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# Academic Professional Development to Support Mixed Modalities

Belinda Tynan, Carina Bossu, and Shona Leitch

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## Abstract

This chapter will explore professional development (PD) of academic and teaching staff in the use of technologies to support learning in mixed modalities including blended and online modalities in higher education contexts. The authors will explore current practices in both face-to-face (f2f) and online/distance education contexts. A succinct annotated review of key seminal and recent texts will be provided of current trends in relation to PD of staff and the implications that arise from this research for practitioners. Two very different but relevant examples of PD will be provided to bring the discussion to life: (i) at the Open University, UK, and (ii) at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia.

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**Keywords**

Professional development, Academic development, Staff development, Online learning, Distance education

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**Introduction**

With the rise of enrolments through online education across the globe, academic professional development (PD) has never been more important to provide quality learning experiences for learners. There is no single *one-size-fits-all* model; however, there are numerous points of research that provide insight into the practices across higher education institutions which participate in distance education, online education, and all manners of blended modalities. Many universities have centers of learning and teaching which quite often have responsibility for academic PD, while other universities have a more decentralized approach, where PD support and activities are situated in individual faculties. This chapter situates PD through the lens of COVID-19, and while the literature in the field is vast, the authors have included significant and relevant research, augmented with concise case studies of PD in practice. Finally, the chapter concludes with a number of recommendations to practitioners.

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**Context**

2020 was the beginning of a pandemic that most across international datelines could not have imagined. No part of the globe was untouched by the COVID-19 virus and its numerous variants as wave after wave ravaged even the wealthiest of countries. The impact on those most vulnerable, the old, sick, and disabled, those living in poverty and millions of children whose education just stopped will be a legacy that we will all live with for generations to come. It was a crisis unimagined.

Higher education institutions closed their doors and overnight and instantly became providers of online education – or rather what was coined as *remote education* as few were prepared for the requirements of creating an engaging and fulfilling online learning experience. Most were prepared through their digital infrastructures and enterprise learning management systems, but, unless you were already a provider of online education, the disruption was enormous. Students the world over were now in their bedrooms, kitchens, and lounge rooms, in their cars, and in the corner shop or anywhere they could access the Internet.

Teaching and research staff, again unless used to teaching purposefully designed online learning experiences, were seeking whatever PD they could get to support their practice. Staff found themselves setting up home offices, learning how to teach online, and using video technologies to engage with their students. Many were stressed and reported fatigue with being online so much and ill equipped for what was required of them.

Distance education institutions did not escape the impact of the global pandemic, despite many having the digital infrastructures, capacity, and resources already designed for online learning. Many institutions faced staff shortage due to furlough, sickness (COVID-19-related or not), or caring responsibility, which resulted in increased staff workload. The need for student support increased substantially, as many students were vulnerable, lived in shared or abusive homes, and had financial difficulties as many lost their jobs. Some assessment strategies had to be reconsidered or eliminated altogether, as students were not able to attend examinations that usually took place in the distributed distance centers.

This grim picture, however, had some silver linings especially when it came to the PD or academic development as is often coined of the academic workforce. For many years, the debate about the academic development of our academic staff within our tertiary institutions has been one which has been fraught, caught between the discipline qualifications that an academic ordinarily has at postgraduate level and the requirement to be able to teach. There is an old argument that a PhD does not give you a “license” to teach nor does it mean you can teach across a range of modalities. There is a 30 plus year research base for education including learning and teaching across numerous disciplines in higher education. A quick scan of the journals reveals many tomes which have a focus on learning and teaching.

Higher education institutions have long faced this dilemma, and all manners of opportunities for engaging with the art of teaching have been in place. Centralized learning and teaching centers have for years provided seminars, formal certificates, and diploma courses to develop the skills required to teach, underpinned by the theoretical basis for what makes a good learning experience. But, and here is the but, much of that provision is accessed by a small number of academic staff who are interested in learning and teaching, and often those who need the support the most do not engage with such opportunity for support and upskilling. Most of the research literature is made up of small case studies, too numerous to quote here, which reinforce that we still really do not know categorically whether such training has an impact on both what and how our students learn. These cases provide a peek into classrooms of our educators and are primarily “happy” stories of success.

