Doctoral Meta-statement

*Pedagogical Partnerships and Professionalisation:*
*Changing work and identities of professional staff at one Australian university*

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Section 1  Setting the scene

1.1  Introducing this meta-statement

Changes in doctoral research in Australia over the last decade and a half have led to the development both of new forms of doctoral research and new ways of communicating doctoral research outcomes (Clerke & Lee 2008). For example, there has been the emergence of the professional doctorate (Malfroy & Yates 2003; Neumann 2005), which allows professionals to engage in research that extends their knowledge, skills and professionalism, and supports evidence-based practice (Burgess & Wellington 2010). At the same time, the doctoral research portfolio is becoming more available in Australian universities, and is seen to accommodate ‘different kinds of knowledge production in various genres to a range of different audiences’ (Clerke & Lee 2008 p. 18).

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? The meta-statement 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 through this meta-statement and the portfolio artefacts. While some of these matters have been discussed in various papers included in this portfolio (Graham 2010, 2012b, 2012c, 2013, in press), and consequently there is some unavoidable repetition between the meta-statement and the associated artefacts, the meta-statement allows for more in-depth development of ideas than was possible in the journal articles.

Section 1 of this meta-statement sets the scene for this research project. It has a brief discussion and analysis of the changing context of higher education, including the shift to using the term professional staff. It outlines the significance of this research project,
and my interest in this work. This section also describes and discusses the methodology and the two-stage research design I used, involving both a Delphi study and a case study. Finally, Section 1 also includes a discussion and analysis of the professional doctorate, the use of a portfolio approach for this research project, and a discussion and analysis of the choice of portfolio artefacts from all research outputs produced during this project.

In Section 2, *Revealing the outcomes*, three sets of major conceptual outcomes are described, analysed and theorised. The first key outcome results from the Stage 1 Delphi study, being the development of a framework for studying the work of professional staff in relation to student outcomes. This framework, the *Professional Staff–Student Outcomes (PSSO) Framework*, was used in the subsequent Stage 2 case study. A further two main conceptualisations of the work and identities of professional staff emerge from the case study, which are described and analysed in this section. First is the examination of a conceptualisation of the work of professional staff that I have named *pedagogical partnerships*, which draws on contemporary understandings of the term pedagogy by Lee, Dunston and Fowler (2012). Secondly, the changing identities of professional staff are examined in the context of growing *professionalisation* of professional staff, and in relation to improved student outcomes. Finally, Section 3 draws together these conceptualisations to make explicit the findings of this study, answering the question: *How do professional staff contribute to student outcomes?*

### 1.2 Contextualising this research project

This research focuses on the work of professional staff in relation to student outcomes at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS).

**Describing UTS**

UTS is a large modern Australian university located in Sydney, New South Wales (NSW), and its characteristics of provenance, location, size and diversity of its student population make UTS representative of Australian universities. UTS was established as a university from a previous institution less than a quarter-century ago (as have half of
Australia’s universities) and is located in NSW, which has more universities than any other state of Australia. With more than 36,000 students in 2011, it is a medium-to-large university, sited in a capital city, as are most universities in Australia. Of its total enrolment in 2011, 26.8% were international students, putting UTS close to the overall Australian figure for international students of 27.2% (Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research & Tertiary Education [DIISRTE] 2012; Marginson & Considine 2000).

**Defining ‘student outcomes’**

Over the last twenty years, there has been growing concern about quality and accountability in higher education both in Australia and overseas (Adams 1998; Williams 2010). In Australia, public and government concern coincided with or was triggered by the massification of higher education, the move from the binary system to the Unified National System, economic rationalism and the consequent changes to student profiles and funding arrangements (Adams 1998; Ng, Heskin & Sharma 1993). There have been consequent calls for effectiveness and efficiency in higher education and the associated need for measurement. The assessment of student outcomes has been identified as one measure of an institution’s performance and accountability (Elford 1996; Volkwein 2010).

Despite the now ubiquitous use of the term *student outcomes* in higher education, this term has different meanings for different people with different purposes (Ewell 1983; Ng, Heskin & Sharma 1993; Terenzini 1989). Comprehensive taxonomies of student outcomes were developed by Lenning in the late 1970s and Pascarella and Terenzini in the early 1990s (Hanson & Denzine 2000), and Ewell (1983) and King and Howard-Hamilton (2000) describe three different classifications of student outcomes. Hanson and Denzine (2000) discuss the importance of deciding, from all the possible types of student outcomes that may be assessed, which outcomes are the most important for a particular institution, noting that rankings of importance of outcomes may vary for different groups. Specifically, as the cost of university education has been transferred to individuals, students and external stakeholders wish to identify and measure the return on their investments (Bradley et al. 2008; Terenzini 1989), making outcomes that relate to retention, graduation and graduate employment rates increasingly important.
Accordingly, for the purposes of this study, the term *student outcomes* relates to engaging and retaining students through to completion, and uses the definition of ‘student retention, persistence and achievement’ (Prebble et al. 2004, p. ix).

**Changing nomenclature: Professional staff**

There are several different designations used in Australian universities for staff that the federal government describes as *non-academic or other*, such as non-academic staff, general staff, administrative staff, support staff and professional staff. Over the last five years, Australian universities have increasingly adopted the term *professional staff* (Graham 2012b). In addition, the Association for Tertiary Education Management (ATEM) has formally adopted the title of *professional staff* as the preferred nomenclature in Australia (ATEM 2011) and, more recently, the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) has endorsed the use of this term (White 2012). The use of the term *professional staff* might be somewhat aspirational (Sebalj, Holbrook & Bourke 2012), and the use of a single term may not do justice to the diversity of the work undertaken by these staff (Graham 2010; Sebalj, Holbrook & Bourke 2012). Nevertheless, to reflect contemporary usage, the term *professional staff* has been used throughout this doctoral research project from 2010.

**Reviewing the context of higher education in the twenty-first century**

As noted elsewhere (Graham 2009, 2013), conditions in higher education, both in Australia and overseas, have changed dramatically in the last 25 years, as changes in external conditions created pressures within universities. These changes may be classified as *broad change forces*, which have created change more widely than just in universities, and *higher education related*, which have created changes more directly associated with universities (Fullan & Scott 2009; Scott, Coates & Anderson 2008). Specifically, in the last decade of the twentieth century, there was rapid growth in higher education participation, change in higher education funding and accountability, increasing knowledge and the demand for new disciplines and transdisciplinary approaches, and industrialisation and changes to industrial relations policy (Coaldrake & Stedman 1999). As global conditions have continued to undergo transformation, universities have faced continued and accelerating rates of change during the first
decade of the twenty-first century. Additional drivers for change include rapid growth and diversification of information technology, and changing student expectations of their higher education experience (Bradley et al. 2008; Robinson & Hullinger 2008; Scott, Coates & Anderson 2008; Wilen-Daugenti 2009).

Changing student expectations have been affected significantly by changing demographics of the student population, with different types of students having different needs and expectations of their higher education experience (Bradley et al. 2008). For example, the proportion of international students in Australian higher education grew from 5.5% to 27% of the total student population in the 20 years between 1991 and 2011 (aggregated data from DEEWR 2012), and it is generally recognised that international students have greater needs for student support services than domestic students (Bradley et al. 2008). Generational changes can also be seen, with current Gen Y students expecting continuous connectivity, immediate personal returns from their higher education, and expecting to be consulted and catered for (Nimon 2007). In addition, professional programs, such as nursing and teaching, have entered the university sector in increasing numbers over the last two decades (Dyson 2005; Russell 2005), bringing with them different student and employer expectations. Moreover, the diversification of the student body is likely to increase, resulting from the widening participation proposed by Bradley et al. (2008), who recommended a target of 20% of the total student population coming from disadvantaged groups by 2020.

Along with increasing diversity of the student population has been a growth in student numbers. Over the last two decades, student numbers in higher education have risen from 441,074 in 1989 to 1,221,008 by 2011 (aggregated data from DEEWR 2012), representing an increase in the proportion of the total Australian population from 2.6% in 1989 to 5.5% in 2011 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008, 2011). This substantial growth, or massification, led to changes in funding sources, with proportionally less government funding (Dobson 2001), increased student to academic staff ratios, and overall higher work loads for all university staff (Dobson 2005). Similarly, professional staff numbers increased by less than 50% between 1991 and 2011 compared with an increase in student numbers of almost 130% (aggregated data DEEWR 2012). Yet staff are crucial to effective operations of universities.
Almost 20 years ago, the report of the *Higher Education Management Review* asserted that ‘the key resource for universities is their academic and general [professional] staff’ (Hoare, Higher Education Management Review Committee & Department of Employment Education and Training [Hoare] 1995, p. 10). More recently, Orr, Jaeger and Schwarzenberg (2007) argued that staff are also a key expense, accounting for approximately 75% of a university’s current costs in Germany. Likewise, staff costs are a significant expense in Australian universities, accounting for more than half the total costs of continuing operations (aggregated data from DEEWR 2007). Since staff are a university’s key resource and a major expense, staff must be appropriately managed if universities are to continue to achieve their missions and strategic goals.

