

## **Peer partnerships in teaching: Evaluation of a voluntary model of professional development in tertiary education**

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*Abstract: This paper describes work over a three-year period to develop a peer partnership approach to professional development at a dual sector university. The aim of the program, arising initially in one school and then piloted in 5 schools, was to support staff in their teaching practice. Emphasis was on the development of a sustainable model of professional development that could accommodate staff at all levels of teaching experience, including permanent and sessional staff in Higher Education and TAFE. Based on evidence from a university-wide survey of staff attitudes and feedback from initial trials, a five-stage model of voluntary, cross-disciplinary partnerships was developed. Quantitative results suggest the program had impact on pedagogy and skill development as well as enhancing collegial relationships between staff within schools. Suggestions for the future development of such programs are offered.*

*Keywords: reflective practice; professional development; peer review; peer feedback; staff*

The challenges that lie ahead for universities to deliver and continuously improve the quality of learning and teaching are complex and varied. Core to these challenges is the need to provide meaningful continuing professional development (CPD) for the academic workforce. Collaborative peer review, designed to document, critique and improve teaching offers a sustainable approach to CPD that builds collegial relationships and enhances educational capital (Hutchings, 1994).

### **I. Background.**

Peer review of teaching refers to a process of pairing academics who observe aspects of teaching. The review can focus on face-to-face classes, course material or assessment (Barnard, Croft, Irons, Cuffe, Bandara, & Rowntree, 2011), as well as any element of blended or online learning (Wood & Friedel, 2008), such as viewing lecture podcasts, observing management of discussion boards or reviewing elements of online assessment and feedback processes. Partners share their reflections and collaboratively discuss ideas for improvement. It is this collegial sharing of ideas, insights, and techniques that provide both parties with a unique and rich opportunity to enhance the quality of their teaching (Bell, 2001).

Two broad categories of research on peer review of teaching exist. The first includes surveys of staff attitudes prior to participation in peer review. Early work by Britt (1982) and later Keig (2000), and more recently by Barnard et al. (2011) reveals similar themes. Staff typically express positive attitudes towards peer review which predict willingness to engage in

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such programs. Perceived disadvantages of peer review, including the time investment required and feelings of vulnerability, while noted, are not generally strongly endorsed.

The second, larger group of studies evaluates the impact of peer review on participants. Many studies support the value of peer review (e.g., Barnard et al., 2011; Beaty, 1998; Bell, 2011; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Brown, 1993; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Kell & Annetts, 2009; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; McMahon, Barrett, & O'Neill, 2007; Martin & Double, 1998; Slade, 2002; Shortland, 2004). These studies are generally qualitative in nature and are often based on small pilot programs or case studies.

As McMahon et al. (2011) note, the programs described in these studies vary in the nature of the observations, level of control of the process by participants and how the outcomes are used. Some studies describe peer review that has been incorporated into formal and existing professional development processes, such as a Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching program (e.g., Bell, 2001; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Donnelly, 2007), while others are offered as voluntary communities of practice (e.g., Barnard et al., 2011). Some studies have evaluated the use of peer review within the institution's appraisal process (e.g., Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004), while other programs focus on peer partnerships for the individual's own use and professional development (e.g., Donnelly, 2007; Kell & Annetts, 2009). In some studies observers are experienced academics selected by participants (e.g., Bell & Mladenovic, 2008) or educational developers (e.g., Bell, 2001). In other studies observers are genuine peers. In these latter programs, partnerships are typically reciprocal, with both members acting as observer and observed (e.g., Donnelly, 2007). In some studies, training is an embedded part of the process (e.g., Barnard, 2011; Donnell, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005); although, it is not always apparent whether training is a mandatory component of participation. In others, training is either not provided or not described (e.g., Bell, 2001; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Shortland, 2004).

Positive outcomes of peer review reported in these studies include the development of new ideas and skills, improvements to and increased confidence in teaching practices, and enhanced collegiality (Barnard et al., 2011; Bell, 2001; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005). Concerns and reservations raised by participants include apprehension at the start of the process and negative reports of the time investment required (Bell, 2001), as well as concerns about the confidentiality of the process and difficulties giving and receiving negative feedback (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004).