Still, something changed during COVID. Across the globe, there were reports that universities had thousands of their staff sign up for PD. They needed to know how to teach online. Suddenly, it became urgent and necessary to reach out for support and ideas and to skill themselves in new techniques. What might have taken 5 years was done overnight. The debate of whether these staff were *really* teaching online or, as many in the online business would say “they were teaching remotely” of course exists and is completely legitimate. Online teaching requires specialized design and engagement with learnings that is distinctly different to the campus-based experience. It isn’t as simple as putting your lectures online and holding tutorials. As we learn more about online learning, the specialized knowledge and pedagogical approaches are becoming more important. Our learners demand more than simply reading a book online.

Interestingly, as countries across the globe emerge from their lockdowns and return to the campus, learning and teaching has altered and probably for good. No

doubt, in years to come, we will see research emerge which will fully analyze and report on COVID-19 impacts. Our learners are now likely to experience a mix of campus and online modes. Some of our staff are even saying they prefer being online. And many of our students are asking for the flexibility that online learning gives them. Some of them have opted to enroll themselves in established open and online universities instead. One example of this is the Open University UK, which experienced a 15% increase in the total number of students enrolled for the 2020/2021 academic year. It should be noted however that many of the institutional surveys in Australian institutions have reported significant drops in the national student engagement scores over 2020 and student feedback has been variably related to their experiences over the past 12 months.

While distance and online learning has been the territory of the distance education provider, it has, over the past few decades, been slowly changing. The rise of learning management systems, smarter digital technologies, and the Internet has seen most tertiary institutions engage in blended or online learning to some extent. Distance learning has essentially been replaced by online learning where the infrastructure can support it.

Supporting our staff to embrace technologies now appears to be a thing of the past, and the challenge is how we shift from teaching remotely to designing for online. For many familiar with this literature, this may feel like a flash back to the past. Distance education providers have been entirely familiar with these challenges since their inception a few decades ago. Regardless of where your institution is along the continuum of embracing new technologies in a variety of modes, there is much to learn from what has gone before us.

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## Literature

From the enormous literature available, the authors have purposefully selected articles that have resonated with the authors and that have recognized standing within the field.

Angela Brew is an Australian expert in academic PD and has written many pieces in this field. She has been a strong advocate for a scholarly approach to PD. In this seminal article, Brew (2010) argues that scholarship should be at the center for both students and teachers to create an environment where research, scholarship, teaching, and learning are viewed as part of one whole. She believes that this integration is key to promote lasting and transformational improvements in learning and teaching in higher education.

However, this integration has implications for academic development. This means that developers need to work in partnership with a range of university stakeholders, including academics, senior and mid-level managers, sessional staff, students, and professional staff, to create a more inclusive, inquiry-focused higher education. This also means that developers need to take into account different contexts and perspectives, as there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the “super-complex, uncertain and ambivalent world in which we practice” (p. 114).

Discussions and cooperation are required so that a holistic and inclusive approach is developed.

The key lessons from this article are as follows:

- (a) The scholarship of academic practice can build capacity of academics.
- (b) Developers need to understand and undertake the scholarship of learning and teaching themselves.
- (c) Graduate certificates can provide opportunities for academics to engage in scholarship of learning and teaching.
- (d) Individual and institutional contexts need to be taken into consideration so that a holistic and inclusive approach is developed.

Daumiller, Rinas, Olden, and Dresel (2021) studied the learning engagement and learning gains resulting from academics undertaking PD and how their own achievement goals are related to such engagement and gains. Findings demonstrated that those who began with positive motivations and goals learned well and had high learning gains; however, substantial differences in the gains were found. The research demonstrated that for those designing and deploying PD, they should not utilize the same methods for each academic and that tailored support is more effectively related to individuals' motivations.

The key lessons from this article are as follows:

- (a) The goals academics had related to their achievement in a PD program impacted the learning gains they had.
- (b) Those high on work avoidance used minimal resources in a PD program.
- (c) Those who were concerned about appearing incompetent and lacking in knowledge achieved lower learning gains.
- (d) Understanding the motivation of academics in a PD program can lead to better strategies regarding engagement and allow for more personalized options targeting their own goals and ways of learning.

The research by Evans, Yip, Chan, Armatas, and Tse (2020) examines the data from a Hong Kong university's learning management system (LMS) to examine the effectiveness of a PD course as to how teachers' behavior in an online environment changed and how the skills they learned during the PD were applied when teaching. The research highlights the significant increase in teacher's activity in the LMS during a delivery period including the use of a larger number of tools, particularly those that encouraged and facilitated collaboration. The delivery of the PD course in a blended mode demonstrated positive effects on teacher's future practice in blended modes of teaching.