Professional staff have comprised more than half the workforce in Australian universities for at least two decades (aggregated data from DEEWR 2012), and they hold much of the systemic knowledge required to ensure the functioning of the university. However, until recently, there has been little research into the work of professional staff, and the effective use of this pool of talent. A decade ago, Conway (2000) asserted that, as a group, university administrators were ignored by government, by the universities for which they worked, and by academics with whom they worked. It is not surprising that academic staff have written little about the work and identities of professional staff, since academics tend to ‘focus on the areas that concern them the most’ (Pitman 2000, p. 166). Likewise, it is fitting that the body of literature about the work and identities of professional staff, which has been growing over the last decade, has been written typically by professional staff (Graham 2012c). Nevertheless, gaps persist in this research, and there remains little research into the contributions that professional staff make to the core business of learning and teaching.

Although universities have developed a broader agenda over the last decade, with increasing focus on external engagement, education (learning and teaching) and research remain the chief components of core business for universities (Shattock 2010), and are fundamental to the strategic goals of their institutions. While contributions of professional staff to research, through research management and administration, have been studied by various practitioners, there has been little research into the contributions that professional staff make to learning and teaching (Graham 2013). Yet, of the three
areas of core business in universities – education, research, and university engagement and service – Fullan and Scott (2009) argue that learning and teaching should be placed centrally, and should become the integrator for core business. An earlier study by Scott confirmed that ‘it is students’ total experience of university – not just what happens in the traditional classroom – that shapes their judgments of quality, promotes retention and engages them in productive learning’ (2006, p. vii). Consequently, it is imperative to know and understand the work of professional staff in relation to achievement of positive student outcomes.

**What’s driving my research?**

As someone who has family and community responsibilities, and who works relatively long hours in a demanding role, I have often reflected upon the question of drivers for my research: *Why on earth am I doing this doctorate?* Central to my research is interest in the changing nature of universities and the conditions that are causing this change, as I have a passionate belief in the role that universities play for the greater good of our societies through the creation and dissemination of knowledge, and the development of future leaders. Consequently, as a leader and manager of professional staff, I am interested in the contributions that professional staff have made, are making, and will continue to make to Australian universities, particularly in relation to student outcomes. Having worked at four different universities over a period of more than 15 years in a diverse range of units, I have personal experience of the contributions that professional staff make to student outcomes, both through my own endeavours and by observing the work of other staff. Moreover, anecdotal feedback from students indicates that the contribution by professional staff to their outcomes is significant and is valued by the students themselves. Yet this research is not driven by a ‘them and us’ perspective: I have been married to an academic for more years than I care to admit, and I have observed, both professionally and personally, the growing pressures under which academic staff are working.

The traditional view of a ‘master–servant’ relationship between academic and professional staff with all ideas coming from academic staff is long outdated (Conway 2001; Hamer 1997), and fails to acknowledge the complexities of higher education in the twenty-first century. Indeed, the blurring of roles between academic and
professional staff activities was commented on almost 20 years ago (Hoare 1995), and has been the subject of extensive subsequent research in the United Kingdom (see, for example, Whitchurch 2007, 2008b, 2008c, 2009). Even so, well into the first decade of the twenty-first century, professional staff remained invisible workers (Szekeres 2004). This invisibility was, perhaps, exemplified in 2004 in a meta-study that reviewed 146 international studies into the effects of institutional support practices on student outcomes (Prebble et al. 2004). This meta-study derived 13 propositions for student support (referred to as Prebble Propositions herein) for enhancement of student outcomes in terms of retention, persistence and achievement (Appendix I). Despite the focus on student services, almost no mention was made of professional staff who manage and are at the front-line of these services. It became clear to me that an understanding of how professional staff contribute to key behaviours identified in the Prebble Propositions could provide insight into how professional staff contribute to student outcomes; yet this was lacking in the literature.

1.3 Developing the methodology and research design

Epistemological and theoretical foundations

Ensuring a consistent framework for a research project’s epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and method(s) can help to ensure the soundness of the research (Crotty 1998). Moreover, the research problem, the researcher’s own background and the audience(s) influence the choice of approach (Creswell 2009). Figure 1 illustrates the research framework for this study, which is internally consistent, and is congruent with the research problem, my background and experience, and the audiences for whom I am writing.
The relationship between the researcher’s worldview, the nature of the research questions and the proposed methodology determines the relevant research paradigm (Mertens 2005). In educational research, three main paradigms may be considered: positivist/postpositivist, constructivist and transformative (Mertens 2005). Constructivism emphasises an active approach to building knowledge (Somekh & Lewin 2011), which suggests knowledge is shaped by the perspective and values in which context it is constructed (Gordon 2009). Fundamental to the epistemology for this research project is my desire to provide a means by which professional staff may be seen and heard, to rend the invisibility cloak covering the invisible workers. As such, the epistemological stance is one of pragmatic constructivism, focusing on ‘people’s activities in the realities in which they actually live their lives’ and is ‘descriptive rather than normative and prescriptive’ (Cobb 2002, p. 53). While one anonymous reviewer sought to impose a more positivist approach on one of my papers, my aim has always been ‘to investigate how professional staff contribute to student outcomes, from the perspectives of the staff themselves’ (Graham 2013, p. 2). As such, this study is situated outside the positivist paradigm, and is not intended to determine a ‘reality’ that is unchanging, observable and measurable (Merriam 1998). Accordingly, I made a
considered decision not to collect data to validate the accuracy of the participants’ perceptions.

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical perspective that concerns basic social interactions, allowing the researcher to enter into the perceptions, attitudes and values of others (Crotty 1998), and therefore fits with the epistemological stance of pragmatic constructivism. Symbolic interactionism arises from a social psychological approach that emphasises construction of meaning and interpretation through interaction, and allows the researcher to pose and answer the fundamental question: What common set of symbols and understandings has emerged to give meaning to people’s interactions? (Patton 2002). This question is answered in Section 2 of this meta-statement and by the associated portfolio artefacts (Graham 2010, 2012b, 2012c, 2013, in press). Symbolic interactionism requires that the associated research design be built to allow study of shared meanings (Patton 2002).

The reality of workplaces, perhaps particularly in higher education, is highly complex. Indeed, there is a substantial body of literature on the impact of increasingly complex environments on academic identities (see, for example, Barnett & Di Napoli 2007; Clegg 2008; Henkel 2000; Marr & Forsyth 2010). Contexts in which reality is multilayered and complex are served well by qualitative approaches (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007), and case studies are a common way of doing qualitative research (Stake 2005). Moreover, as case studies typically arise from a constructivist paradigm (Stake 1995; Yin 2009), which aligns with my pragmatic constructivist approach, using a case study method is highly appropriate for my research. However, having determined a pragmatic constructivist perspective, I sought a framework for my research: hence I developed a two-stage research design. Stage 1 was designed to develop a framework for studying the behaviours of professional staff, which was subsequently used to analyse the data collected in the Stage 2 case study. Moreover, this research design is consistent with my theoretical perspective, since symbolic interactionism allows for a mixed methods approach, and provides a perspective for researchers using multiple method design (Benzies & Allen 2008).
**Stage 1: The Delphi study and its method**

In order to provide a foundation for my research, the Stage 1 study explored and developed a framework for describing the work of professional staff in relation to student outcomes (Graham 2010). This Stage 1 study addressed the research question: *How can the contributions of professional staff to student outcomes be investigated?*

Since the Prebble Propositions had been ‘designed to assist policy makers in tertiary institutions to improve student outcomes’ (Prebble et al. 2004, p. 53), it seemed that there would be value in exploring the ways in which professional staff contribute to the behaviours described in the Prebble Propositions. Accordingly, the following sub-questions were explored:

- *According to professional staff, to which of the Prebble Propositions for student support (Prebble et al. 2004) do professional staff contribute?*
- *What is the order of significance of this contribution, as viewed by professional staff?*
- *What other activities do professional staff undertake that support positive student outcomes?*

The Delphi method uses structured communication to facilitate group management of complex problems (Linstone & Turoff 2002). This method was originally developed by the RAND Corporation (Hasson, Keeney & McKenna 2000) for long-range science and technology forecasting (Linstone & Turoff 2002), and is designed to create group consensus from individual opinions (Hasson, Keeney & McKenna 2000). As previously described (Graham 2010), the Delphi method is an iterative process that gathers and synthesises the opinions of several experts in the field of study. A series of questionnaires is interspersed with controlled feedback to the participants based on the results of the previous round. (Delbecq, Van de Ven & Gustafson 1975). Dalkey and Helmer describe the purpose of the Delphi method as being ‘to obtain the most reliable consensus of opinion of a group of experts’ (1963, p. 458).

