

The Carrick Institute and Teaching Excellence: Progress and Prospects

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TODAY'S PRESENTATION

1. The national policy context for achieving excellence in teaching and learning.
2. The 'policy settings' of excellent institutions (?)
3. Some observations on the Carrick Institute, its programs and where these fit in the scheme of things.
4. In anticipation of the afternoon panel session, *Teaching Excellence — What does it mean?*, a glimpse of a CSHE ARC study into the cultures of academic disciplines and the assumptions about teaching and learning.



The national policy context

‘SOFT’

Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

‘HARD’

Learning and Teaching Performance Fund

‘Soft’ meets ‘hard’ at the theoretical issues around defining and measuring effective teaching and learning.



Learning and Teaching Performance Fund

\$54 million for 2006, \$82 million for 2007, \$108 million for 2008

From the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS):

Graduates in full-time employment

Graduates in full-time study

From the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ):

Generic Skills Scale

Good Teaching Scale

Overall Satisfaction Item

Retention

Student Progression (SPU)

Science, computing, engineering, architecture and agriculture	Business, law and economics	Humanities, arts and education	Health
BAND A1			
The Australian National University	The University of New South Wales	University of Wollongong	The University of Melbourne
University of Wollongong	The University of Melbourne	Murdoch University	The University of Western Australia
The University of Western Australia	The Australian National University	The University of Sydney	University of Ballarat
The University of New England	University of Technology, Sydney	The University of Queensland	Monash University
Murdoch University	University of Wollongong	The Australian National University	
University of Tasmania	Swinburne University of Technology	Macquarie University	
University of Technology, Sydney			
BAND A2			
The University of Melbourne	The University of Western Australia	Victoria University	Murdoch University
The University of Queensland	University of Canberra	The University of Melbourne	University of Canberra
The University of New South Wales	The University of Queensland	La Trobe University	The University of Adelaide
	The University of Sydney	Swinburne University of Technology	Charles Sturt University
		The Flinders University of South Australia	The University of Queensland
		University of Ballarat	
		The University of New South Wales	
		Monash University	

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What are the 'policy settings' of excellent institutions?

1. A serious teaching and learning management plan.
2. Extensive evaluation and targets.
3. Developmental performance review.
4. Academic promotion policies that reward teaching.
5. Opportunities to celebrate teaching and learning.
6. Awards for teaching, grants for teaching development.
7. Professional development for staff and various strategies for support of students beyond the classroom.
8. Investment in renewal of teaching spaces.
9. Genuine commitment of senior leaders.



The challenges for research-led universities ...

Ensuring that teaching is valued alongside research.

Ensuring that teaching and research are not in competition with each other...

The RQF is unlikely to be helpful.

More work on understanding and utilising the research-teaching nexus will probably be very helpful.

A performance indicator to measure the research-teaching nexus would be a real breakthrough.



Why the Carrick Institute might be effective

- It has excellent leadership.
- There's been a considered, consultative approach to program design.
- It's very well funded — in particular, the grants for projects are sizeable and offer the opportunity for sustained cross-institution work.

- **The Grants Scheme**, encompassing three major Programs (Priority Projects, Competitive Grants, Leadership Capacity-Building) (\$28million)
- **Discipline-Based Activities** (\$11.5million)
- **The Resource Identification Network (RIN)** (\$7million)
- **The Carrick Fellowship Scheme** (\$7.5million)
- **The Carrick Awards for Australian University Teaching Scheme** (\$11.5million)

Carrick Awards for Australian University Teaching

2005:

13 awards, to which were allocated a total of \$565,000

2006:

251 awards, to which were allocated \$3,150,000

Initial concerns of the CSHE project team

- Dilution of the value of the awards? (due to the larger number to be awarded)
- Excessive administrative demands?
- A drying-up of the pool of high quality applicants?

Our goals in designing the new scheme

- Focus as far as possible on excellent *teaching* rather than teachers.
- Recognise the diversity of contributions to student learning — extend the awards beyond teaching staff, encourage applications from teams of staff.
- Improve the selection criteria, using common criteria across awards as much as possible to enhance - encourage articulation b/w awards.

- ‘Encourage greater institutional ownership’ — devolve aspects of the award processes to institutions, aim for greater spread of awards across institutions.
- ‘Make life easier for applicants’ —
Streamline nomination processes with the objective of working towards online processes over time.
Provide a sound framework to assist people to write good applications, encourage Carrick to begin moving towards online submission.

