Written response to the Interim report

Executive Summary

- Agreement with the issues identified in chapter 2.4: Excellence in learning, teaching and student experience

- Agreement with the four considerations for change (p.89)

- Agreement with the potential proposals the Review may also consider for the final report (p.90)

- Two proposals are presented on the role the *Contemporary Approaches to University Teaching (CAUT)* massive open online course (MOOC) can play in tracking the outcomes of Accord recommendations

Contents

A/Prof Agnes Bosanquet SFHEA Director, Learning and Teaching Staff Development Office of the PVC(E) Macquarie University,	**Honorary Associate Professor Marina Harvey** PhD, PFHEA, Australian National Teaching Fellow Faculty of Arts Macquarie University

Written response to the Interim report

Introduction

This response relates to the invitation to target the themes of "What measures of success could the Panel propose to track the outcomes of Accord recommendations?" It specifically focusses on **2.4: Excellence in learning, teaching and student experience**.

As academic developers with over fifty years' combined experience in Australian higher education, we were pleased to see the emphasis on the professional development of teachers, inclusive of sessional teaching staff. We agree with and support the current issues identified to drive excellence in learning, teaching and student experience.

We are co-leads of the *Contemporary Approaches to University Teaching (CAUT)* massive open online course (MOOC), which we are sharing as an exemplar of an evidence-based, open access, collaborative teaching development program. Given the alignment of the MOOC content with:

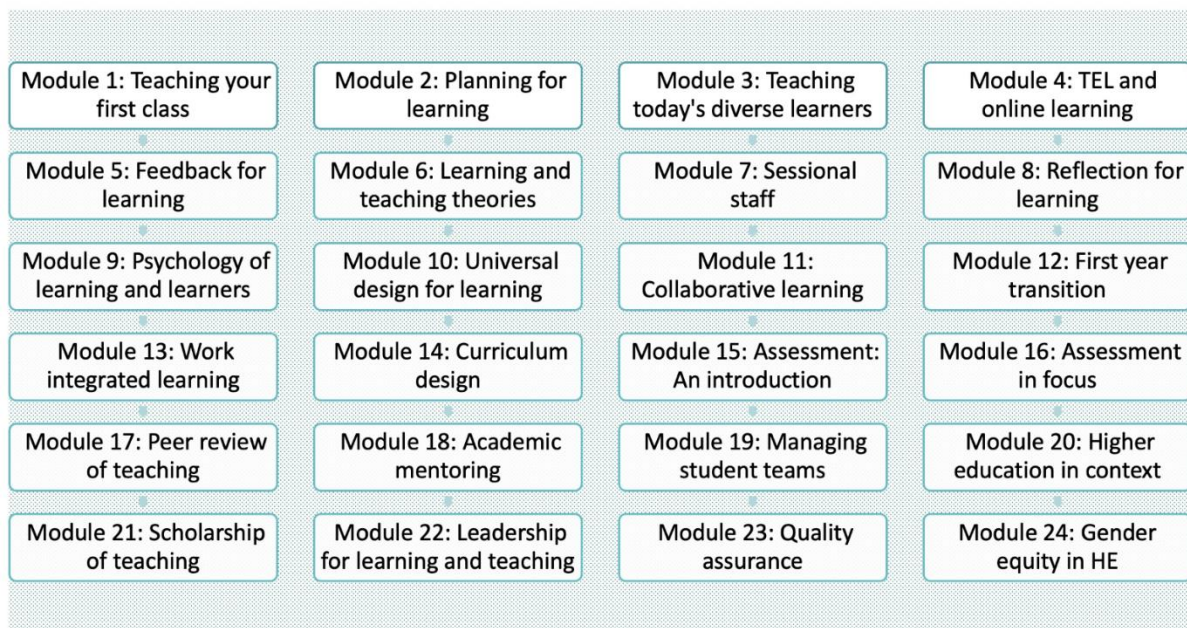"Addressing the issues identified in Chapter 2.4, and

Achieving effective solutions to the considerations for change"

we propose that participant registration in this MOOC could be one example of data collection used to track the outcomes of the Accord recommendations.