Scheele (2002) notes that, as individuals, we have different realities, but the one important product of a Delphi study is the consensus reality obtained through the group’s interaction. Specifically, by using controlled interaction in which participants do not have direct contact, the Delphi method avoids many of the disadvantages of more
conventional group decision-making, such as round-table discussions or focus groups, in which direct confrontation can sometimes force an apparent consensus (Dalkey & Helmer 1963). Moreover, as this method does not require co-location of the experts, logistical constraints of the study are reduced and significant stakeholders may be included as expert panellists, making this method highly suitable for practitioners researching professional practice (Graham 2010).

There is a broad range of research objectives that can be achieved using the Delphi method. Apart from determining scientific forecasts, the Delphi method can be used to identify problems, set priorities, identify problem solutions (Delbecq, Van de Ven & Gustafson 1975) and to ensure the relevance and utility of findings (Fox 2003). It is also useful for selecting a topic and defining the research questions in the early stages of research (Okoli & Pawlowski 2004), and has application for postgraduate research projects (Skulmoski, Hartman & Krahn 2007).

Choosing appropriate experts is an important aspect of Delphi studies (Adler & Ziglio 1996; Delbecq, Van de Ven & Gustafson 1975; Duffield 1993; Okoli & Pawlowski 2004) involving two main considerations: panel size and knowledge of the panellists (Powell 2003). Delphi study expert panellists should meet four overarching criteria: (1) knowledge and experience of the issues under study; (2) the capacity and willingness to contribute to the investigation; (3) sufficient time for the study; and (4) adequate communication skills (Ziglio 1996). Nevertheless, the number of expert participants required for a panel is not large, with 10–18 being considered suitable (Paliwoda 1983; Ziglio 1996).

Delbecq et al. (Delbecq, Van de Ven & Gustafson 1975) described a modified version for use in ranking issues, which has subsequently been used in a variety of fields (Schmidt 1997). However, while a set method for using the Delphi technique had been developed for forecasting, researchers had not followed a consistent technique for ranking issues (Schmidt 1997). Schmidt (1997) proposed a method for data collection and analysis to improve the ranking method, involving three phases: (1) the discovery of issues; (2) determining the most important issues; and (3) ranking the issues. Schmidt’s method (Schmidt 1997), which I refer to as the Schmidt Delphi method, uses open-ended questions to elicit issues from the expert panellists, which are then
consolidated and referred to the panellists for verification (phase 1). In phase 2, the panellists are asked to nominate the most important issues, from which the researcher eliminates any issues that were not selected by a majority of panellists; this process is repeated, if necessary, until a short-list of the most important 20 or fewer issues is determined (Schmidt 1997). Phase 3 involves a number of rounds in which the issues are ranked by the panellists, with analysis of the rankings provided as feedback to the panellists between rounds, until consensus has been achieved (Schmidt 1997).

To explore my research question for Stage 1 and its sub-questions, I developed a new method, adapting the Schmidt Delphi ranking method (Schmidt 1997) and using the Prebble Propositions as a starting point (Graham 2010). In this modified Schmidt Delphi method, I contend that Schmidt phases 1 and 2 are satisfied by the 13 Prebble Propositions derived by means of the meta-study (Prebble et al. 2004). This is a valid assumption since the issues were derived from experts’ studies, and the number of Prebble Propositions, being 13, is consistent with the Schmidt phase 2 requirements. Phase 3 in my study was completed by a group of expert professional staff, identified by criterion sampling on the basis of relevant skills and attributes (Graham 2010). The modified Schmidt Delphi method is shown schematically in Figure 2.

As detailed in my paper (Graham 2010), sufficient expert panellists were identified to ensure validity of the ranking method. In total, 26 panellists, whose average length of experience in higher education was 16 years, participated in the Delphi study. Panellists

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**Figure 2:** Modified Schmidt Delphi method
worked in positions ranging from Higher Education Worker (HEW)\(^1\) Level 4 to above Level 10, with the median being Level 7. On average, the panellists’ highest educational qualification was a bachelor degree. Three ranking rounds were completed, with feedback provided to the panellists between rounds, which provided a balance between adequate consensus and panel-fatigue. This feedback comprised the mean rank of each Prebble Proposition, the proportion of panellists ranking each proposition in the top half of their rankings, and the level of agreement, as determined by Kendall’s coefficient of concordance. Member checking was undertaken by providing panellists with a final report, inviting comments and questions, prior to publication of my journal article (Graham 2010).

**Stage 2: The case study and its method**

Having determined in Stage 1 that the Prebble Propositions would provide a suitable framework (see Section 2.1) for the Stage 2 case study, the case study was designed to address the research question: *What behaviours do professional staff exhibit that contribute to positive student outcomes?* Based on themes emerging from the case study data, the following sub-questions were explored:

- *What pedagogical partnerships do professional staff form?*
- *How do these pedagogical partnerships contribute to positive student outcomes?*
- *How are the work and identities of professional staff changing?*
- *How do these changes in work and identities enable or inhibit contributions to student outcomes?*

A case study engages with and captures the complexity of an activity (Stark & Torrance 2005), within clearly defined boundaries (Creswell 2007). Stake (1995) observes that, as educational researchers, we are interested in people and programs ‘for both their uniqueness and commonality’ (p. 1), and it is these people and programs that form the basis of case studies. However, there is dissention concerning how well accepted the case study is as a methodology: while Creswell (2007) states that case study research

\(^1\) HEW levels, given various titles in different institutions, refer to the classification structure for professional staff that is typically used in Australian universities. The classification ranges from HEW 1, which is the lowest level and is rarely used in most institutions, to HEW10+, which includes directors and managers. HEW 5 and 6 are the most common levels at UTS, representing 40% of all professional staff from 2009 to 2011.
has a ‘long, distinguished history across many disciplines’ (2007, p. 73), Yin (2009) contends that case studies are stereotyped as having insufficient precision, objectivity or rigour in comparison to quantitative research methods. Although Yin (2009) goes on to argue that this stereotype is misguided, he does caution case study researchers about this stereotype and he concedes that good case studies are difficult to conduct. Accordingly, Yin (2009) and others, such as Stake (1995), have developed systematic procedures for case study research.

Yin (2009) describes four types of case study design, based on two dimensions: holistic or embedded, and single- or multiple-cases, in which the multiple-cases are replications, not sampled cases. While multiple-case study may be regarded as more robust (Herriott & Firestone cited in Yin 2009), this methodology requires replication of the case studies in different contexts, entailing considerable resources and time and, as Yin points out, is likely to be ‘beyond the means of a single student or independent research investigator’ (2009, p. 53). Yin (2009) suggests that the case study may be used as a strategy for three different purposes of research – exploratory, descriptive or explanatory studies – each of which may be either single- or multiple-case studies. Stake (1995) describes three other types of case study: intrinsic (a case of particular interest), instrumental (a case study that will lead to wider understanding), and collective (using more than one case). In addition, Merriam asserts that the defining characteristic of case study research is the determination of its boundaries (1998), although these may change during the course of the research and evidence collection (Simons 2009).

Yin (2009) describes six main sources of evidence that may be used in case studies: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation and physical artefacts. Each source has its own strengths and weaknesses, and the choice of evidence and data collection methods needs to be consistent with the methodology, theoretical perspectives and epistemology of the study (Crotty 1998). For my purposes, the interview method is consistent with pragmatic constructivism and symbolic interactionism, allowing description of the participants’ perspectives of the issue (Patton 2002). Yin (2009) cautions that preparing for data collection can be difficult and complex and, if not done well, the whole research project can be placed at risk. This preparation includes the skills and training of the researcher, the development
of a protocol for the investigation, the screening and selection of suitable cases, and conducting a pilot study.