In general, studies evaluating the impact of peer review programs are qualitative. As Bell (2002, p.8) notes, "it is difficult...to find quantitative evidence of the effectiveness of peer observation of teaching because of the nature and context of the practice."

#### *A. Peer Partnerships in Teaching: Core Characteristics.*

Drawing on the work of the successful peer review programs cited above, we developed and piloted a model in the School of Health Sciences in 2009-2010. Work by Kell and Annetts (2009) has suggested that the term "review" is perceived to be associated with a judgemental, summative, audit approach, and perceived to signal a lack of power by the observed. We wanted to avoid such connotations and so actively sought a name that would underscore the collegial and reciprocal nature of the program. We called our model *Peer Partnerships in Teaching*.

Peer Partnerships in Teaching (PPiT) has six core, defining features. First, participation is *voluntary*. Although critics might argue that those who volunteer for peer partnerships are the

ones least in need of support, our approach has been to work with those most engaged and use their energy, experiences and example to encourage those who might be more hesitant. Further, evidence suggests that mandatory approaches can lead to superficial engagement (McMahon et al., 2007).

The second feature of the model is that it is *cross-disciplinary*. Although many existing programs pair staff from within the same discipline area and anecdotal evidence suggests that staff often imagine that only those who teach similar content will be able to understand their particular experience, we have maintained a cross-disciplinary focus for two reasons. It encourages a focus on process and underlying pedagogy, rather than on the content of the class. Removing content-expertise, participants are forced to focus on the learning and teaching experience, examine the processes being used and question the underlying pedagogy. In addition, by pairing staff across disciplines, outside existing power relationships we also hoped to reduce perceived vulnerability and threat. Cross-disciplinary partnerships build collegial networks beyond one's discipline and can help provide supportive relationships outside the politics of one's everyday work group.

Third, the process is *reciprocal*, meaning that each PPiT member is both observer and observed in a partnership. Unlike other models that use expert reviewers (e.g. Bell, 2001) or approaches that encourage emerging academics to observe their more experienced colleagues (e.g., Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2007), PPiT was designed to be a genuinely collegial exchange. Despite potential differences in teaching experience, confidence and age, each member of the program is regarded as having the potential to contribute meaningfully to the process. This is consistent with research suggesting participants in such programs learn as much from observing as from being observed (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004).

The fourth feature of the PPiT program is the embedded, mandatory nature of *training*. No staff member can engage in the program without attending training. The compulsory nature of training, which takes place in a two to three-hour workshop (depending on group size), ensures a shared understanding of the principles underpinning the program. Training also provides an opportunity to prepare staff for some of the more challenging aspects of the peer partnership experience including giving and receiving feedback. Previous research has noted staff reservations about receiving criticism (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004) and anecdotal evidence suggested staff felt concerned about their own capacity to give effective feedback to a peer. As a result the PPiT training has a substantial, experiential component devoted to the process of giving and receiving feedback. The mandatory training is designed to instil confidence that all participants have appropriate skills for the program. Also incorporated into the training is the initial meeting between partners. Staff negotiate the focus for the partnership at this meeting.

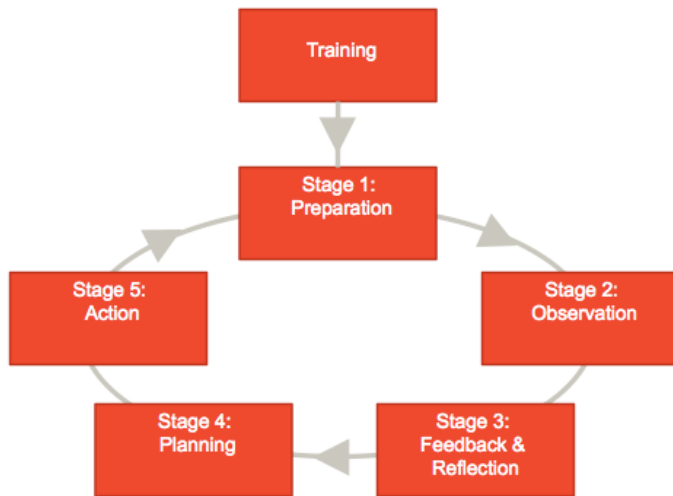
The fifth characteristic of the formative approach to PPiT is the *individually determined focus* of the partnership. Based on their own needs and the expertise of their partner, staff may negotiate to focus on an element of their face-to-face teaching, aspects of online teaching, viewing podcasts, review of assessment and feedback processes, or observation of course and program guides. Participants are encouraged to negotiate their own focus, bearing in mind the particular features of their teaching that semester and the specific skills and experiences of their partner. Staff are encouraged to refine a focus that is specific rather than broad, so that partners can provide clear and meaningful feedback.