Summary of the expanded awards scheme

- *26 Awards for Teaching Excellence (\$25,000)*
- *Prime Minister's Award for the Australian University Teacher of the Year (\$50,000)*
- *14 Awards for Programs that Enhance Learning (\$25,000)*
- *210 Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning (\$10,000)*

The selection criteria

Five selection criteria, all given equal consideration:

- 1. Approaches to teaching that influence, motivate and inspire students to learn**
- 2. Development of curricula and resources that reflect a command of the field**
- 3. Approaches to assessment and feedback that foster independent learning**
- 4. Respect and support for the development of students as individuals**
- 5. Scholarly activities that have influenced and enhanced learning and teaching**

Prompts are provided for each criterion.

For example:

- 1. Approaches to teaching that influence, motivate and inspire students to learn**

Which may include: fostering student development by stimulating curiosity and independence in learning; contributing to the development of students' critical thinking skills, analytical skills and scholarly values; encouraging student engagement through the enthusiasm shown for learning and teaching; inspiring and motivating students through high-level communication, presentation and interpersonal skills.

Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning — 210 Citations with award money of \$10 000

- The Carrick Citations provide an opportunity for distinctive institutional missions, values and priorities to be recognised — institution rank all local nominations against the selection criteria.
- Nominations are encouraged from academic staff, general staff, sessional staff and institutional associates.
- Nominees are invited to select one or more of the criteria.
- A twenty-five word citation describes individuals' specific achievements.

What do excellent university teachers do?



ARC study: *The influence of disciplinary cultures on approaches to undergraduate teaching and learning*

The background and motivation ...

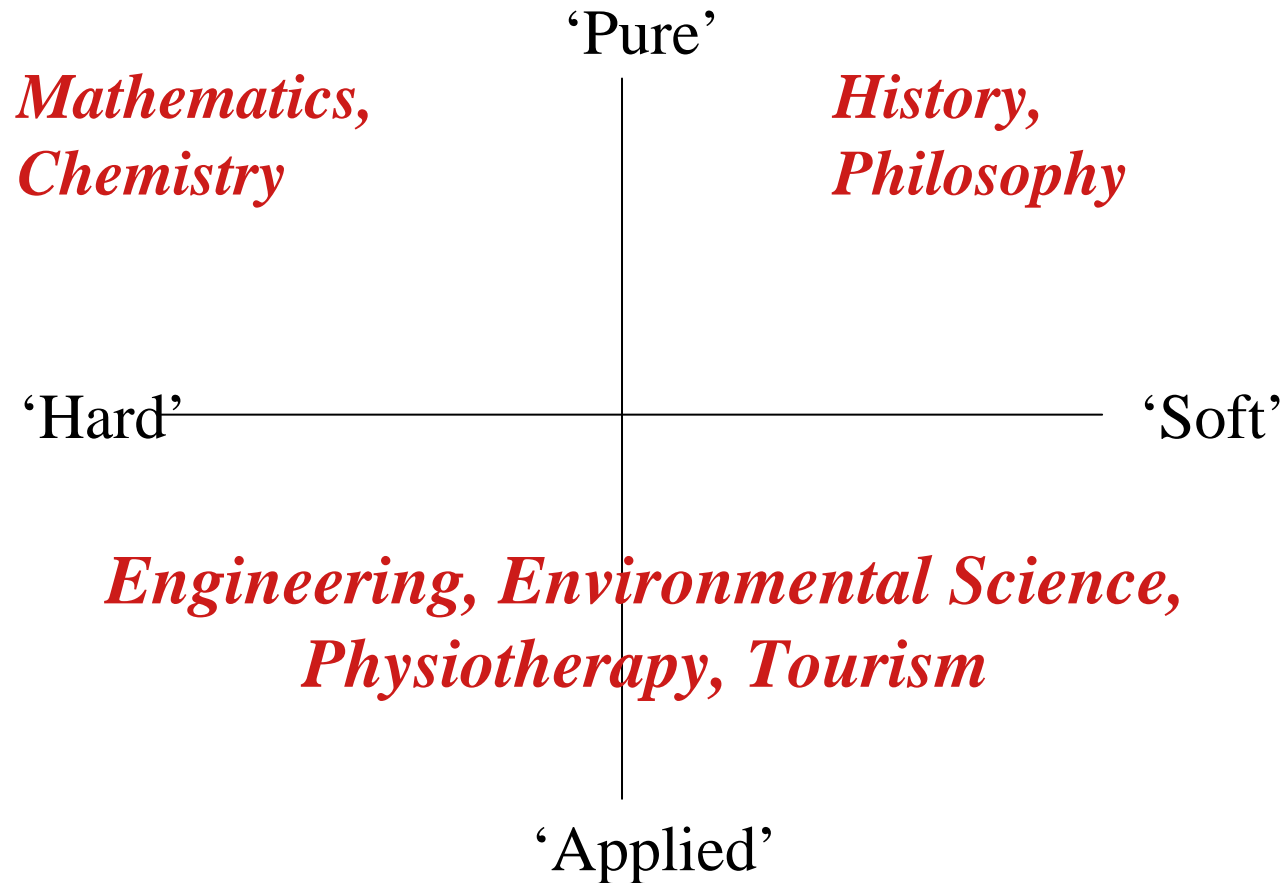
- The *generic* character of the prevailing theories on the characteristics of 'good teaching' in higher education.
- The well-known differences across fields of study in Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) scores.