The above considerations were kept in mind while developing the research design for this case study. As outlined in Artefacts 2, 3 and 4 (Graham 2012c, 2013, in press), and in common with many other studies, a single site was chosen for the case study for both logistical reasons (Daymon & Holloway 2002), representative reasons (Yin 2009), and, as my workplace, intrinsic reasons (Stake 1995). While UTS may be representative of Australian universities, as described earlier, it is not intended to generalise from these findings. Rather, this case study is descriptive (Yin 2009), as it identifies and describes behaviours exhibited by professional staff that contribute to student outcomes. Nevertheless, being both descriptive and intrinsic, this study provides an illustrative case, which may provide insights into situations at other institutions.

Building on the Delphi study (Graham 2010), it was recognised that there would be value in interviewing expert professional staff, and purposive sampling was used for the case study. A mind-map was developed identifying work units in which staff would have interactions with a hypothetical cohort of students. Contact was made with the managers of these work units for recommendations of staff who had at least three years’ experience in higher education. In addition, snowball sampling, in which existing participants recommend other potential participants, was used as suitable opportunities arose. Theoretical saturation – the point at which no new themes are observed – may occur after 12 interviews for a relatively homogeneous purposive sample (Guest, Bunce & Johnson 2006); accordingly, this study used 14 interviews.

Of the 14 participants, 64% were women, which corresponds to the overall proportion of women in professional staff roles at UTS. The participants’ length of experience in higher education ranged from 3 years to 24 years, averaging 10 years, while the length of service at UTS across different age groups reflected the pattern for the total UTS professional staff population. Participants were drawn from 12 different work units, and whereas half the participants had worked only at UTS, the other half had worked at one other university. Participants worked in positions ranging from HEW Level 5 to above Level 10, with the median being Level 7. Six of the 14 participants had completed a postgraduate coursework program, four at Master’s degree level, and four
staff were currently studying: one completing a Bachelor’s degree, one (already holding a postgraduate diploma) who was updating a vocational education Certificate IV, and two doing postgraduate certificates.

The use of semi-structured interviews complements the pragmatic constructivist epistemology of this research project (Merriam 1998; Stake 1995), and is consistent with the theoretical approach of symbolic interactionism (Crotty 1998). A semi-structured interview guide based on Patton’s framework for designing interview questions (Patton 2002) was developed. This allowed participants to guide the direction of the interview, and to describe their experiences across five domains: options and values, feelings, knowledge, sensory and behaviours. A pilot interview was conducted in April 2010, which allowed me to refine both the interview guide and the manner in which I conducted the interview. For example, subsequent to the pilot, I decided to ask participants to complete a one-page demographic survey, rather than ask demographic questions during the interview. The research interviews were conducted over a 17-month period between April 2010 and September 2011.

As noted above, the skills and training of the researcher in data collection are crucial to the success of a case study (Yin 2009). From my professional work as a tertiary careers advisor, a staff manager and an employer, I had both training and experience in conducting interviews. I was able to transfer those skills to the act of research interviewing: establishing rapport, active listening, open questioning, and using follow-up questions (Simons 2009). These interviews were digitally recorded using an iPhone. Transcriptions of the digital files were completed by professional transcription services, which I subsequently checked against the associated audio files making additions and corrections where necessary. In addition, member checking was undertaken by sending each transcript to the relevant participant, with additional corrections being made where required. Further member checking was accomplished by sending draft papers to relevant participants for their comments, all of which were favourable.

Analysis of the data was informed by the framework derived in Stage 1, and used first cycle descriptive coding as well as structural coding (Saldaña 2009). This allowed identification of key themes, and subsequent second cycle coding provided elaboration of these themes, identifying sub-themes. The online tool, Dedoose (SocioCultural
Research Consultants 2011), was used to assist with coding, which also allowed viewing by my supervisor for oversight.

Figure 3 shows a diagrammatic representation of the research design for the entire study, showing the relationship of the Delphi study to the case study. Both portfolio artefacts and additional artefacts are indicated in relation to the research design. Section 1.4 and Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4 provide more details of the artefacts and their relationships to each other.

1.4 Creating the portfolio

Undertaking a professional doctorate

I decided that I wanted to study for a professional doctorate, a Doctor of Education (EdD) in contrast to a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), while I was still completing my Master’s degree. I was attracted to this form of doctoral research as information I read suggested that it was (a) appropriate for professional practitioners wishing to research an issue in their field, and (b) intended to be undertaken part-time while working full-time; both of which were applicable to me. I had conceived my overarching research question – how do professional staff contribute to student outcomes? – while attending the 2006 Tertiary Education Management Conference, listening to a presentation by Stuart Middleton (2006), and this research topic fitted well with a professional doctorate. I had no desire to complete a PhD and become an academic; instead, I wanted to improve my professional practice, and contribute to knowledge in my field of practice, namely tertiary education management. As such, the professional doctorate at UTS appeared to best satisfy my requirements, although others argue that the PhD is also suitable for the generation of working knowledge (Tennant 2004).
Figure 3: Schematic representation of the research design and outputs
Indeed, the PhD has become such an essential thread in the fabric of universities that it is easy to forget how recently it was established, introduced into Britain in 1917 (Lee, Green & Brennan 2000). The first PhD was awarded in Australia in 1948 (Evans et al. 2004), while professional doctorates have existed in Australia for about a quarter-century (Lee, Green & Brennan 2000). However, it is easy to question why one would do a professional doctorate in preference to a PhD when typically a PhD is more respected and better understood and, it is suggested, can address the issues of professional research (Evans et al. 2004). Nevertheless, despite the questions, the professional doctorate continues to contribute to the diversity that is essential for a robust doctoral sector (Lee, Green & Brennan 2000; Pearson, Evans & Macauley 2008).

Lee and her colleagues argue that the professional doctorate produces new kinds of knowledge in new ways, existing at the intersection of the university, the profession and the workplace (Lee, Green & Brennan 2000). Accordingly, my doctoral research speaks to three audiences: academe, the profession and the workplace. For my research, all three audiences are located within the higher education sector, with a relatively high degree of overlap between them. This overlap is shown in Figure 4, in which each audience is represented by a shade of blue, with the degree of overlap between them presenting challenges in the development of portfolio artefacts that addressed distinct audiences.

**Adopting the portfolio approach**

There are currently two options for presenting the research outcomes for a Doctor of Education at UTS: a traditional dissertation; or a portfolio of selected research outputs, *portfolio pieces or artefacts*, that are linked by a meta-statement. I decided early in the first year of my doctoral program to use the portfolio approach, so that I could construct a series of targeted outputs that would address each of my three audiences, and to communicate my outcomes with my professional colleagues along my journey.

Although doctoral portfolios have been used at other Australian universities for some time (Clerke & Lee 2008), this approach is relatively new for the Doctor of Education at UTS, and I am amongst the first cohort to present in this way.
In their discussion of education and professional portfolios, Smith and Tillema (2001, 2003) describe four clearly distinguishable types of portfolios (Table 1) that are differentiated by two main dimensions: (1) the purpose of the portfolio, being either for selection/certification or development; and (2) the use of the portfolio, either voluntary or mandated. Having initially voluntarily chosen to use the portfolio approach, the production of my portfolio has become mandatory, which leaves open the question of its purpose. Clearly, since the intended outcome of this research is demonstration of doctoral quality research such that the degree Doctor of Education is awarded, this portfolio fulfills a selective purpose. That is, this portfolio provides a summative assessment of this research project for external evaluation, for certification, of its doctoralness, thereby fitting the definition of a dossier portfolio. In addition, however, this portfolio documents through this meta-statement, to some degree, the doctoral journey, allowing for reflection and description of the learning journey. To this extent, this portfolio is also a training portfolio, illustrating formative assessment. Smith and Tillema (2003) acknowledge the difficulty of using only one instrument both to measure required standards and to demonstrate a developmental journey in that ‘the relation
between selection of evidence and reflection on work remains intrinsically tense’ (p. 626). Nevertheless, it is contended that this portfolio succeeds in balancing these two somewhat conflicting requirements.