The sixth and final feature of the model is *confidentiality*. Partnerships are established for the benefit of the two people involved and no formal reports have thus far been required for auditing or other purposes. Partners are encouraged to use the outcomes of their experience to support applications for promotion and teaching awards as evidence of their reflective practice, but are advised that the information obtained during the partnership is owned by the participant.

The characteristics of the model are consistent with the evidence-based recommendations developed by McMahon et al. (2007) that peer review participants have control over elements of the process, including participation, the focus of the observation, the resultant data-flow and next steps.

*B. Peer Partnerships in Teaching: A 5-stage Model.*

With these six characteristics as a framework, a five-stage model was developed (Figure 1). The model, using an action-research, reflective approach was based on the work of Maureen Bell (2005), who has been leading peer review of teaching at the University of Wollongong for more than 10 years. Stage One is the *Preparation* stage, which includes training. Pairing and briefing of partners takes place within this stage. Stage Two is where the *Observation* itself takes place. The third stage, *Feedback and Reflection*, includes the provision of both written and face-to-face feedback. A one-page PPiT template was developed to support the feedback process and help staff document change. We encourage all partnerships to engage in feedback over lunch and have provided a small financial reimbursement to underscore the importance of this stage in the process.



**Figure 1. Five-stage peer partnership model.**

The action research nature of peer partnerships is emphasised in many models of peer partnerships (Barnard et al., 2011). It is incorporated into the PPiT model in a fourth stage, *Planning*. Here the participant is encouraged to contemplate the changes to be made either within the current semester or subsequently and to make plans to enact those changes. The final stage, *Action*, emphasises the importance of behavioural change resulting from the partnerships and staff are invited to collect data on the effectiveness of the changes implemented.

The PPiT model has been highly successful in the School of Health Sciences, with more than half the permanent staff and a small number of sessional staff now trained and engaging in the process. Qualitative evaluation of the program and anecdotal data has suggested positive

outcomes consistent with the existing literature including the development of new skills and ideas, increased teaching self-efficacy and the development of collegial relationships across the school. On the strength of these outcomes a project was established to trial PPIt across the university. A reference group, set up to guide the development of the pilot, consisted of Deputy Heads, Learning and Teaching representing four schools, senior advisors in learning and teaching, and a staff member from the Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching and Learning.

A survey of staff attitudes at the start of the year confirmed the perceived acceptability of a peer review program and the core features of the model. The only feature not confirmed was cross-disciplinary partnerships. Academic colleagues in the same discipline area were perceived to be more appropriate as review partners than either another academic outside the discipline area or an educational developer. Despite this preference prior to participation, the reference group decided to retain and evaluate the cross-disciplinary element given the strong rationale for it and the success of the model in the School of Health Sciences. PPIt was implemented in 5 schools representing the 3 Colleges of the university. Schools in both the Higher Education and Tertiary and Further Education (TAFE) sectors were included in the pilot.

### *C. Research Question.*

The aim of PPIt was to engage academic staff in cross-disciplinary peer partnerships to enhance reflective practice about teaching and ultimately improve teaching quality. The aim of the current research was to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of PPIt during the pilot implementation phase with a view to refining the model for university-wide implementation. In particular the study aimed to evaluate PPIt with attention to the focus of PPIt chosen by participants, its perceived benefits, perceptions of workload and vulnerability and confidence in self and partner.

## **II. Method.**

### *A. Participants.*

Participants were 35 academic staff (19 females and 16 males) who volunteered for the pilot program. Of these, 30 were permanent staff and 5 sessional, 30 were from Higher Education and 5 were TAFE teachers. The five pilot schools (Health Sciences; Fashion and Design; Business TAFE; Global Studies, Social Science and Planning; and Computer Science and Information Technology) were selected for the program on the basis of two criteria: (i) positive attitudes towards participation identified in a university-wide staff survey and (ii) strong support from the Head of School. Due to the dual-sector nature of the university, schools representing both HE and TAFE were purposively included in the sample, as were schools with a high proportion of sessional staff. The study was advertised to staff in participating schools via email. Of the 35 staff who were trained in PPIt, 18 completed the PPIt evaluation survey and three staff participated in the focus group. In order to protect the confidentiality of the staff who responded to the evaluation survey and focus group, demographic details were not recorded.

