THE RST PROCESS AND APPLICATION

The Engaging Pedagogies Team
Education (NSW and ACT)
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IDENTIFYING A RESEARCH FOCUS

- Consider research issues at four key levels:
  - Personal
  - Organisational Unit
  - University
  - Wider community
IDENTIFYING A RESEARCH FOCUS

Personal level

- Start with your research plan and identify your needs:
  - Consolidating a research area
  - Track record
  - Improvement in quality of output
  - External grants
  - Networks

- Engaging pedagogies identified problem at a personal level:
  - Development of a stronger track record
The major focus of this team is the development of member’s individual and team track records within the areas of pedagogy and learning.
IDENTIFYING A RESEARCH FOCUS

Organisational Unit Level

- What are the research strengths in your OU?
- Where are the gaps and/or what are the research needs in your OU?
- Talk to your HOS and ADR about your ideas – don’t work in a vacuum

- Engaging Pedagogies identified problem at OU level
- No specific research group focusing on teaching and learning
ACU is the largest provider of teachers in Australia, and a strong research culture in teaching and learning is central to maintaining the University’s high profile in Education. The Faculty has research strengths in curriculum, particularly literacy and mathematics, hence there is a pressing need to build the Faculty’s research profile in pedagogy and learning. The aim of this group is to support the development of a group of 5 researchers from Sydney and Canberra working, drawing together a number of existing projects in pedagogy and learning (see diagram).
IDENTIFYING A RESEARCH FOCUS

University Level

- How does your thinking align with the university mission and strategic research focus areas?

- Engaging pedagogies decided to focus on teaching and learning research that supported equity within the strategic research focus areas of Education and Common good and Social Justice.
This Research Support Team is aligned with Education, an ACU strategic research focus area. Furthermore, the specific focus of this group on pedagogical practices that enhance engagement and learning of students from low SES backgrounds and Indigenous students aligns closely with the ACU Mission, particularly the concern for justice and equity, and the strategic research focus areas of the Common Good and Social Justice.
IDENTIFYING A RESEARCH FOCUS

Wider community

- Consider context of higher education eg. Bradley review
- Strategic focus areas of granting bodies eg. ACR priority areas
- Engaging pedagogies considered the following issues relevant to teaching and learning:
  - Engagement of students from low SES backgrounds
  - Engagement of Indigenous students
IDENTIFYING YOUR RESEARCH FOCUS

Consolidate and articulate your specific outcomes.

- The Engaging Pedagogies RST has four key outcomes:
  - development and monitoring of individual and team research plans
  - publications within the focus area
  - grant applications within focus area
  - development of external research networks and a website to promote the research activities and profiles of group members.
DEVELOPING A TEAM

Once you have established the focus of the RST who might be interested in working with you?

- What levels of expertise do you need?
- Any particular skills?
- Same or diverse theoretical positions?
- Level of experience?
DEVELOPING A TEAM

I considered:

- Research interests within the focus area
- Varied levels of experience
- Methodological expertise
- Campus location
- Potential
- Group dynamics
PLANNING THE RESEARCH

- The key issue here is that there needs to be joint ownership.
- Talk to the other members about what they want to achieve, how the RST can be helpful.
- We decided to work initially to support each individual members existing projects and related outputs.
The focus was on outputs so we put money into processes that supported outputs:

- Monthly meetings
- A group mentor
- Writing retreat
- Marking support
- Editing support
- Website to build profile

To achieve these outcomes the group will undertake strategic activities including: monthly strategic planning and monitoring meetings and writing retreats. The primary focus of the strategic planning and monitoring group (SPAM) will be to develop and monitor research plans both for individual and team outputs and to undertake activities that support the delivery of outputs. The focus will initially be on current projects within the focus areas. Once well established the group will expand membership to include other research active staff from ACU working in relevant focus areas.
PUTTING IT IN THE RST APPLICATION

- Develop drafts with the group, HOS and ADR
- Ensure consistency between:
  - Focus
  - Outcomes
  - Methods to achieve these
  - Budget
WHAT THE RSTS LEARNED

- Plan ahead with the application, anything involving a number of people needs good lead time.
- Make sure you involve your line management in what you are doing.
- A mentor is great – though a domestic one may be more accessible than OS.
- Meetings are very difficult to organise in semester time – if possible it would be preferable to have RST meeting time timetabled.
- One size doesn’t fit all. The budget needs flexibility, don’t be too prescriptive.
ACHIEVEMENTS

Activities
- Enjoyed collegial discussion over our research
- Visit from our mentor as a Distinguished Visiting Scholar in March this year
- Writing retreat with our mentor – very valuable.

Outputs
- Website
- 5 members presented at overseas conferences this year
- Members have met or exceeded output targets in B1s and C1s
- One external grant application in
- Next year’s focus: Book proposal being developed for Engaging Pedagogies in Higher Education