Table 1: Matrix of portfolio types
(after Smith & Tillema 2001, 2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portfolio Matrix</th>
<th>Mandated Use</th>
<th>Voluntary Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selective Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Dossier Portfolio</td>
<td>Reflective Portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Record of achievement</td>
<td>• Purposeful and personal collection of works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mandated collection of work</td>
<td>• Demonstrates best practices or key competencies to meet certain criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Detailed coverage of attainments</td>
<td>• Evidences self-appraisal and progress over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Establishment of standards</td>
<td>• Annotation of evidence is as important as the evidence itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• External evaluation for certification or promotion</td>
<td>• Mainly summative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Summative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developmental Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Training Portfolio</td>
<td>Personal Development Portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Required compilation of artefacts collected during a learning program</td>
<td>• Personal evaluation and reflection of professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Highlights the core knowledge, skills or competencies acquired</td>
<td>• Developed over a long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Often has a fixed format</td>
<td>• Gives value to the identity-building activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• May contain some reflective elements</td>
<td>• Allows sustained conversation with peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Formative</td>
<td>• Formative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robyn Muldoon uses the metaphor of a temple to describe her professional doctorate portfolio (Muldoon 2010). While my metaphor is that of a prefabricated home, it is, nevertheless, a grand design, in the spirit of the BBC television program Grand Designs, with host Kevin McCloud (Channel 4 2012). A number of episodes on this television program have featured quite remarkable kit homes (see, for example, Episodes 6 and 9 in Season 8), which have inspired my pragmatic conceptualisation of my portfolio. Prefabricated homes, now often known as kit homes or modular homes, once may have been ‘little more than glorified huts’ (Davidson 2011 p. 1). However, responding to a changing environment and changed expectations, they are now environmentally sustainable, economical and built fit-for-purpose. Similarly, the
doctoral research portfolio is becoming more prevalent across Australian universities (Clerke & Lee 2008), and it is certainly designed and constructed to be fit-for-purpose.

Like a modular home, my portfolio is designed to a plan, from pieces that are constructed off-site for specific purposes and, ultimately, assembled on the meta-statement foundation and held together by my professional practice. This meta-statement addresses the academic audience only, while three of the journal articles in my portfolio speak to both the academe and the profession. The fourth journal article speaks to all three audiences, and the audience for the management report is that of the workplace. The modular pieces of the portfolio represent different stages in my doctoral journey; nevertheless, they sit squarely within the central portion of the foundation, relating to the sections on methodology, key findings and impact (Figure 5).

In addition to being able to target my outputs to address all three audiences, the other major advantage of using the portfolio approach to my doctoral research is that it has allowed me to communicate my ideas and my findings along the doctoral journey. This elicited feedback that helped to inform the development of my research. Encouraging feedback from conference presentations led to the writing and submission of several of journal articles: in one case quite directly, and in the case of two others, more obliquely. The fourth journal article (in draft form) precedes the related conference presentation, and the latter was intended to provide direct feedback to the professional audience. Furthermore, helpful and supportive feedback from reviewers of the journal articles ultimately resulted in more robust pieces of work. The additional artefacts are depicted in relation to the associated portfolio artefacts in Figure 6.
Figure 5: Schematic representation of my doctoral portfolio

**Doctoral Portfolio**

Acknowledgements, Table of Contents
List of Portfolio Artefacts, Statement of Contribution, Abstract

Appendices, Bibliography

**Artefacts**

- **Journal article 1**

- **Journal article 2**

- **Journal article 3**

- **Journal article 4**
  Graham, C. (in press), ‘Professional staff contributions to positive student outcomes: a case study’, *Australian Universities’ Review*.

**Setting the Scene**

- **Introduction and Context**
  - What this research project is about
  - The professional doctorate and portfolio approach
  - Brief literature review

- **Developing the Methodology & Research Design**
  - Preble Propositions
  - Delphi Study
  - Case Study
  - Research design

**Developing the Portfolio**

- Choosing the artefacts—portfolio vs non-portfolio
- The doctoral journey

**Revealing the Findings**

- **PSSOs Framework**
  - Using the Preble Propositions as a framework
  - Testing with the adapted Delphi method
  - Gaps in the Preble Propositions

- **Pedagogical Partnerships**
  - Conceptualisation of pedagogical partnerships
  - Domains of pedagogical partnerships

**Professionalisation**

- Growing professionalisation
- Gormez & Lassen and Blumel frameworks
- Wichelhausen typology
- Changing identities
- Professionalisation findings

**Concluding remarks**

- Summarising the project
- The doctoral journey
- Significance & impact—academe, profession and workplace
- Implications for practice and policy
- Further research

**Audiences**

- Workplace
- Profession
- Academe
Figure 6: Doctoral journey and development of artefacts
Choosing the artefacts

It is also important to keep in mind that, regardless of the range or format of artifacts, a DRP [Doctoral Research Portfolio] must be able to demonstrate the achievement of a number of doctoral elements that evidence the international standard and standing of the work through and across the range of artifacts, as well as the candidate’s research capabilities. (Clerke et al. 2010)

The portfolio should comprise a selection of artefacts that best demonstrates doctoral-level research (Walker 1998). Accordingly, I am including five artefacts in this portfolio to evidence my research capabilities and the standing of my work (Table 2). Eleven additional artefacts, which are not included in this portfolio, are listed in Table 3 and Table 4, while Figure 6 shows the relationship of the additional artefacts to the portfolio artefacts.

Early in my research and the development of my artefacts, I held the view that I should include a wide range of artefacts in my portfolio to demonstrate the different communication styles I had adopted to disseminate my research findings to my different audiences. In particular, I was keen to use a range of non-traditional artefacts, particularly those using technology, to reach out to audiences that typically do not read academic writing: ‘to communicate to the relevant discourse communities what has been found’ (Maxwell & Kupczyk-Romanczuk 2009, p. 139). I have used both different media and different text types, or genres, to communicate better with my different audiences. So, for example, I have used peer-reviewed papers to communicate with the academic audience, PowerPoint™ and Prezi™ presentations for professional audiences, a report tailored for senior executives in my workplace, and another report for my participants. However, it is consideration of the purpose and the audience that informed my selection of artefacts for this portfolio (Walker 1998), particularly bearing in mind that, as a whole, this portfolio is a dossier of ‘achievements that may be evaluated judgmentally according to specified external standards’ (Smith & Tillema 2001, p. 184) that is subject to examination.