### *B. Measures.*

An evaluation survey (Appendix 1) was designed to gather quantitative feedback on the experience of engaging in PPIt. The survey included 16 questions covering the following

aspects of the program: the focus of PPIt; the perceived value of PPIt; the impact of PPIt on workload and perceptions of vulnerability; issues of trust and control; and questions about the use and usefulness of the training and template. A global evaluation of the program was assessed by the questions “I would recommend PPIt to colleagues” and “I would participate in PPIt again”. Item responses included yes/no answers, and 5-point Likert scales. In addition, open-ended questions were included to gather information on changes made as a result of participating in PPIt, the best aspects of PPIt, areas for improvement and advice for staff contemplating participation in the program.

The focus group was designed to feedback the results of the survey to participants, triangulate the data and shape the model for university-wide implementation.

### *C. Procedure.*

Participants undertook a compulsory two to three-hour training session. Training covered an introduction to the fundamental principles of peer partnerships and an overview of the 5-stage peer partnership model. Where possible training included the opportunity to meet with partners and discuss the focus for the staff involved. A chance to discuss concerns and issues was provided. After attending the training participants completed the first section of the PPIt template and forwarded this to their partner. The PPIt observations were completed within one semester and feedback provided within the partnerships. To emphasise the importance of meeting face-to-face for the final feedback session a small amount of money was provided to each pair for lunch. Sessional staff in one school were paid for the time they committed to the pilot. At the completion of the semester the online evaluation and face-to-face focus group were conducted. The research was approved by the University Human Research Ethics Committee.

## **III. Results.**

The survey data were analysed in SPSS v.19. Due to the small sample size results presented here are largely descriptive. Where inferential statistics are included, non-parametric analyses were used.

### *A. Focus of PPIt.*

The majority of survey respondents ( $N = 15$ ) focused on an aspect of face-to-face teaching in their partnership. The remaining three participants examined an element of online teaching. Two participants focused on more than one aspect, including a review of the course guide, assessment and/or observation of online learning.

### *B. Perceived Benefits of PPIt.*

All participants rating the experience of each as “quite useful” or “very useful”. The mean score for usefulness of observing a partner was 4.5 (SD = 0.53) on a 5-point scale and for being observed, 4.6 (SD = 0.53). A Wilcoxon signed-rank test revealed no significant difference between these scores. The specific aspects of PPIt considered useful are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1. Perceived outcomes of PPIt participation**

| To what extent did participating in PPIt help you   | Mean score<br>(out of 5) | SD   | Score<br>range |
|---|--------------------------|------|----------------|
| Promote good teaching practice at the University    | 5.00                     | 0.00 | -              |
| Reflect on your teaching                            | 4.94                     | 0.32 | 4-5            |
| Increase your confidence in your teaching           | 4.80                     | 0.41 | 4-5            |
| Develop new strategies or skills                    | 4.60                     | 0.63 | 3-5            |
| Enhance relationships with your academic colleagues | 4.55                     | 1.21 | 1-5            |
| Increase your student feedback scores               | 2.53                     | 1.50 | 1-5            |
| Support an application for promotion                | 1.83                     | 1.50 | 0-5            |
| Support an application for a teaching award         | 1.56                     | 1.19 | 0-5            |

There was a high level of agreement that PPIt provided a range of benefits for the individual, including an opportunity to reflect on teaching, increase teaching self-efficacy, develop new skills and build relationships with colleagues. At a broader level there was unanimous agreement that PPIt promoted good teaching within the University. In terms of the capacity of PPIt to improve student feedback there was a mixed response. Only two staff noted they had used PPIt in a promotion application and one had used it for a teaching award.

