



Australian Learning  
and Teaching Fellows

## A GUIDE TO THE ALTF NETWORK

[www.altf.org](http://www.altf.org)

### *Take advantage of the passion and expertise of the Australian Learning and Teaching Fellows*

The purpose of this brief guide is to introduce the ALTF network and its collaborative approach to supporting and promoting quality learning and teaching across Australian higher education

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<sup>4</sup>James Cook University; <sup>5</sup>Edith Cowan University

*The Fellows lead change in learning and teaching. They are the cohort to ensure that good ideas do not languish on the shelf or remain confined to small pockets of good practice. They push one another and they coax and coach others to ensure better learning and teaching outcomes. They are an investment in academic leadership.*

**Professor Margaret Gardner AO**

OLT Strategic Advisory Committee (Chair)  
Vice-Chancellor and President, RMIT University

MAY 2013

Support for the production of this publication has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government for Learning and Teaching.



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**Learning & Teaching**

*I am a huge supporter of the OLT Fellowships Scheme. OLT Fellows help drive learning and teaching innovation in a way that not only impacts, very positively, upon their own institutions and disciplines, but also on the quality of the broader tertiary sector in Australia. More broadly, they serve as powerful role models that serve to demonstrate the key role that leadership in teaching and learning plays as a fundamental plank on which the success and the vitality of the sector is based.*

**Professor Deborah J. Terry**  
Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor  
The University of Queensland

## WHAT IS THE ALTF?

The Australian Learning and Teaching Fellows (ALTF) network comprises leading learning and teaching scholars who work collegially and inclusively to address local, national and international issues across higher education. The ALTF was established in 2011 with the support of network funding from the Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd.

Now managed by the Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) in the Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, the Fellowships Scheme (through OLT and predecessor bodies offices) has, since 2006, supported 62 Fellows across 24 Australian universities. In 2013 the Australian Government's *Promotion of Excellence in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education* (PELTHE) program committed \$1.54 million towards the Scheme<sup>1</sup>, which offers up to ten new Fellowships each year.

## WHAT DO FELLOWS DO?

Fellows aim to advance learning and teaching in higher education by undertaking a significant program of strategic, high-profile activities in areas of importance to the sector. Critically, these activities must 'have a positive and lasting influence and impact on higher education practice in Australia'.<sup>2</sup> The selection of Fellows is influenced by the OLT Strategic Advisory Committee's desire to contribute to the sector's higher education agenda and the critical issues that are driving educational reform. Fellows are thus leading educators and scholars focusing on a variety of higher education issues such as first-year experience, practice-based education, technology-supported learning design, student engagement and retention, global citizenship, assessment, inquiry-oriented learning and curriculum design. Application of a Fellow's work may be across the sector or discipline specific.

The Fellows have so far contributed to a diverse range of disciplines including natural and physical sciences, engineering and related technologies, health, creative arts, and society and culture. As shown below, Fellowships have been undertaken in each Australian state and territory.

### Australian Learning and Teaching Fellows

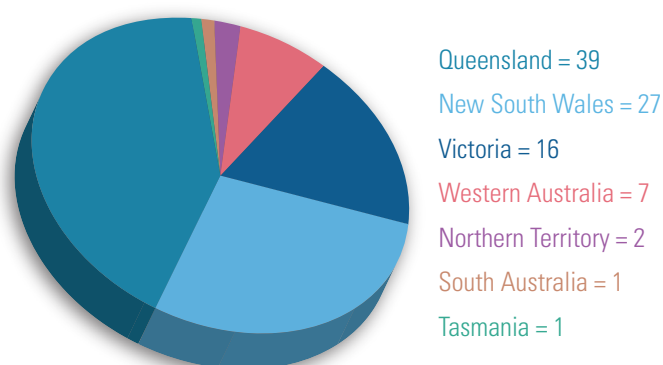


Figure 1: Distribution of the 62 Fellows across Australia<sup>3</sup>

For more information on the Fellowships Scheme, visit [www.olt.gov.au/fellowships](http://www.olt.gov.au/fellowships).