Background

This course was collaboratively developed by 36 higher education content experts from across Australia. It was originally launched in 2018 as part of a National Learning and Teaching Fellowship led by Associate Professor Kym Fraser (Swinburne University of Technology). The course is now hosted by Associate Professors Agnes Bosanquet and Marina Harvey (Macquarie University) under the auspices of the Council of Australasian University Leaders of Learning and Teaching (CAULLT).

In 2022 we led a full quality review, and revision of the course was undertaken drawing on the expertise of 46 higher education scholars – an example of "2.4.2.1 Utilising knowledge from across the sector, Australia and the world. " The new version of the course was launched in 2023 (enrol in the course via https://canvas.instructure.com/enroll/PYKL9G. You may need to set up an account first: https://www.instructure.com/en-au/try-canvas). Originally 11 modules, it now consists of 24 two-hour self-paced modules:

Module 1: Teaching your first class	Module 2: Planning for learning	Module 3: Teaching today's diverse learners	Module 4: TEL and online learning
Module 5: Feedback for learning	Module 6: Learning and teaching theories	Module 7: Sessional staff	Module 8: Reflection for learning
Module 9: Psychology of learning and learners	Module 10: Universal design for learning	Module 11: Collaborative learning	Module 12: First year transition
Module 13: Work integrated learning	Module 14: Curriculum design	Module 15: Assessment: An introduction	Module 16: Assessment in focus
Module 17: Peer review of teaching	Module 18: Academic mentoring	Module 19: Managing student teams	Module 20: Higher education in context
Module 21: Scholarship of teaching	Module 22: Leadership for learning and teaching	Module 23: Quality assurance	Module 24: Gender equity in HE

There are four pathways through the course of eight modules each: *New to Teaching*, *Enhancing student learning*, *Enhancing your teaching* and *Leading learning and teaching*. Each pathway is recognised with a digital badge awarded by CAULLT, a form of documenting professional learning. This is innovative as few higher education institutions award badges for professional learning, although they have been found to encourage and motivate participants who appreciate this recognition (Dyjur & Lindstrom, 2017). While initially designed to support new teachers in higher education, the expansion of the course has provided an opportunity to support mid-career and emerging leaders in learning and teaching.

Now in its sixth year, the course has had over 9000 participants from across the world. Offered twice per year, each semester sees 800 to 1000 participants. It positions Australian higher education as a leader in quality learning and teaching.

Alignment of the MOOC with the issues and considerations for change

The design and delivery of the CAUT MOOC, and the modules offered, align with and reflect the very issues identified in the ACCORD interim report (refer to Table 1).

The design and delivery of the CAUT MOOC *models* a course that is both personalised and scalable (2.4.1 Learning and teaching that is personalised and scalable). The module options are a clear example of how participants select and design their own "form of individualised learning plan" (p.81).

Participants who enrol in the MOOC can choose to simply complete one of the 24 modules currently on offer in response to their professional development needs. The recently revised course provides

four pathways of study and again participants can choose which pathway best addresses their current professional development and learning needs. Upon completion of eight modules, making up one pathway, participants are awarded a digital badge, an example of "fast, stackable and portable credentials" (p, 81). The CAUT MOOC has been designed to be scalable as numbers of participants are not limited.

Table 1. Mapping the alignment of the CAUT MOOC to the issues and considerations for change.