The key lessons from this article are as follows:

- (a) Delivering PD in the same mode as the proposed teaching will take place provided a more authentic experience which allowed staff to "put themselves in their students shoes."

- (b) Those who learned in a blended and online mode therefore used more tools and features of the LMS than they had previously done before the PD.

Gregory and Salmon (2013) consider the experiences of an Australian university in designing and delivering an approach to PD for online teaching that could be done at pace and was scalable and also addressed the key skills for teaching online rather than just technical ability or expertise. The researchers utilized a model of online PD delivery which was iterative across cycles within the teaching and learning context. Key principles for the success of the model included the use of a number of intervention cycles ensuring continuous improvement; addressing the institutions' environment and requirements, the commitment to ensuring leadership and mentoring as an ongoing activity; and engaging wider academic cohort participation through encouragement by their colleagues.

The key lessons from this article are as follows:

- (a) Having a committed and passionate leadership of PD is essential.
- (b) Having distributed and cascaded leadership and mentorship across the university assisted sustainability long terms.
- (c) Having academic staff be "champions" to encourage wider participation worked effectively.
- (d) Pace and scale can be achieved with the appropriate mechanisms, design, and support.

It is so interesting to go back and read Jamieson (2004) again. He talks about some of the challenges of teaching online in 2004 and the need to build the capacity of an academic workforce that had no experience of either learning or teaching online before. The challenge was even greater as the majority of academics teaching didn't have a teaching qualification nor pedagogical knowledge. An experienced teacher was just someone who taught for many years.

In this work, Jamieson looks at the design and delivery of academic development for a large cohort of teachers at one of Australia's largest universities in an online mode. This research was designed to test an experiential approach to building staff capability in online teaching. Most participants had a first-hand experience in teaching in flexible modes, and the approach was designed to build understanding of and empathy for their online student cohorts by embedding capability development into workplace practice. That is "learning" while on the job. The results were that academics were more engaged and connected to their students' expectations through this method and that it influenced positively their approach to their teaching practice in flexible environments.

As an attempt to bridge this gap in his university (Monash at the time), a Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (GCHE) was developed. In the paper, Jamieson talks about the structure of the program and the units' mode of delivery. The author ran a little evaluation after the first unit was offered to participants. Responses were a mix of positive and not so positive insights into their experiences, as some academics were still reluctant to teach and/or adopt online learning.

The key lessons from this article are as follows:

- (a) Context and current capability are important when considering the best approach and design for PD.
- (b) For experienced practitioners, embedding capability building into current practice and the live teaching experiences promoted engagement.

The research by Macdonald and Poniatowska (2011) has positioned the importance of embedding PD (PD) in a way that is meaningful to ensure engagement by university staff who are a part of connected but diverse community with multiple types of roles within one institution. The design of the PD to be aligned to roles which then directed staff to learning tools was an approach that was successful with staff and provided a more curated and relevant PD learning experience. Utilizing both self-study and cohort opportunities also allowed further personalization with those in a cohort finding the value of such a community important although more opportunities to connect through a wider community of learners in different contexts/roles was desired.

The key lessons from this article are as follows:

- (a) PD was needed to cover staff from a wide variety of teaching roles.
- (b) Having a learner experience that was more personalized was important.
- (c) Learning individually was important but also the need to ensure opportunities for people to connect to others (individuals and groups) wanted and valued.

Whereas Salmon (2004) presents the five-step model for developing online instructors, the model is mostly focused on teaching using LMS/VLE and has two dimensions to it, with a combination of interaction and learning. One dimension develops the instructor's teaching skills, while the other provides the appropriate technological skills necessary to match these with the teaching skills and, hence, accomplish each step of the model. The five steps are "access and motivation, online socialisation, information giving and receiving, knowledge construction, and development" (p. 63).