Fundamentally, the portfolio must demonstrate the doctoralness of this research project, and hence it has a strong summative purpose. The artefacts chosen for inclusion are also summative in nature, being informed by the additional artefacts as shown in Figure 6. Moreover, all portfolio artefacts, with the exception of the management report, have been through peer review. In contrast, apart from the two final presentations, which are
summative, the additional artefacts are formative in nature and have not been through peer review. Nevertheless, these artefacts have played an important part in the doctoral journey, allowing iterative development of thinking that led to writing the portfolio artefacts. There is also a pragmatic reason for the exclusion from the portfolio of my presentation artefacts – the PowerPoint™ and Prezi™ presentations mean little without me speaking to them. Finally, as a professional working in higher education, it is entirely appropriate that I use, as my portfolio artefacts, the currency of legitimacy of the sector: the peer-reviewed journal article.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portfolio artefact</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Audience and Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graham, C. 2010, ‘Hearing the voices of professional staff: A Delphi study of the contributions of professional staff to student outcomes’.</td>
<td>Peer-reviewed paper published in <em>Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management</em>, vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 213–223.</td>
<td>Audience: Both academics and professional practitioners working in higher education, who read the peer-reviewed JHEPM. Purpose: To demonstrate knowledge and understanding of my preliminary research and to communicate effectively with the audiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham, C. 2012, ‘Transforming spaces and identities: the contributions of professional staff to learning spaces in higher education’.</td>
<td>Peer-reviewed paper published in <em>Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management</em>, vol. 34, no. 4, pp. 437–452.</td>
<td>Audience: Both academics and professional practitioners working in higher education, who read the peer-reviewed JHEPM. Purpose: To demonstrate knowledge and understanding of my research through the lens of learning spaces, and to communicate effectively with the audiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham, C. 2013, ‘Changing technologies, changing identities: A case study of professional staff and their contributions to learning and teaching’.</td>
<td>Peer-reviewed paper accepted for publication in <em>Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education</em>. Available electronically from September 2012 and in print in 2013.</td>
<td>Audience: Professional practitioners in the UK, who are readers of the peer-reviewed Perspectives. Purpose: To extend and consolidate my network in the UK, to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of one aspect of my case study research, and to communicate this in an appropriate style.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham, C. in press, ‘Professional staff contributions to positive student outcomes: a case study’.</td>
<td>Peer-reviewed paper accepted for publication in 2013 in <em>Australian Universities’ Review.</em></td>
<td>Audience: Both academics and professional practitioners, working in higher education, who read AUR. This journal is a refereed publication of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) and is likely to be read mainly by academics. Purpose: To present a capstone article, demonstrating knowledge and understanding of my research, to communicate this with the audiences and to have wide impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham, C. 2012, ‘Report on the findings of the doctoral research project Pedagogical Partnerships and Professionalisation: Changing work and identities of professional staff at one Australian university’.</td>
<td>Management report on my research, focusing on outcomes and recommendations for implementation at UTS.</td>
<td>Audience: Senior Executive Managers at UTS: DVC (Corporate Services), DVC (Teaching, Learning and Equity) and DVC (Research). Purpose: To inform my workplace of my research outcomes in an accessible way, and to potentially have impact through detailed recommendations for change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Additional artefacts 2009–2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artefact</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Audience and Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graham, C. 2009, ‘Contributions of general staff to positive student outcomes’.</td>
<td>Presentation at the 2009 ATEM NSW / ACT Regional Conference: A Brave New World: Challenges Confronting the Australian Higher Education Sector, Sydney, NSW, 3 July 2009.</td>
<td>Audience: Professional staff, mostly ATEM members. Purpose: I was invited to present my research to this audience by the ATEM NSW Professional Development coordinator. This gave me an opportunity to present the aims and rationale to this audience at this early stage in my research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham, C. 2010, ‘Hearing the voices of professional staff: professional staff perspectives on their contributions to student outcomes’.</td>
<td>Professional development presentation at the ATEM Central Region Professional Development Program, Adelaide, SA, 24 June 2010.</td>
<td>Audience: Members of ATEM Central located in Adelaide. Purpose: Invited speaker to this professional development session, to share preliminary findings from the case study with a different audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham, C. 2010, ‘Future directions: Recognising the contributions of professional staff in supporting technology for positive student outcomes’.</td>
<td>Presentation at the Tertiary Education Management Conference 2010: Future Directions, Melbourne, VIC, October 2010.</td>
<td>Audience: Delegates at the TEMC: mostly professional staff, members of ATEM (some members of the Tertiary Education Facilities Management Association). Purpose: To share early findings from the case study with professional colleagues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Available to download from http://www.higheredprofessionals.info/publications.
Table 4: Additional artefacts 2011–2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artefact</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Audience and Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graham, C. 2011, ‘What makes a difference to students’ outcomes? Professional staff, the hidden factor’.</td>
<td>Presentation at the AUA Jubilee Conference and Exhibition, Nottingham, UK, April 2011.</td>
<td>Audience: International professional colleagues, mostly members of the Association of University Administrators in the United Kingdom (UK). Purpose: To present at an international conference and to share findings from the Delphi study in an interactive way with international colleagues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham, C. 2012, ‘Beyond the Oracle: Divining and Describing the Contributions of Professional Staff to Student Outcomes’.</td>
<td>Presentation at the Tertiary Education Management Conference 2012: Future Directions, Adelaide, SA, October 2012.</td>
<td>Audience: Delegates at the TEMC: mostly professional staff, members of ATEM. Purpose: To ‘close the loop’ for members of ATEM who might have heard presentations of my early research by presenting complete findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham, C. 2012, ‘Colleagues and Classes: Accessing networks and professional development for enhancing student outcomes’</td>
<td>Presentation at the ATEM NSW / ACT Regional Conference: Access all areas, Canberra, ACT, 9 November 2012.</td>
<td>Audience: Professional staff, mostly ATEM members. Purpose: To allow professional staff in NSW / ACT who were not able to travel to TEMC 2012 to hear complete findings of my research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham, C. 2009–2012, Higher Education Professionals.</td>
<td>Personal research website, <a href="http://www.higheredprofessionals.info/">http://www.higheredprofessionals.info/</a></td>
<td>Audience: The wider public, with a focus on professional staff. Purpose: A repository for research artefacts, a public space in which to share research findings and generate discussion, a private section for a research journal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Available to download from http://www.higheredprofessionals.info/publications.
Section 2  Revealing the outcomes

This section discusses three key conceptual outcomes of 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, which describes, analyses and theorises the ways in which professional staff contribute to student outcomes; and
3. professionalisation, with a key theme of changing professional identities, which describes, analyses and theorises the increasing professionalisation of professional staff.

In concluding, this section discusses the overarching question: How do professional staff contribute to student outcomes?

2.1 The Professional Staff–Student Outcomes Framework

Development of a framework\(^4\) for studying the contributions that professional staff make to student outcomes involved a 9-step approach, illustrated in Figure 7 and described below. I have named this framework the Professional Staff–Student Outcomes (PSSO) Framework.

Exploratory literature reviews prior to and during the early stages of this doctorate revealed that contributions of professional staff to student outcomes had not previously been researched. This is still largely the case: one anonymous reviewer commented recently in reviewing one of my papers (Graham 2012c) ‘. . . your statement at the end of paragraph one that “there is little research into the contributions that professional staff make to the core business of learning and teaching” is absolutely true . . .’ (Reviewer 2 2012, pers. comm., 10 May). Given this lack of an appropriate framework

\(^4\) A framework is defined as a basic structure underlying a system, concept or text (American Heritage Dictionary 2003)
Figure 7: Steps in the development process of the PSSO Framework

Step 1
Review of literature to explore whether a framework for describing the contributions of professional staff to student outcomes existed.

Step 2
Analysis of the Prebble Propositions for suitability as the basis for an appropriate framework.

Step 3
Review of literature to determine a suitable definition of student outcomes.

Step 4
Literature search for a tool to investigate the trustworthiness of the Prebble Propositions for this research.

Step 5
Review and adaptation of the Schmidt Delphi method for use with the Prebble Propositions.

Step 6
Round 1 Delphi resulting in elimination of 3 academic-related Propositions. Open-ended comments provided additional insight.

Step 7
Round 2 Delphi ranking the importance of the remaining 10 Prebble Propositions in terms of professional staff contributions.

Step 8
Round 3 Delphi re-ranking the importance of the remaining 10 Prebble Propositions in terms of professional staff contributions.

Step 9
Member checking of results using final report prior to publication.
for my research, I analysed the meta-study by Prebble and his colleagues (Prebble et al. 2004) to determine the suitability of the Prebble Propositions as a basis for a new framework.

The Prebble Propositions (Appendix I) comprise 13 propositions for student support that link institutional support practices to student outcomes in terms of retention, persistence and achievement. Although the Prebble Propositions focused on student services, there was almost no mention of the contribution by professional staff to these services in the meta-study (Prebble et al. 2004). Yet the behaviours described in the propositions were, in my experience, activities that could be undertaken by professional staff. The Prebble Propositions therefore provided a potential means for linking professional staff behaviours to student outcomes, but they were untested for this purpose.

In investigating the framework, I decided that to be effective the PSSO Framework would need to provide a link between activities and behaviours of professional staff and student outcomes. There is a perception (Bokor 2012) that all professional staff are only ‘back office’ (p. 12), and do not make direct contributions to ‘front-line’ (p. 17) activities. Yet, based on my own observations as both a practicing professional and a postgraduate student, I believed that it should be possible to develop an appropriate linking framework. However, it is crucial to this framework to determine an appropriate definition of student outcomes for my research.

As noted earlier, there are various definitions of the term student outcomes. Increasingly, there is a focus on outcomes that relate to student retention and achievement, such as targets for attainment of degree qualifications, as proposed by Bradley and her committee (2008). As such approaches are appropriate for professional staff (Ewell 1983), I decided that for the purposes of this study, the term student outcomes would relate to engaging and retaining students through to completion. This approach was also consistent with the definition of ‘student retention, persistence and achievement’ (Prebble et al. 2004, p. ix), encompassed in the Prebble Propositions.

The next step in developing the PSSO Framework was to test the trustworthiness of the Prebble Propositions for linking professional staff activities to student outcomes. After reviewing the literature, and consistent with my adoption of the epistemological
approach of pragmatic constructivism, I adapted the Schmidt Delphi method, described in Section 1.3 and my earlier paper (Graham 2010), to investigate the credibility of using the Prebble Propositions for my research study. After round one of the Delphi (Step 6 of Figure 7), propositions 4, 5 and 12 (Appendix Table A) were omitted as they related to behaviours currently relevant to academic staff only. However, as more professional staff enter and work in the *third space* between traditional professional and academic spaces (Whitchurch 2008b, 2009), and if the PSSO Framework is further developed, these propositions may need to be reinstated into the framework. Moreover, the open-ended comments from round one of the Delphi alluded to gaps in the Prebble Propositions, including the impact of technology and the diverse range of activities undertaken by professional staff. These matters became more evident as the framework was used in my case study, and are discussed in detail in Sections 2.2 and 2.3. At the conclusion of three Delphi rounds agreement was moderate, with the ranking order shown in Table 5 (Graham 2010). Further verification was achieved through member checking of the results.

