Pedagogical Partnerships and Professionalisation:

Changing work and identities of professional staff
at one Australian university

Carroll Graham

A Portfolio submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
University of Technology Sydney

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Certificate Of Authorship/Originality

I certify that the work in this portfolio has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the work presented in this portfolio has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the artefacts has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the portfolio.

________________________________
Signature of Student

Date: ___________________________
Acknowledgements

This has been a substantial project that has required extended periods immersed in ‘doctoral land’. Completion of this doctorate would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of many people, whom I’d like to acknowledge.

My supervisor, Dr Tony Holland, and my second supervisor, Professor Alison Lee, both provided me with invaluable support. Tony understood the conflicting demands that a research degree has with an exacting full time job, and was understanding of my lack of progress when I wasn’t making any. Nevertheless, he always displayed faith in me, my decisions and my research. Alison provided intellectual challenges along the journey, regularly questioning my thinking and writing, which led to improved outcomes and outputs. Thank you also to Dr Ann Reich, who willingly joined my supervisory team when needed, and was of invaluable assistance at the ‘pointy end’.

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And finally, but by no means least, to Ruth Lusty who was my study partner and confidante, and without whom I would not have reached the point of being able to write this acknowledgement – thank you.

* * * * *

Sadly, Alison was unable to see the end of this project. Along with many other contributions to education, social research and practice, Alison Lee was the driving force behind the introduction of the portfolio approach for the Doctor of Education at UTS. Therefore, I dedicate this portfolio to her memory.

Alison Lee, 1952-2012

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This meta-statement describes the portfolio, and its development, for the doctoral research project: ‘Pedagogical Partnerships and Professionalisation: Changing work and identities of professional staff at one Australian university’. Within the context of higher education in Australia, this research project addresses the overarching research question: How do professional staff contribute to student outcomes? It discusses the context of this research; the methodology used; its contribution to professional, academic and workplace audiences; and the rationale for the choice of portfolio artefacts. It outlines the contribution to knowledge and practice made by this research, linking theoretical frameworks to findings. It also suggests further research and demonstrates the doctoral quality of the research and the portfolio artefacts.

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This paper describes the Delphi study that contributed to the development of the Professional Staff–Student Outcomes (PSSO) Framework. As described in Section 2.1 of the meta-statement, the PSSO Framework provided a tool for investigating how professional staff contribute to student outcomes. The PSSO Framework used 13 propositions for support of student outcomes derived in a meta-study by Prebble et al. (2004). These propositions for student support focused on the contributions by academic staff or ‘the institution’. The Delphi study used the Delphi method to test the applicability of the propositions for investigating contributions to student outcomes by professional staff.
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Graham, C. 2012a, Report on the findings of the doctoral research project ‘Pedagogical Partnerships and Professionalisation: Changing work and identities of professional staff at one Australian university’, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Technology, Sydney, Sydney.

This management report describes this doctoral research project, its aims, methods and outcomes, in a style appropriate for the workplace audience. This report was made available to members of the Senior Executive at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS): Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Corporate Services), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning and Equity) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).

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This paper explores the work of professional staff, focusing on the contributions that such staff make to the design, development and maintenance of learning spaces, both physical and virtual. Following the Delphi study, a case study was undertaken using semi-structured interviews with a range of professional staff. Emerging from this case study was a conceptualisation of the work of professional staff in relation to student outcomes, from the perspectives of professional staff themselves.

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Drawing on findings from the case study, this paper discusses the changing roles of professional staff in Australian universities, in the context of changing technology for learning and teaching. Using four illustrative case profiles, this paper argues that changes in the work of professional staff are associated with new forms of professional identities. Using the framework of bounded, cross-boundary,
unbounded and blended professionals (Whitchurch 2008a, 2009), this paper contends that even staff who would traditionally be considered bounded are moving towards the third space (Whitchurch 2008b), extending the framework to more junior roles.