*I strongly encourage institutions to consider nominating colleagues to join this group of leading educators and to investigate issues of strategic importance to our dynamic sector. As the ALTF website [www.altf.org](http://www.altf.org) evidences, the list of Fellows past and present reads like a 'who's who' of Australian higher education. OLT Fellows represent the interests of many institutions, disciplines and professions, and they work collaboratively across the sector with the future of our students and their learning at heart.*

**Professor Sally Kift**  
President ALTF  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)  
James Cook University

<sup>1</sup> OLT 2013. Fellowship Program: Information and application instructions. Version 1.0

<sup>2</sup> OLT, 2012. See [www.olt.gov.au/fellowships](http://www.olt.gov.au/fellowships)

<sup>3</sup> Territory or state where Fellows are currently employed

*The Fellows have identified nine hot topics in higher education and indicated where they can utilise their expertise at institutional and national levels to address these areas of challenge and thus improve learning outcomes for higher education students.*

### Professor Jane den Hollander

Vice-Chancellor  
Deakin University

## HOW THE ALTF CAN CONTRIBUTE TO LEARNING LEADERSHIP

There are numerous ways to become involved in network activities and to draw on the expertise of the Fellows. The network supports and promotes quality learning and teaching across Australian higher education by:

- mentoring prospective and current Fellows;
- hosting bi-annual national forums;
- contributing to higher education events nationally and internationally;
- disseminating Fellows' findings through the ALTF website;
- contributing to sectoral policy, discussion and debate; and
- connecting Fellows with people who are searching for specific expertise.

## HOT TOPICS IN AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

The Fellows have consulted with a range of stakeholders to identify a set of nine 'hot topics' for Australian higher education. These are depicted below. Fellows have indicated their areas of expertise or contribution against each of these topics at [www.altf.org](http://www.altf.org). The website includes contact details for Fellows with expertise relating to each hot topic. Fellows may also be available for consultancy projects where resources and time permit.

Figure 2: Nine hot topics in higher education and an example of Fellows' contributions



*The Fellowships Scheme has enabled the identification of experts in disciplines and university leadership and has enabled other universities to leverage off their expertise. Their contribution to the dissemination of knowledge in critical areas of university life and learning has been enormous. Their roles have meant that they have been able to meet with a wide variety of staff across the sector and to provide a conduit for the sharing of experience and innovation with Australian higher education.*

### Professor Anne Cummins

Deputy Vice Chancellor (Students, Learning and Teaching)  
Australian Catholic University

## EVIDENCING POSITIVE IMPACT

This Guide is the result of ALTF research undertaken in 2012-13. The OLT-funded research aimed to evidence the positive impact of the Fellowships Scheme and to strengthen the capacity of the Australian Learning and Teaching Fellows to contribute to Australian higher education. More detailed findings are published in the project report, titled *The Australian Learning and Teaching Fellows Network: A collaborative resource for higher education*. The report is downloadable from the ALTF and OLT websites, which also includes searchable links to all Fellows and their Fellowship reports.

The project entailed gathering evidence of the positive impact that Fellows have made through their Fellowships. This included surveys of completed Fellows (since 2006), expert commentators, institutional representatives, and end-users of Fellows' work.

Key project findings are outlined in the following points:

- Commentators relayed very positive perceptions of the Fellowships Scheme's impact on Australian higher education. They also noted the impact of individual Fellowship programs, with 71 per cent strongly agreeing: 'The Fellow's Fellowship program has made a significant and positive impact on the relevant field/topic/theme';
- Fellows reported that participation in the Scheme had enhanced their personal recognition and leadership capacity in circumstances where it was not already strongly acknowledged;
- Fellows made a number of suggestions on how to embed Fellowship work. These included active engagement with the media and critically discussing Fellowship findings;

- Critical success factors for Fellowships include support from the home institution, the amount of funding, early and frequent engagement with stakeholders, personal enthusiasm, and targeted dissemination; and
- Barriers to successful and impactful Fellowships were identified as a limited level of institutional support, a research-focused culture, time management issues including limited release from regular duties, and barriers to sustaining the impact post-Fellowship. Potential solutions to these barriers were proposed and have been adopted by the ALTF committee as recommendations for current and future Fellows and their institutions.



Figure 3: Word cloud of Fellowship topics

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2013  
ISBN: 978-1-922218-86-5 (paper)  
ISBN: 978-1-922218-87-2 (online)

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