

A Peer Assisted Teaching Scheme

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This showcase outlines an education initiative, Peer Assisted Teaching Scheme (PATS), trialled in five Australian universities (Carbone et al. 2013, under review). The aim of the trial was to implement an innovative and collegial scheme to support academic teaching staff interested in reinvigorating their units and teaching practice. PATS draws on research that highlights the benefits of peer assisted learning (PAL) directed at students (Topping 2001), but applies it to academic teaching staff. PATS is informed by Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (1978) and Lave's situated learning literature (1988; 2009), as well as research promoting reflection on teaching practice (Brookfield, 1995). Short term effectiveness of the

scheme is measured via quantitative changes in unit evaluations but qualitative measures collected as part of completed tasks in the PATS workbook and through focus groups provide insights into longer term changes. In some cases, PATS has been embedded into existing universities' programmes (e.g.: Griffith PRO-teaching project; ECU Graduate Certificate of Academic Practice) and supported through the initiation of PATS coordinators across faculties for the longer term. In this showcase we focus on four of the PATS tasks in which academics are required to create collegial places:-

1. to discuss barriers to teaching improvement (Hockings, 2005);
2. to set goals for learning and teaching improvement based on a course quality attribute framework (Carbone et al. 2013a and 2013b);
3. to close the student feedback loop (Brookfield, 1995); and
4. to undertake a peer review to ensure developmental goals are progressing both in an online and blended environment (McKenzie, 2011).