With the successful outcome of the framework development, it was decided to use the PSSO Framework to analyse the case study data (Sections 2.2 and 2.3). Applying the PSSO Framework across the case study, the contributions of professional staff to student outcomes were found to be most significant in ensuring behaviours, environments and processes are welcoming and efficient (Graham 2012b, in press). This result confirmed the validity of the PSSO Framework. Furthermore, the PSSO Framework is currently being used in the UK, using the method I devised (Regan 2012, pers. comm., 24 January, 3 March and 29 June). The UK study is replicating my Delphi study using the information sheets, consent form and questionnaire sheet that I provided. In addition, I provided the UK researcher with suggestions on how to gain access to participants and how to address potential concerns of the ethics committee. Preliminary results from the first round of the UK study are consistent with the results in my study (Regan 2012, pers. comm., 12 November).
Table 5: Most highly ranked Prebble Propositions
(Graham 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Support Propositions</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Percentage Top Half</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional behaviours, environments and processes are welcoming and efficient</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic counselling and pre-enrolment advice are readily available to ensure students enrol in appropriate programs</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation and induction programs are provided to facilitate both social and academic integration</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A comprehensive range of institutional services and facilities is available</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The institution ensures there is an absence of discrimination on campus, so students feel valued, fairly treated and safe</td>
<td>6.28</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students working in academic learning communities have good outcomes</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The institution provides opportunities for students to establish social networks</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplemental instruction is provided</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer tutoring and mentoring services are provided</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The institutional culture, social and academic, welcomes diverse cultural capital and adapts to diverse students’ needs</td>
<td>7.52</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Pedagogical partnerships

... the term ‘pedagogy’ refers to how learning and teaching are often embedded in activities and relationships not formally designated as educational. (Lee, Dunston & Fowler 2012, p. 268).

Traditional, English-language, definitions of pedagogy focus on the teaching of children, while European cultures, for example, have used a broader definition (Watkins & Mortimore 1999). More recently, English-language usage has broadened to include ‘any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance the learning in another’ (Watkins & Mortimore 1999, p. 3) and, in the last 20 to 30 years, specific pedagogies such as critical and feminist have developed (Gore 1992). In the last decade, the understanding of the term pedagogy has developed further, such that, for the purposes of this study, the above definition by Lee, Dunston and Fowler (2012) is employed. This framing of the term pedagogy allows the work of professional staff, in relation to

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5 The percentage of panellists ranking each proposition in the top half of the rankings.
the achievement of positive student outcomes, to be conceptualised as being in pedagogical partnerships with others. In this context, learning and teaching occur through activities and relationships that contribute to student retention, persistence and achievement, and may be skills- and process-based rather than content-based.

Although not using the explicit term *pedagogical partnerships*, activities contributing to pedagogical partnerships were discussed in earlier papers and the management report (Graham 2012b, 2012c, 2013, in press). This section draws together that discussion, and frames it within the conceptualisation of pedagogical partnerships, as examined below.

Applying the PSSO Framework across the case study, the contributions of professional staff to student outcomes were found to be most significant in ensuring that behaviours, environments and processes are welcoming and efficient (Graham 2012b, 2013, in press), and in providing a comprehensive range of services and facilities (Graham 2012b, 2012c, 2013). In addition, there was a high level of co-occurrence between these two propositions. In exploring these themes in the data, four core sub-themes emerged, which elaborate these findings: changing and increasing use of technology for learning and learning environments, importance of knowledge of the participant and of colleagues, significance of helpful colleagues and supportive supervisors or managers, and the associated job satisfaction. Analysis and theorising of these sub-themes led to the conceptualisation of *pedagogical partnerships*.

**Pedagogical partnership – a working definition**

The term *pedagogical partnership* has been used across a broad spectrum of activities, for example: academic librarians working with faculty-based academics (Simmons 2005; Techataweewan, Woraratpanya & Sanrach 2009); families, schools and communities working together at pre-tertiary education levels (Ravn 2005); between academics (Cochrane & Bateman 2010); and between a number of different actors in complementary training programs in post-secondary education (Gendron 1997). A satisfactory definition of *pedagogical partnership* is not readily available, and this concept has not previously been applied to the work of professional staff. Relationships
that contribute to pedagogical partnerships for positive student outcomes, in the context of the work of professional staff, are illustrated in their most simple form in Figure 8.

![Figure 8: Relationships for pedagogical partnerships](image)

In Figure 8, the perspective of professional staff is placed centrally, with primary relationships for pedagogical activities indicated by dashed lines, while other relationships are indicated by dotted lines. All lines are shown with arrowheads at each end, suggesting two-way communication in the relationships, such as is required in partnerships. Nonetheless, this illustration belies the complexity of the activities and relationships. The central professional staff member may interact with each of the others sequentially, but often concurrently, within an activity, taking on a variety of roles, for example: advocate, information resource, instructor, etc. Combining, now, the definition of partnership as ‘a relationship between individuals or groups that is characterised by mutual co-operation and responsibility, as for the achievement of a specified goal’ (Oxford Dictionaries 2012), with the concept that pedagogy ‘refers to how learning and teaching are often embedded in activities and relationships not formally designated as educational’ (Lee, Dunston & Fowler 2012, p. 268), provides the
following working definition for *pedagogical partnerships* within the context of the work of professional staff in this study:

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.

Embodied in this definition is pedagogical work, implicit or explicit, occurring between participants in service partnerships, which develop new practices, dispositions and capacities for action (Lee & Dunston 2010). This suggests changes are occurring to professional practice particularly in relation to changing relationships (Lee, Dunston & Fowler 2012). The changing work and identities of professional staff are explored in Section 2.3, while the concept of pedagogical partnerships will now be explored in relation to the four domains that emerged from my case study: technology, staff knowledge, colleagues and supervisors, and job satisfaction. Each of these domains will be examined in terms of their contributions to the formation of pedagogical partnerships between professional staff and other key stakeholders, which support positive student outcomes. These activities are mediated through the framework of behaviours, environments and processes that are welcoming and efficient, or the provision of services to students provided by professional staff. This conceptualisation of pedagogical partnerships for professional staff is illustrated in Figure 9.
While changes in technology and its increasing use in higher education have impacted on the work of professional staff both operationally and in relation to technologies that support student learning, this analysis of pedagogical partnerships focuses on activities of professional staff that relate directly to student learning. My case study identified three key impacts of technology on higher education described by Wilen-Daugenti (2009): continual development of new technologies (Graham in press), increased use of technology (Graham in press), and changes to learning environments that are facilitated by technology (Graham 2012c). In addition, it was found that professional staff undertake activities in co-operation with students, with other professional staff and with academic staff, that use technology to facilitate student learning (Graham 2012c, 2013, in press).

A range of participants in the study described relationships with students involving technology, which I define as pedagogical partnerships in the domain of technology. For example, one participant described instructing students on the use of various software packages for use in assignment work, while another discussed teaching students how to use different technologies for accessing information (Graham 2012c). One participant described a pedagogical partnership with students that used technology to create a virtual learning environment to address a specific learning need:

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**Figure 9: Formation of pedagogical partnerships**

**Technology**

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A lot of the students have said “We would love to come but don’t have the time, so can you offer an online alternative?” So we started a Facebook group page and they can basically come in when they have the time. (Graham 2013, p. 5).

Other participants described pedagogical partnerships with other professional staff for the provision of information resources (Graham in press), or technologies that would support mobile learning (Graham 2012c). However, most relationships were more complex than one-on-one, and several participants described activities that encompassed pedagogical partnerships with a number of principal stakeholders.

Several activities using technology for learning, involved complex networks of relationships between professional staff and a combination of students, other professional staff and academic staff. One example of a three-way relationship was a project for the development of a new study program using a curriculum management system, in which one participant was working directly with academic staff and with external stakeholders (Graham 2013, pp. 6–7, in press). The study participant had to work in partnership with the academics to ensure that learning outcomes for students were being embedded throughout the program and the curriculum management system (CMS), and in partnership with the external stakeholders to ensure that external professional requirements were met. This pedagogical partnership would be further extended when the CMS was implemented and students were added to the relationships:

So a lot of the day-to-day explaining to students, I think, of how to use the technology and dealing with helping them to use the technology will be me rather than the academics . . . I will have a lot of monitoring of the students’ participation in online environments – so technology-based environments. We are going to be using social media a little bit more than we’ve ever done before and a lot of the monitoring of that will fall to me . . . I’m going to have a much closer role with the students than I did at [another university]. (Participant 14)

Another complex set of pedagogical partnerships involved the provision of assistive technology for students with special needs (Graham 2012c, 2013). In this case, the participant worked with students to assess their needs, with other professional staff to have material put into appropriate electronic formats, and with academic staff to ensure understanding of the accommodations required by the students (Graham 2013, pp. 4-5). Not only were student outcomes improved by these pedagogical partnerships, but also embedded in these activities was the opportunity for other staff, professional and academic, to learn about the needs of students with disabilities:
A student comes in who is blind and so there is a lot of preparation that needs to happen before the semester starts with getting those materials in an accessible format, but also informing the lecturer what to expect and what they need to do.