In response to an open-ended question about the aspects of teaching that participants had changed as a result of the partnership, participants noted changes to their teaching processes including changes to specific aspects such as chunking content, focus on time management within the class and skills to better engage students. Several participants, including those in the focus group, explicitly noted the impact of PPIt beyond the course focused on in the partnership. Staff observed a proactive approach to course review, with steps taken to redevelop courses for the following year. Broad changes were noted in teaching confidence.

Respondents were asked, in an open-ended question, to reflect on the best aspects of PPIt. Staff valued the core features of PPIt, including the opportunity to reflect and the chance to build collegiality across the school. As one participant commented, there was value in “meeting with other teachers and not feeling so isolated”. The opportunity to share ideas and approaches and to do this by both inviting someone into one’s space and observing a colleague was highly valued. As one participant noted, the best aspect of PPIt was to “share what is usually a very private space, and get feedback on how this compares with others’ classrooms”. Even staff who expressed a lack of trust in their partner’s PPIt skills noted the value in “learning from observing another’s classes” and “having the space to reflect and review”. Focus group data strongly supported the value of observing others’ teaching. Other specific comments related to the value of practising feedback skills, the structure of the PPIt template and the training.

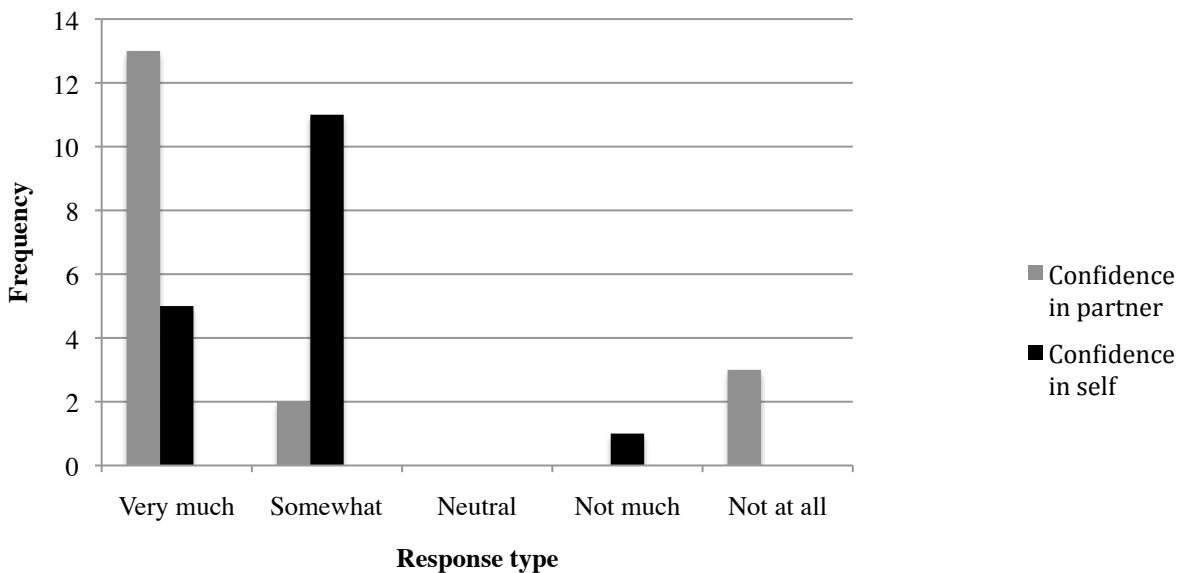
### *C. Participant Workload and Vulnerability.*

In terms of workload, PPIt was perceived to add minimal workload by 13 participants. A further 4 noted that it added “somewhat” to workload and one noted that it added “very much”. The time commitment involved in PPIt was acknowledged by two participants who added that the extra workload was worth it. As one participant added, “try to take time to do this as the benefits outweigh the inconvenience of thinking of the time taken or other things you think you could be doing”.

Participant vulnerability in response to PPIt was assessed on a 5-point scale, from “Not at all” to “Very much”. Responses to this item, suggest two broad groups of participants: those who experienced little ( $N = 5$ ) or no vulnerability ( $N = 5$ ) and a smaller group who experienced some vulnerability ( $N = 7$ ). It is of note that relatively few participants ( $N = 2$ ) experienced high levels of vulnerability. Nevertheless vulnerability was a common occurrence. As one focus group participant noted, “Having peers sitting in your lectures can be quite nerve racking. But I felt it necessary to put myself out there to improve my teaching. This was important to me.”