Reference to Interim Report	CAUT MOOC module
2.4.3 Curriculum design and delivery that is responsive and collaborative	1. Teaching your first class
adopts a learner-centred approach to pedagogy (p.81)	2. Planning for learning
As student cohorts become more diverse, a new focus on student-centred models of delivery and support will be required. This could include teaching in ways which are better tailored to the specific needs of each student, (p. 81)	3.Teaching today's diverse learners
2.4.2 Inclusive and high-quality teaching that embraces technological advancements	4. TEL and online learning
2.4.3 Curriculum design and delivery that is responsive and collaborative	5. Feedback for learning
2.4.3 Curriculum design and delivery that is responsive and collaborative	6. Learning and teaching theories
2.4.4.3 Incentivising and valuing all academic roles	7. Sessional staff
2.4.3 Curriculum design and delivery that is responsive and collaborative	8. Reflection for learning
2.4.3 Curriculum design and delivery that is responsive and collaborative	9. Psychology of learners and learning
implementing the Universal Design for Learning framework (p.81)	10. Universal design for learning
2.4.3 Curriculum design and delivery that is responsive and collaborative	11. Collaborative learning
2.4.3 Curriculum design and delivery that is responsive and collaborative	12. First year transition
"Others have developed courses in collaboration with industry and provide students with the opportunity to undertake WIL." (p.85)	13. Work-integrated learning
2.4.3 Curriculum design and delivery that is responsive and collaborative	14. Curriculum design
2.4.3 Curriculum design and delivery that is responsive and collaborative	15. Assessment: an introduction
2.4.3 Curriculum design and delivery that is responsive and collaborative	16. Assessment in focus
2.4.4.4 Measuring excellence	17. Peer review of teaching
2.4.4 Committing to teaching excellence and collaboration	18. Academic mentoring
2.4.3 Curriculum design and delivery that is responsive and collaborative	19. Managing student teams
b. rewarding institutions taking a leadership role in learning and teaching, (p.90)	20. Higher education in context

Not mentioned in the report, therefore an identified gap in the report.	21. Scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching
b. rewarding institutions taking a leadership role in learning and teaching, (p.90)	22. Leadership for learning and teaching
b. rewarding institutions taking a leadership role in learning and teaching, (p.90)	23. Quality assurance
2.1: A larger, fairer system	24. Gender equity in higher education

Proposing measures of success

Higher education centres for learning and teaching have long lived with the knowledge that they experience a constant "state of flux", with endless change and reconfiguration (Holt, Palmer & Challis, 2011, p.15). The recent pandemic has exacerbated this state of flux across the Australasian higher education sector with concerns over financial viability (TEQSA, 2021), decreasing government funding and ongoing restructuring of workforces (Croucher & Locke, 2020) including "catastrophic" job losses (Littleton & Stanford, 2021).

Within this context of reduced resources, the Interim Report posits the consideration for change of "b. enhancing the professional development of academic staff in teaching, especially for those newly employed to teach [and]

c. promoting collaboration and shared best practice in learning and teaching" (p.89).

There is a need to provide teaching induction programs that "develop student-centred, scholarly behaviours and attitudes" (Fraser et al., 2019, p.297). Yet, not all Australian universities offer teaching induction programs (ten do not offer teaching induction) and those that do vary in what is offered (Fraser et al., 2019). Structural issues also continue to exist in terms of the provision of professional development for sessional staff and support is "inadequate" (Hitch, Mahomey & Macfarlane, 2018, p. 293). The MOOC can be offered to these staff or alternatively the MOOC can be adapted to meet the professional learning needs of their institutional contexts at negligible cost. The risks of the current MOOC delivery model need to be acknowledged; it is led by volunteer academics and is hosted on what is currently a free learning management system (Canvas Free for Teacher) with no guarantees about its future availability and functionality. We read with interest the proposal for grants associated with implementation of the Accord and anticipate there may be opportunities for maintenance and development of the MOOC which can mitigate identified risks.

Proposal #1.

For the universities and higher education providers who are currently unable to resource the professional development needs of their teaching staff we recommend that they support their teaching staff at their institution to complete one or more pathway/s of study offered by the CAUT MOOC.

Staff can either enrol at the central website using the Canvas Free for Teacher platform, Alternatively, the course is offered under a CC Attribution Share Alike license which means that participants can use and adapt the content with attribution. The course's relevance and quality to the higher education sector is well demonstrated by the 44 tertiary institutions from eight countries that have requested to import the course into their own Learning Management System, as part of their provision of learning and teaching professional development opportunities for their staff. Below are representative quotes from colleagues at those institutions.