The key lessons for this chapter are as follows:

- (a) Identify e-moderators' key competencies, so that training and development of these moderators can be planned.
- (b) Train e-moderators online instead of face-to-face, so that they experience what students will experience.
- (c) Use materials and software that can be reused, improved, and expanded to enable economy of scales.
- (d) Run evaluations of trainings.

van der Sluis, Burden, and Huet (2017) examine the impact of professional recognition programs, in particular the one offered by Advance HE in the UK, which uses the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) as a standard by



which teaching and professional staff can gain recognition for their teaching practice. Many universities in the UK and abroad can be accredited to offer an in-house version of such scheme. In this paper, the authors provide a case study of one such institutional recognition scheme and discuss the impact it is having on practice and on practitioners. Their findings suggest that participation in recognition schemes increases engagement with the scholarship of learning and teaching and provides participants opportunities for staff development and reflection on practice, as a result reinforcing commitment to teaching and/or supporting learning.

The key lessons from this article are as follows:

- (a) Participation in recognition schemes increase engagement with the scholarship of learning and teaching.
- (b) The process helps practitioners to reflect on their current and future practice.
- (c) Receiving the fellowship provides participants a sense of reward and achievement.

The seminal work on academic PD by Webb (1996) explores theoretical foundations of staff development and argues that staff development is underpinned by the perspective offered by hermeneutics. This is due to the nature of staff development being about understanding, supporting, and helping others to improve their practice. He states that this perspective “places human relationships centre-stage” (p. 65). This stance has a direct impact on how staff development is planned and designed. Webb argues that such PD should be transformative, encourage critical reflection, instead of being merely practical, where teachers just learn how to use a particular tool or technique.

In addition to suggesting theoretical and philosophical stances for staff development, Webb also recommends in his book that action research was the most influential and the fastest-growing orientation toward staff development at the time. This was due to the fact that it has a focus on action and change for improvement.

The book also discusses the role of educational developers, as experts and supporting/counseling figures as they help their colleagues becoming better practitioners. Webb suggests that developers also need to be developed and have a supportive and collegial network which they can rely on, such as “critical colleagues” or “critical friends.” They may offer support in various ways, three of which may be described as restorative, normative, and developmental.

The key lessons from this book are as follows:

- (a) Staff development is underpinned by the hermeneutic theoretical perspective.
- (b) Staff development activities should be designed with this perspective in mind to encourage critical reflection and change in practice.
- (c) Action research could help practitioners and developers to achieve change and improvement.

- (d) Developers need to work closely with colleagues to help them to become better practitioners.
- (e) Developers also need to be developed.

Webb (2003) further suggests ten key points for quality teaching, including in distance education, that should be considered when developing academic staff. He believes that these points might assist in enhancing students' learning experiences. They are:

- Building relationships between staff and students
- Modeling scholarly values
- Encouraging cooperation
- Encouraging active learning
- Providing appropriate teaching through different teaching approaches to meet different learning objectives
- Providing appropriate assessment
- Providing prompt and helpful feedback
- Encouraging productive use of time
- Communicating high expectations
- Respecting diversity in the background and experience of students (p. 90)

However, before starting planning any academic development activities, there are a few elements that should be taken into consideration within the institution, such as institutional context and appropriate educational policies and strategies for learning and teaching.

The following cases demonstrate the practice and theory in action.

## The Cases

### Case 1: OU UK – *Applaud*

The first case from the Open University, UK, details an approach to staff PD that is aligned with a national scheme that recognizes teaching experiences at several levels of maturity from early career through to expert. As a scheme, it provides a framework of competencies that supports academics in reflecting on their practice and evidencing impact. As a form of PD, this is very attractive to academics as they are incentivized by certification that is benchmarked globally.

### Setting the Stage

PD has been recognized for decades as key to effective organizational change and to improving student learning and experience. This is even more the case today as the need to upskill and build capacity in online learning across the higher education sector has increased. In addition, and particularly in the UK, increasingly universities and professional accrediting bodies (e.g., in nursing) have adopted professional recognition such as the HEA Fellowship as one of the strategies to offer PD and

recognition to staff in teaching and learning support roles. This is also the case for The Open University, which is the largest university and online learning provider in the UK and is internationally known for its excellence in learning and teaching.

*Applaud* is The Open University's institutional scheme for Accrediting and Promoting Professional Learning and Academic Development. In line with the OU distance learning approaches, *Applaud* is a fully online scheme and has been developed to provide PD and recognition of teaching excellence to its teaching and learning support staff. *Applaud* offers individuals the opportunity to gain external recognition as an associate fellow, fellow, or senior fellow of the Higher Education Academy. The fellowship category will depend on an applicant's role, experience, and responsibilities in teaching and supporting learning.