*D. Confidence in Self and Partner.*

When asked about their confidence in their partners’ skills to engage in the PPIt process, the majority of participants ( $N = 12$ ) answered positively, rating their partners’ skills highly, however, 3 participants disclosed a complete lack of confidence (Figure 2). Confidence in one’s own ability to provide effective feedback produced a different picture, with the largest group of participants ( $N = 11$ ) indicating moderate confidence in their own ability.



**Figure 2. Confidence in self and partner’s ability to provide useful PPIt feedback.**

The mandatory training provided at the beginning of the program was evaluated positively with a mean rating on the 5-point usefulness dimension of 4.7 (SD = 0.48). The PPIt template used by all participants was also rated highly, with a mean score of 4.5 (SD = 0.53).

In order to explore relationships between variables a correlation matrix was constructed. The strongest significant relationships were noted between confidence in one’s own reviewing skills and using PPIt to reflect on teaching ( $r = .91$ ). Relationships were noted between the use of PPIt to develop new skills and confidence both in one’s own reviewing skills ( $r = .64$ ) and those of one’s partner ( $r = .52$ ). Confidence in one’s own ability and one’s partner’s ability to engage in useful reviews were correlated ( $r = .58$ ). A correlation was also noted between using PPIt to develop new skills and using it to reflect on teaching ( $r = .70$ ). A moderate positive relationship was noted between vulnerability experienced in PPIt and using PPIt to enhance relationships with colleagues ( $r = .56$ ). Finally, significant relationships were noted between



using PPIt to support an application for promotion and to support a teaching award ( $r = .80$ ) as well as to improve student feedback ( $r = .49$ ).

Staff provided a small number of suggestions for improvements to PPIt, including the value of starting early in the semester to allow maximum time for exchange. Included in these comments was an interest in undertaking more than one observation-feedback-reflection cycle with a partner in a semester. Another participant expressed an interest in choosing a new partner each semester to continue to build skills.

In response to the global evaluations of the value of PPIt, all respondents strongly agreed that they would recommend PPIt to colleagues and engage in PPIt again in the future. This feedback was endorsed in the focus group.

When asked to provide some advice for participants contemplating PPIt, survey respondents were universally enthusiastic. This was echoed in comments such as “Do it. Especially if you are doing something new and need feedback”, and “Just do it... it’s one of the best methods to reflect and improve on your teaching”, and “It’s 100% worth it”. Survey respondents and focus group participants acknowledged the hesitations that staff may bring to the process and provided advice to get the most out of PPIt, including “embrace the process”, “participate openly”, “focus on an area of your teaching you are really interested in”, “do it properly”, “start as soon as you can”, and “be ready to be challenged”.

#### **IV. Discussion.**

This research adds to the existing literature supporting the value of peer review by examining the impact of a voluntary PPIt program. The pilot PPIt program, implemented in five schools, was evaluated positively. Perhaps the strongest endorsement for the program was the unanimous intention of participants to engage in PPIt in the future and recommend it to colleagues.

##### *A. Formative and Summative Benefits of PPIt.*

A more detailed analysis of the results suggested two groups of benefits. First were those benefits integral to the formative model – focus on reflection, development of new skills and collegial support. Congruent with previous studies, these benefits were valued highly and consistently by participants. Not surprisingly the use of PPIt to reflect on teaching and develop new skills were related, underscoring the relationship implicit in peer review programs between pedagogy and practice. In addition, development of new skills was correlated with perceived confidence in one’s partner’s skills. Although partners were typically rated highly, some were not. These results reinforce the value of the mandatory training program, suggesting that building peer review skills is a valuable investment, with impact on the potential for the program to lead to skill development. It is of note, however, that confidence in one’s partner’s observation skills was not related to perceived usefulness of the program and did not impact on willingness to engage in the program in the future. It would appear therefore that reciprocal programs provide staff with benefits beyond receiving direct feedback and are not wholly dependent on the perceived characteristics of one’s partner.