Can we develop a theory of T&L in HE that reflects the epistemologies of the disciplines?

(Pursuing Shulman's concept of Pedagogical Content Knowledge — PCK — in higher education.)



Where we've been ...



Philosophy

The core values around learning ...

‘... to engage with intellectual issues, to be able to sift evidence, to analyse reasons, to come up with reasons of your own – in other words, to have a critical ability to engage with philosophical issues.’

‘an ability to see whether what someone is saying is plausible or implausible, what reasons there are for holding it, what objections there might be against it. Because there are all kinds of philosophical views on the market ... and if you don’t want to believe what someone says *just* because they say it’



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Philosophy

The core values around learning ...

‘There are many disciplines in the university where people are expected to go in and learn the facts, and show a mastery of them, maybe have to apply them to solve various problems. But essentially it’s a process of absorbing a set of ideas and being able to regurgitate and apply them, okay?’

Well philosophy goes a long way beyond that. Even in Humanities subjects where students are suddenly expected to show critical awareness, such as History and English and so on, **I don’t think they have the same kind of intellectual edge that Philosophy has.**



Mathematics

The core values around learning ...

'Not facts, right. Not facts. But a methodology. I mean, in some sense the methodology is the facts in mathematics.'

'There's, let's say, intuition and **an aesthetic, a mathematical aesthetic ... an elegance of process.** And I know other areas have that as well, certainly physics. But when it comes to something like business studies and that, well, you know... But people in maths are very aware of it. The intrinsic beauty of the subject, right.'



Mathematics

The methods of teaching and learning ...

‘The actual teaching process is a **highly structured working through of detailed examples.**’

‘there is a ... certain kind of ingrained methodology **which they’ve, you know, tortured their way through.** I think it becomes kind of a sort of a genetic blueprint, or something like that.’



History

The core values around learning ...

‘Critical thinking in history means being sceptical and always asking questions. I say to my students ‘a quote is an invitation to attack.’

‘Students need to be able to write a sound argument. Clarity is very important ... students need to be able to argue in a rational way.’

‘The process not the content.’



History

The methods of teaching and learning ...

‘I like lecturing. I like the whole mode of standing up and delivering something that students can listen to and take notes on and think about.’

‘... I’ll often give a small narrative of historical events and then I’ll talk about how best you might want to analyse or critique this narrative or think about it in a different way.’



Chemistry

The core values around learning ...

‘Students need to be able to have **a high degree of abstraction in their thinking**. They need to be able to develop a concept of picture or description that works for them of something that they literally cannot see ... you can write something on a piece of paper and it doesn’t necessarily have a direct connection with the real world, the connection is an indirect one’

‘I think one of the most difficult things in learning chemistry is that **it involves a different language**’



Some broad observations from the research so far ...

- **Profound differences in the skills that are highly valued and the ways of teaching and assessing them.**
- Academics are often (very) inaccurate in their depiction of disciplines other than their own.
- Academics' knowledge of T & L is often tacit, many find it difficult to articulate a personal 'theory' of T & L.
- If there's a decline in the disciplines it's not obvious from our interviews. Interestingly, many academics see their disciplines as more 'liberal'/'generalist' than we'd expected.
- And what does 'teaching excellence' mean? This is a question that can await this afternoon's panel ...



Excellent university teachers ...

Have empathy with students.

Model the epistemological culture of the discipline.

Provide structured opportunities for rehearsal, practice, experimentation and feedback.

Have expert knowledge of their fields.

Utilise the teaching-research nexus in a number of ways.

Assess strategically.

Show their own passion for their discipline.



The effects of disciplinary cultures on beliefs about knowledge and learning

Academics' approaches to teaching shaped by the following dimensions:

1. Content 'light' — content 'dense'
2. Individual knowledge generation — collective knowledge generation
3. Imagination/creativity 'light' — imagination/creativity 'dense'
4. Specialist symbolic language — limited specialist symbolic language
5. Competing theoretical paradigms — unity on theoretical paradigm
6. Oral communication 'light' — oral communication 'dense'





Guide for Reviewing Assessment

**Prompts and guidelines for monitoring and
enhancing assessment practices**

**For subject coordinators, course coordinators
and others involved in assessment practice
and policy development**

Kerri-Lee Harris



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