### Challenge

Schemes like *Applaud* are accredited by Advance HE (previously known as HEA) every 4 years. The first *Applaud*-accredited period was from 2016 and ended on August 31, 2020. During this time, the scheme supported over 543 applicants for HEA recognition. Although it has been generally successful, based on participant feedback during evaluation of the scheme, the fluid way that the scheme was running was inefficient and resource-intensive. Candidates could register for the scheme at any time of the year and change their submission deadline basically as often and for as long as they wanted, and this meant that it was unsustainable as the number of candidates applying steadily increased, but completion rates remained stable at around only 20–30% in any given year. One of the key reasons for this increase in registration numbers was a policy change in the UK requiring universities to report their number of HEA Fellowships in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) (van der Sluis et al. 2017). As a result, OU faculties have more aggressively encouraged their staff to get HEA recognition by applying for *Applaud*. In addition, Fellowship of the HEA has progressively become a requirement in job advertisements and renewal of teaching contracts in the UK higher education sector.

### Solution

As the *Applaud* team prepared for the reaccreditation of the scheme in 2019, the *Applaud* team saw an opportunity to make the changes needed to create a scheme that provided better support to candidates, had stronger connections with the faculties and related units, and was less resource-intensive.

Some of the main changes adopted were the following:

- *Applaud* now uses a cohort system with 60 candidates per year accompanied by 3 workshops per cohort and a set timeframe for registration and submission of the fellowship application.
- A Triage Page was added to the *Applaud* website to guide and assist candidates to choose the right fellowship category for them. Candidates are asked to complete the Triage Page before registering.

- The development and implementation of a dedicated software that links all elements of the *Applaud* process from registration to submissions and panel decisions to cope with the increased demand and improve efficiency.
- The *Applaud* Quality Steering Group was created. It has representatives from all faculties and key units. They meet twice a year to discuss and oversee *Applaud* high-level strategies.

Two main activities supported the core changes in the scheme. One was an evaluation of the previous scheme through an online survey that was sent to over 450 participants who successfully gained their HEA Fellowship through *Applaud*, with 108 valid responses ( $n = 108$ ). Despite the challenges presented, the scheme has been somehow successful. Survey responses indicated that the scheme has had a positive impact on participants' practices (81%), as 72% of them were more confident in their role as teachers/supporters of learning and 66% felt more confidence to undertake scholarship of learning and teaching. We then presented the findings of this survey and the proposed changes in the scheme to key *Applaud* stakeholders across the University during a workshop. The event enabled key stakeholders to discuss and provide feedback on the proposed changes. This workshop was important as it acted to strengthen *Applaud* connections and get buy-in across the University.

## Results

The newly accredited *Applaud* scheme started on September 1, 2020 (accredited period 2020–2024). At the time of writing, two cohorts have completed the new scheme (approximately 98 candidates). Asking candidates to self-assess through the Triage process before registering has helped them to select the right fellowship category for their evidence of practice, and, as a result, only six candidates have needed to change categories. The move to a cohort structure has also proven to be the right strategy. The workshops provided to each cohort have been well attended (60–80% attendance), and most candidates have felt more supported. As a result, completion rates have increased to between 70% and 80% a year. More support to candidates has also meant that the quality of submissions has improved, based on the reviewers' feedback. Each candidate is supported by an individual trained mentor.

In total, *Applaud* manages over 115 mentors. Feedback from mentors has also been mostly positive. The cohort structure means that they can choose a particular time of the year that they are available to mentor *Applaud* candidates, helping them to better manage their workloads, instead of the previous ad hoc approach. The dedicated software system has taken longer than expected to be developed, but Cohort 2 submissions and panel review have taken place electronically saving time and effort and increasing accuracy in data handling. So far, the results of the changes implemented in the *Applaud* scheme have been beneficial to most stakeholders, including candidates, mentors, reviewers, and the *Applaud* team. However, an evaluation of the new scheme is being developed to fully capture participants' perceptions and experiences with the scheme. Hopefully, the reaccredited scheme will continue having a positive impact on participants' practices as the previous.

Whether or not student learning outcomes have been improved will require further investigation. Ultimately, the main reason for such a program is to improve the student experience and their learning outcomes.