The PPIt program emphasises collegiality, pairing staff across disciplines and sectors (HE and TAFE), sometimes with partners who are not known to them. A staff survey administered to academics prior to implementation of the pilot revealed a preference for partners from the same discipline. This preference was also raised by participants in some training

sessions. The benefit of the cross-disciplinary model was explained and in all sessions staff agreed to trial it. One participant noted that this did not meet her needs and dropped out of the program. Despite some initial reservations the cross-disciplinary feature of PPIt was not criticised by participants in their evaluation, although it is possible that their evaluations of partners' PPIt skills may reflect perceptions of disciplinary difference. A more refined evaluation of this particular feature of the model, including the advantages and concerns associated with working in a cross-disciplinary way, is planned in the future.

In terms of the collegial nature of PPIt, perceptions of relationship development and vulnerability were positively correlated, suggesting perhaps that those who acknowledge vulnerability experience the greatest gains in collegial relationship development. Far from being a weakness of peer review programs, vulnerability may therefore be a valuable experience if staff can be encouraged to acknowledge these feelings as a normal part of the peer review process.

The second group of benefits were those characteristics typically associated with summative models. These included using the experience to support applications for promotion and teaching awards. These benefits were not considered applicable for the majority of participants, which may simply indicate that few participants were planning to apply for either promotion or a teaching award in the coming year. However, it is also important to note that PPIt was not embedded in promotion and award criteria, so even staff applying may not have been clear whether or how to use their PPIt experience as evidence. Building PPIt into existing structures within the university, including CPD, promotion criteria and workplanning is an important future task.

In comparing these two groups of benefits it appears that staff are more motivated to engage in PPIt for formative rather than summative rewards. This may explain the perceived lack of impact of PPIt on student feedback scores. Within a context in which student feedback is highly valued by universities, it is interesting that staff did not perceive PPIt to impact on this aspect. It may be that staff see student evaluations conducted by the university as a summative aspect of PPIt or it could be that the changes to teaching as a result of PPIt are generally not implemented in that semester, so impact on the current cohort of students was perceived to be minimal. Further research is warranted into the specific impact of peer review programs on teaching practice and the influence of such programs on student engagement.

Despite the perceived acceptability of peer review of course materials and assessment tasks (Barnard et al., 2011) and an emphasis in the training that moved beyond the traditional focus on face-to-face observation, it is of note that the majority of staff in the current evaluation chose an element of their face-to-face teaching for their peer partnership. Anecdotal evidence suggested a clear preference for face-to-face observation, with other alternatives typically chosen only if partners could not attend class, due, for example, to a timetable clash. This focus may reflect the lack of feedback staff typically receive on their face-to-face teaching. In contrast course and assessment materials is often reviewed in teaching teams. In addition, the preference may indicate the value staff place on the face-to-face interactions they have with their students and their desire to maximize potential here. In the School of Health Sciences, we have noted that this focus on face-to-face observation has continued over time, however, as staff have received feedback on their classroom teaching some experimentation has increased, with focus on other aspects of teaching.

### *B. Limitations of the Pilot Study.*

The results of this evaluation should be read in light of the limitations of the study. In common with several other evaluations of peer review programs, this study was characterised by a low sample size. In addition, the survey was completed by slightly more than half the 35 staff who trained in PPIt. The positive attitudes reported here are consistent with most other research in this area, however, it is possible that those staff who did not complete the survey had different perspectives of the program. Finding ways to engage these staff in future evaluations will be important. Embedding leadership for the program within the school may lead to enhanced participation in the evaluation process.

### *C. Future Directions.*

Results of the survey and focus group evaluation of a voluntary peer review program add to a consistent picture that supports the value of such programs for participants, underscoring their potential to provide sustainable professional development. The results presented here suggest the program was highly regarded, with impact on pedagogy and skill as well as on the enhancement of supportive, collegial relationships. The next key step in the development of the program will be to develop a sustainable model, locating leadership for the program in communities of practice within schools. In order to be successfully implemented in the long term, PPIt needs to be embedded into university structures, including the workplan process, where the time commitment (estimated to be 10-12 hours) can be appropriately acknowledged. Integrating PPIt as a form of evidence in the promotion and teaching award criteria is also likely to be important. Work already done in the area includes the peer review handbook developed by Harris, Farrell, Bell, Devlin, & James (2008) and the report by Crisp et al. (2009) on implementing peer review for promotion purposes.