"*On behalf of those constantly searching for good professional development for learning and teaching in higher education, thank you for all the work you and your team/s have done here. It is an immensely valuable and accessible resource.*" Dr Karina Luzia, Professional Learning Project Coordinator, Macquarie University

"*I have been exploring (and really enjoying) the course Contemporary Approaches to University Teaching….I admire the professional approaches, the structure of modules and the emphasis on self-reflection on behalf of the participants….I can see on you course page that you are very generous when it comes to sharing with suggestions of how universities may implement and use the material – that is just great! I would like to introduce the course and the course material within my institution*." Guorun Geirsdottir, Director, The Centre for Teaching and Learning, University of Iceland.

"*We would love to use your fabulous MOOC content for a new professional development plan for sessional staff we are introducing at Deakin*." Dr Julia Savage, Professional Learning, Learning Environments, Research and Evaluation, Deakin University.

There are multiple options for institutions to support their staff in engaging in professional learning through the MOOC (dependent on Enterprise Agreements and context). One example is provided below:

Sent: Sunday, 6 August 2023 11:03 AM
Subject: MOOC incentive

Hi Agnes

Just to let you know that we have incentivised College casual teachers to complete the MOOC by offering $300 payment on evidence of completion by December. Not sure how many will do it but hopefully it will increase interest.

Regards

Pamela

Dr Pamela Humphreys (SFHEA)
Director

Macquarie University College

Proposal #2.

Collect annual data on CAUT MOOC participation numbers as an example of "evidence of success".

The CAUT MOOC disseminates research-informed good practice in higher education learning and teaching. It provides, at no cost, professional learning to support quality learning and teaching in higher education. The four pathways of study enable participants to have autonomy over their professional learning. The awarding of digital badges provides a means of documentation of learning. With 24 modules that closely align with, and reflect, the issues and considerations for change of the Interim Report the MOOC presents itself as a natural partner of the goals of the Accord.

Evidence of success can be data collected on:

- Number of MOOC participants each semester
- Number of participants by module
- Number of badges awarded

Conclusion

In conclusion, we propose completion of the Contemporary Approaches to University Teaching MOOC by academic staff with teaching responsibilities, especially those "newly employed to teach" (p 89). This offers a measure of success for tracking outcomes of Accord recommendations in the area of excellence in learning, teaching and student experience. The above mapping of the Accord themes with MOOC modules, and its position as a successful evidence-based, open access, collaborative teaching development program, demonstrate its applicability to achieve the teaching development goals of the Accord. We encourage members of the panel to enrol in the MOOC (https://canvas.instructure.com/enroll/PYKL9G. You may need to set up an account first: https://www.instructure.com/en-au/try-canvas) to enable them to assess its potential role in achieving the outcomes of the Accord.

References

Croucher, G. & Locke, W. (2020). *A post-coronavirus pandemic world: some possible trends and their implications for Australian higher education. Melbourne CSHE Discussion Paper, May 2020*. Melbourne: Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education. https://melbourne-cshe.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/3371941/a-post-coronavirus-world-for-higher-education_final.pdf

Fraser, K., Ryan, Y., Bolt, S., Copeman, P., Cottman, C., Fisher, M.B., Fleming, J. & Luzeckyj, A. (2019) Contemporary induction to teaching in Australian universities. *International Journal for Academic Development, 24*(3), pp. 286-300. DOI: 10.1080/1360144X.2019.1612751

Hitch, D., Mahoney, P. & Macfarlane, S. (2018) Professional development for sessional staff in higher education: a review of current evidence. *Higher Education Research & Development, 37* (2), pp. 285-300. DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2017.1360844

Holt, D., Palmer, S., & Challis. D. (2011). Changing perspectives: teaching and learning centres' strategic contributions to academic development in Australian higher education. *International Journal for Academic Development, 16* (1), pp. 5-17. DOI: 10.1080/1360144X.2011.546211

Littleton, E. & Stanford, J. (2021). *An avoidable catastrophe: Pandemic job losses in higher education and their consequences*. Manuka: The Australia Institute, Centre for Future Work. https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/An-Avoidable-Catastrophe-WEB.pdf

TEQSA. (2021). *Forward impact of COVID-19 on Australian higher education*. https://www.teqsa.gov.au/latest-news/publications/forward-impact-covid-19-australian-higher-education-report