## **Case 2: RMIT**

Case 2 has a focus on the response to COVID-19 and details the quality approach taken to an end-to-end experience for students and in supporting staff in their PD journey. The imperative here was to provide PD as a “just-in-time” solution in addressing the issue that most of the staff did not have any previous expertise in online learning.

### **Setting the Stage**

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) is a large dual-sector university in Melbourne, Australia, with a student population of approximately 93,000 based in Australia as well as in other global locations. RMIT is primarily a campus-based university operating in Melbourne, Singapore, and Vietnam. Although RMIT has a subsidiary called RMIT Online, this represents about 10% of the total student cohort.

### **Challenge**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the students impacted by the initial wave of international travel bans, RMIT identified 300 courses across its suite of programs that could be offered via remote delivery to students in impacted countries where students were unable to travel to Australia to commence or continue their studying. With the escalation of the situation in Melbourne and the implementation of staged restrictions related to group gathering sizes and the need for physical distancing, RMIT Melbourne ceased face-to-face lectures in March 2020, and face-to-face tutorials/practicals were moved to online/remote delivery for all courses (3000 approx.). While there were some on-campus activities and assessment during 2020 when restrictions allowed, the majority of the learning took place online for the entire academic year.

### **Solution**

In response to the longer-term requirements, RMIT responded by ensuring standards related to online/remote learning were developed and implemented to ensure a consistent RMIT-wide approach. This was augmented with a quality management semester end-to-end and process-related, to ensure the attainment of student learning outcomes, holistic student support, and staff capability development.

Prior to 2020, RMIT did not have a large-scale expertise across its workforce in the delivery of online or remote learning, and, therefore, there needed to be a direct and clear strategy to support thousands of academics and teachers in transition to a changed mode of paced delivery. Also, the PD also had to be delivered online and have several approaches to be able to accommodate different staff capabilities and mindsets. Also, it needed to support an initial and immediate need as well as having an ongoing approach as a teaching semester progressed.

RMIT therefore utilized a multifaceted approach of:

- Initial online sessions targeting key elements of online learning centered around the RMIT online teaching guidelines designed to support staff in the pre-semester preparatory period and in the first few weeks as they transitioned the design of their course and the mode of delivery
- An ongoing opportunity to engage with the workshops throughout the semester around key areas that may continue to be challenging to their teaching practice
- A just-in-time online live chat function to get immediate support for an individual and support discrete issues that staff might be experiencing or wanted to seek advice on

Around 40% of staff attended PD sessions; over 50% of these were during the first week of teaching with a further 16% attending in week 2, while the remainder of the semester attendance held steady between 2% and 4% of staff. A total of 153 professional capability sessions were run across a 12-week period.

24/7 live chat sessions were held with a high volume of chat in the second and third week of semester as staff progressed from the workshop sessions to more targeted support. Chat dropped in week 4 before stabilizing for the rest of the period. Technical support for tools and the University Learning Management System (LMS) was where most support was most sought.

## Results

In order to determine impact and the success of the approach, staff satisfaction data were collated resulting in a 95% satisfaction rating, as well as the validation of the success of the implementation of the online learning guidelines which the PD supported. This had mixed results, with some key areas such as the design and delivery of assessment in an online environment challenging academics and teachers which was unsurprising due to the large practical nature of RMIT's curriculum and the teaching of vocational educational competencies. Elements of improvement were also identified as required in the provision and type of learning resources. Further data related to student engagement with the learning management system (LMS) was also used to further clarify the outcomes and the potential future strategy of online/blended learning and the PD support that would underpin such a strategy.

The immediate necessity of such PD and the significant staff engagement with these opportunities demonstrated that the approach taken, by providing both depth and breadth in support, as well as scheduled and just-in-time PD was appropriate in the circumstances that presented themselves.

The learnings from this period have significantly changed the environment of RMIT with an appetite and a subsequent strategy to continue the digital uplift of programs and courses utilizing the best of both a physical and digital environment to inspire and deliver flexible and meaningful learning experiences and successful student outcomes. With an enterprise-wide focus, this has also meant the professional learning capabilities and opportunities have been strengthened with a modularized set of blended learning sessions developed that are self-paced, adaptable, and aligned to the pedagogical approach being embedded into curricula, thus creating a

more holistic professional learning framework to support future aspirations and strategic directions.