Core decisions for the future will surround the voluntary nature of the program and questions around the control of information produced by the partners (McMahon et al. 2007). It is of note that the pilot described here had support from Heads of School, who provided funding for the debriefing lunch and support for sessional staff to engage in the program. The ongoing success of the voluntary program will be dependent on strong support from the university and will rely on ongoing local level support, through embedded leadership. In this way, peer review programs can provide sustainable CPD in ways that build collegial relationships and enhance educational capital.

### **Acknowledgements**

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1. Peer Partnerships in Teaching Evaluation.

We are interested to hear about your experiences of Peer Partnerships in Teaching (PPiT) last semester. There are many different forms that PPiT can take and some of the following statements may not apply to you

- Thinking back over your experiences of PPiT last semester, how useful did you find it to have a peer observe the following aspects of your teaching:

|                                   | Not at all useful | Not very useful | Neutral | Quite useful | Very useful | Does not apply |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| Face-to-face teaching             | 1                 | 2               | 3       | 4            | 5           | N/A            |
| Online teaching material          | 1                 | 2               | 3       | 4            | 5           | N/A            |
| Podcasts                          | 1                 | 2               | 3       | 4            | 5           | N/A            |
| Course or program guide           | 1                 | 2               | 3       | 4            | 5           | N/A            |
| Assessment and feedback processes | 1                 | 2               | 3       | 4            | 5           | N/A            |

- How useful did you find it to observe your partner?
 

|  | Not at all useful | Not very useful | Neutral | Quite useful | Very useful |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|---------|--------------|-------------|
|  | 1                 | 2               | 3       | 4            | 5           |

- To what extent did engaging in PPiT help you in the following areas:

|   | Not at all | Not much | Neutral | Somewhat | Very much | Does not apply |
|---|------------|----------|---------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| Reflect on your teaching                            | 1          | 2        | 3       | 4        | 5         |                |
| Increase confidence in your teaching                | 1          | 2        | 3       | 4        | 5         |                |
| Develop new strategies or skills                    | 1          | 2        | 3       | 4        | 5         |                |
| Enhance relationships with your academic colleagues | 1          | 2        | 3       | 4        | 5         |                |
| Promote good teaching practice at the university    | 1          | 2        | 3       | 4        | 5         |                |
| Increase your student feedback scores               | 1          | 2        | 3       | 4        | 5         | N/A            |
| Support an application for promotion                | 1          | 2        | 3       | 4        | 5         | N/A            |
| Support an application for a teaching award         | 1          | 2        | 3       | 4        | 5         | N/A            |

|  | Not at all | Not much | Neutral | Somewhat | Very much |
|--|------------|----------|---------|----------|-----------|
| 4. How useful did you find the training provided?  | 1          | 2        | 3       | 4        | 5         |
| 5. How useful did you find the PPiT template provided?   | 1          | 2        | 3       | 4        | 5         |
|  | Not at all | Not much | Neutral | Somewhat | Very much |
| 6. To what extent did engaging in PPiT add to your workload?   | 1          | 2        | 3       | 4        | 5         |
| 7. To what extent did engaging in PPiT make you feel vulnerable?   | 1          | 2        | 3       | 4        | 5         |
|  | Not at all | Not much | Neutral | Somewhat | Very much |
| 8. To what extent did you feel that you set the agenda for your own review?  | 1          | 2        | 3       | 4        | 5         |
| 9. How challenging did you find it to  | Not at all | Not much | Neutral | Somewhat | Very much |
| Trust your peer's reviewing skills   | 1          | 2        | 3       | 4        | 5         |
| Trust your own reviewing skills  | 1          | 2        | 3       | 4        | 5         |
| 10. What were the best aspects of the PPiT process for you?  |            |          |         |          |           |
| 11. What aspects of the PPiT process do you think could be improved and how? (For example: the training, potential use of templates, pair selection process, feedback session, etc.) |            |          |         |          |           |
| 12. What changes have you already made as a result of engaging in PPiT?  |            |          |         |          |           |
| 13. What changes do you plan to make as a result of engaging in PPiT?  |            |          |         |          |           |
| 14. What advice would you give to someone about to undertake PPiT?   |            |          |         |          |           |

|  | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 15. I would recommend PPIt to colleagues | 1                 | 2        | 3                          | 4     | 5              |
| 16. I would participate in PPIt again    | Yes               | No       | Not sure                   |       |                |

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