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Graham, C. in press, ‘Professional staff contributions to positive student outcomes: a case study’, Australian Universities’ Review.

Using the findings of the case study, this paper describes and analyses the work of professional staff in relation to student outcomes, focusing on ‘behaviours, environments and processes [that] are welcoming and efficient’ (Prebble, et al. 2004, pp. 56–58). This paper concludes with three proposals to improve outcomes for students, and to improve the working lives of both professional and academic staff.
Abstract

The purpose of this research was to develop an improved understanding of the work of professional staff in Australian universities. Over the last two decades, external pressures on universities have increased significantly, such that there is even greater need to understand the work of all staff in our universities, and to make the most of their talents. Professional staff comprise more than 50% of staff in Australian universities. Yet little research has been undertaken into the work of professional staff, particularly in relation to teaching and learning. This doctoral research project was undertaken at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), in 2009–2012, with the aim of investigating how professional staff contribute to student outcomes, from the perspectives of the staff themselves.

Three key conceptualisations emerged from this research project:

1. the Professional Staff–Student Outcomes (PSSO) Framework, which defines a new method and framework for the study of the work of professional staff in relation to student outcomes;
2. pedagogical partnerships, providing a novel conceptualisation of the ways in which professional staff contribute to student outcomes; and
3. professionalisation, with a key theme of changing professional identities, conceptualising the growing professionalisation of professional staff.

Professional Staff–Student Outcomes (PSSO) Framework

Using as a basis 13 propositions for student support that had been derived in an earlier meta-study, the Schmidt Delphi method was modified to test the validity of these propositions in relation to the contributions of professional staff to student outcomes. Moderate agreement resulted, and further verification was achieved through member checking of results. Replication of my methodology is currently underway in the United Kingdom, where preliminary results confirm my results.

Pedagogical partnerships

It was found that professional staff form relationships – for the achievement of positive student outcomes – with a range of different individuals and groups including other
professional staff, academic staff, students and, at times, external stakeholders. In these pedagogical partnerships, learning and teaching occur through activities, undertaken by professional staff in co-operation with these partners, which contribute to student retention, persistence and achievement. These activities primarily occur when professional staff are providing behaviours, environments and processes that are welcoming and efficient, as well as when providing a comprehensive range of services and facilities.

Professionalisation

The phenomenon of changing identities, which is set in the context of growing professionalisation of professional staff, emerged as both an enabler and a driver for the development of pedagogical partnerships. Professional staff who are highly qualified, have specialised knowledge, are experienced networkers, and are confident decision-makers, are both more able to form pedagogical partnerships, and are more likely to initiate such partnerships.

In conclusion, a proposal is made for a Roles Matrix and a single pay spine system for mapping and equitably rewarding the work of all university staff. Together, the Roles Matrix and the single pay spine would facilitate flexible career paths and would permit equal pay for equal value of work. This study indicates that the work of all staff is essential to students achieving their learning outcomes, and that all staff need to work together, supportively, valuing the work of their colleagues.
Doctoral meta-statement


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Artefact 1  Graham (2010)


This paper has been published in the *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, June 2010, copyright Taylor & Francis, available online at: http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13600801003743315.¹

This paper describes the Delphi study that contributed to the development of the Professional Staff–Student Outcomes (PSSO) Framework. As described in Section 2.1 of the meta-statement, the PSSO Framework provided a tool for investigating how professional staff contribute to student outcomes. The PSSO Framework used 13 propositions for support of student outcomes derived in a meta-study by Prebble et al. (2004). These propositions for student support focused on the contributions by academic staff or ‘the institution’. The Delphi study used the Delphi method to test the applicability of the propositions for investigating contributions to student outcomes by professional staff.

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¹ As author, I retain the right to include this paper in my doctoral portfolio, provided I acknowledge prior publication in the journal (http://journalauthors.tandf.co.uk/permissions/reusingOwnWork.asp).
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