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## Conclusion

At this point in the chapter comes the difficulty of drawing out key themes and recommendations for the reader. What can we learn, for example, from the intersection of the theory in the annotated readings and the practice found in the cases? Lessons learned for each article are provided for rich reading.

There is no doubt that there is a complexity when it comes to supporting academic staff in their ongoing PD as teachers and pedagogues.

No discussion about staff development is separated from the topic of quality. Waring (2019) goes as far to say that “staff development is a prerequisite for quality” (p. 363). In Australia, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) has an expectation that academic staff both are qualified and have currency to fulfill their role as educators and researchers. We note the Quality Code for Higher Education, UK, echoes similarly. No doubt this requirement can be found among quality codes the globe over. As the responsibilities of staff shift in complex higher education environments because of both external and internal drivers, staff capabilities also change to meet new demands. And it was evident during COVID-19 as many universities moved into remote and online teaching that new skills were required. For the learning outcomes of our student cohorts to not be affected negatively, academic staff needed to upskill and develop a deeper appreciation for the pedagogies of online learning quickly.

Jung and Latchem (2008) observe there are key competencies associated with quality online learning to deliver coherent courses and programs. It goes without saying that for learners to “learn,” the experience needs to be well planned and designed. The online environment has unique challenges that require a deep understanding of how students learn in this mode. Furthermore, what we may refer to as “the nuts and bolts” such as the technology platforms and standards associated with these add an additional complicating factor. Teachers are required to wrestle with a range of variables such as their organization policy, pedagogy, ICT, administration, student support, and assessment.

As more universities shift into blended and online modalities, workload is another key consideration. As educators balance teaching, research, and often significant administrative and engagement responsibilities, the time required to prepare holistic responses to online learning is certainly squeezed. During COVID-19, one of the main complaints from staff was the increase in workload as courses went online. A quick search reveals numerous examples of staff stress and overload resulting in impacts to their research. Staff have indicated that working from home has also meant a collision between personal and professional lives, and for women, the impacts of this on their academic career are yet to be fully understood. In a work by Ryan, Tynan, and Lamnot-Mills (2014) state that in blended and online environments that there is a lack of acknowledgment of how much effort is required to teach

well and that workload models rarely detail the specific workload required for this activity.

The two cases are very different. They tackle PD of staff as a response to both longer-term strategic directions and the immediacy of a crisis to enhance quality education outcomes. The readings provide further cases of practice, and the authors hope that readers find them instructive. As Brew (2010) highlights, there is no fixed approach or one solution that can be applied globally to PD in an institution. However, here we provide a few recommendations that have arisen from the literature and cases as detailed above.

We recommend that:

- Academic PD is framed by the context where it is situated (Brew, 2010; Evans et al., 2020; Jamieson, 2004; Macdonald & Poniatowska, 2011; Salmon, 2004; Webb, 1996, 2003).
- Strategic directions, policies, and guidelines of universities play an important role in determining the capabilities and competencies that are required of its academic staff (Brew, 2010; Jamieson, 2004; Jung & Latchem, 2008; Ryan et al., 2019; Wareng, 2019; Webb, 2003).
- Quality should be at the heart of “why” academic PD is supported and championed (Brew, 2010; Jung & Latchem, 2008).
- PD should be supported within the workload allocations and prioritized against the university’s strategy (Jamieson, 2004; Ryan et al., 2019).
- Incentivizing PD through recognition schemes, certification, promotion, etc. should be considered (van der Sluis et al., 2017).
- Providing opportunities for academic staff to reflect deeply and to immerse themselves with peers in professional conversations where they can be reflexive is important for long-term engagement and impact (Brew, 2010; Evans et al., 2020; Gregory, & Salmon, 2013; Jamieson, 2004; Macdonald & Poniatowska, 2011; Salmon, 2004; van der Sluis et al., 2017; Webb, 1996, 2003).
- Allowing staff to personalize their PD and select appropriate modes of learning from and with cohorts to individualize self-paced opportunities ensures that personal learning styles are accommodated improving the chances of positive engagement (Evans et al., 2020; Gregory, & Salmon, 2013; Jamieson, 2004; Janet Macdonald & Barbara Poniatowska, 2011; Salmon, 2004; Webb, 1996, 2003).
- Just-in-time PD for academics is a powerful driver of participation (Brew, 2010; Jamieson, 2004; Macdonald & Poniatowska, 2011).

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