( Participant 8 )

These examples of pedagogical partnerships that harness new technologies for the provision of learning to students, illustrate the involvement that professional staff have in facilitating learning for students and the attainment of positive student outcomes. New learning technologies, and the infrastructure that underpins these learning technologies, are developed, implemented and maintained by professional staff in partnership with other groups ( Graham 2013, in press), forming pedagogical partnerships in the domain of technology. With the development and adoption of new technologies has been the requirement for increased and different knowledge for staff. New roles, such as educational designer and information services librarian, have arisen, occupying the third space between academic and professional staff, and require skills and knowledge from both sides of this space ( Whitchurch 2008c). These are explored further in Section 2.3. More generally, staff knowledge is an important factor in the provision of quality information and services that support the achievement of positive student outcomes ( Graham 2013, in press).

Staff knowledge

Staff knowledge has been recognised as a key factor for positive relationships between staff and customers in various industries ( Bitner, Booms & Tetreault 1990; Johnston 1995). In this study, participants recognised the importance of professional staff knowledge in meeting the needs of students effectively, and they identified two aspects of it: their own knowledge and knowledge held by other professional staff ( Graham 2012c, in press). In particular, staff knowledge influences whether behaviours, environments and processes are welcoming and efficient ( Graham in press), as well as impacting on the effectiveness of the services provided by professional staff ( Graham 2012c). For activities in these two areas, pedagogical partnerships that contribute to positive student outcomes may be formed between professional staff and other key stakeholders based on the use and sharing of staff knowledge.

Participants in my case study remarked ‘on the need for experience and knowledge to be effective in their roles’ ( Graham 2012c, p. 447). This process may also be viewed as
the development of expertise (Ericsson 2006a). Appropriate training for staff has been identified by other studies as necessary for high quality service (Chen 2012; Schneider, White & Paul 1998). For example, one participant in my study commented on the need for well-trained university security staff, who also manage contractor security staff: ‘Nobody notices until there is a crisis and then we just swing into action because we’ve practised and we know [what to do].’ (Graham in press, p. 5). This was illustrated by the example of medical emergencies, which rely on trained university security staff firstly to deal with a student in need and, secondly, to call for and liaise with paramedics. Hence, the ability to deal successfully with medical emergencies of students contributed to the retention of students. Another participant commented on the importance of training, not just for skill development, but also for development of a broader understanding of the university context (Graham in press). In this example, having broader knowledge of the university context enabled front-line staff to probe for underlying causes of presenting problems, generating learning that contributed to retention and hence to positive student outcomes: ‘So it’s really important to have the conversation, to make sure that you’ve got a handle on what they really want and I think that’s an area that I’d like to focus on with training [for staff].’ (Graham in press, p. 5). Both these scenarios are examples of training to acquire knowledge that could assist in the development of pedagogical partnerships that support student outcomes. Other participants commented on the importance of knowledge that was generated through experience.

So it’s just really having that prior kind of knowledge of being within the same university, but also the university sector . . . You kind of have a bit of an insight into how other areas of the university work . . . (Participant 5). (Graham 2012c, p. 447).

Simon and Chase proposed in 1973 (cited in Ericsson 2006b, p. 687) that expertise is developed through gradually acquired patterns and knowledge about how to react in situations through experience. Therefore expertise, developed through experience, is created when staff are retained within an organisation. Accordingly, ‘maintaining a stable workforce is a key element in effective talent management strategy’ (Deery 2008, p. 792). While there is an increasing understanding of the link between institutional performance and the ability to attract and retain the right staff (Gordon & Whitchurch 2007), the importance of retaining knowledgeable and experienced professional staff is
often overlooked. Nevertheless, in this study, participants associated staff knowledge, and the ability to effectively and efficiently support student needs, with retention of experienced staff: ‘But, yeah, to retain staff that have been here a while, that know about the whole university, we can provide a more in-depth support, for people, for students . . .’ (Participant 4) (Graham 2012c, p. 447).

With the development of expertise, comes a broader understanding of the context of higher education, the institution and the processes that support student outcomes. For example, one participant discussed the importance of retaining staff with knowledge about the whole institution, in relation to understanding the consequences of technology failures on student achievement (Graham 2013). Knowledge sharing was considered important in order to keep up with changes in processes, for example, as students often use professional staff as their ‘first port of call’ (Graham in press, p. 5). One participant commented that the lack of knowledge sharing was an impediment to providing effective service: ‘. . . they’ll go “I’ll do it for you”, but they won’t tell you how it’s done. That can be frustrating because the next time when you need to help a student you can’t, because you’ve got to refer it on again.’ (Participant 2).

These examples of pedagogical partnerships illustrate the need to attract and retain good professional staff, and to provide relevant professional development for these staff, so that students’ learning needs may be met in the most effective and efficient manner possible. While emphasis and resources have for some time been given to the attraction, retention and development of academic staff (for example: Cumming 2010; Darwin & Palmer 2009; Edwards & Smith 2010; Main 1993; Zuber-Skerritt 1992), these pedagogical partnerships suggest that attracting, retaining and developing professional staff also play a significant role in attaining positive student outcomes. Professional staff work in pedagogical partnerships with students, using their knowledge in active exchanges that result in learning and teaching for positive student outcomes. Professional staff also work in pedagogical partnerships with other professional staff and with academic staff, in which the expertise held by professional staff is crucial to the successful partnership. Developing a diversity of networks across the institution allows professional staff to access knowledge held by other staff.
**Attitudes of colleagues and supervisors**

The key resource for universities is their academic and general [professional] staff. In particular, it is the knowledge, skills, attitudes and performance of staff which directly affect the quality of academic teaching, research, consulting and community service, as well as how effectively our universities work in performing those activities. (Hoare 1995, p. 69)

In their report, Hoare and his colleagues associated knowledge, skills, attitudes and performance of staff with positive student outcomes (Hoare 1995). Responses from participants in my case study suggested that by having networks within their own units and across the university with a diversity of other staff, professional staff were able to provide more effective services to students (Graham 2012b, in press). Firstly, these networks enabled professional staff to identify other staff holding knowledge that would facilitate formation of pedagogical partnerships. Secondly, as will be discussed below, professional staff identified the importance of attitudes they observed in their colleagues, supervisors and managers (referred to hereafter as *staff attitudes*). Attitudes that professional staff perceived as positive could facilitate the provision of effective services to students, enabling the formation of pedagogical partnerships. In contrast, attitudes that were viewed as negative inhibited the development of pedagogical partnerships. My case study data indicated that the domain of staff attitudes relates most strongly to behaviours being welcoming and efficient (Graham 2012b).

In general, staff attitude is a crucial factor in determining the quality of service experience (Chase 1978), a concept that has also been applied to the higher education sector (Chen 2012). Indeed, the relationship between staff attitudes and quality of service was commented on by a number of participants (Graham in press). For example, one participant commented that having good relationships with their team enabled consistency of the services provided to students (Graham in press). The same participant also noted:

> I guess the best way of [keeping up with changes] has just been through making contacts with people, and you know who the helpful people are in each area, who ‘get’ what you’re trying to do [my emphasis] . . . That really helps because it just makes things a lot quicker. (Participant 8)

Here, the participant reveals that knowing others who are perceived to have positive attitudes contributed to more efficient completion of their own work. Another participant discussed the issues of staff coming from different discipline areas to solve
problems or provide learning for students. The perception that other staff had a willing and helpful attitude was believed to be important in achieving a successful outcome, and illustrates the formation of pedagogical partnerships based on positive attitudes:

Most of our IT people don’t really have a library background . . . they usually work in an office and are not seeing the students. It’s kind of hard for them when you tell them about a certain problem that seems too basic to them [such as] providing basic classes on how to use [Microsoft] Office . . . But generally once we try to explain it they try really hard to understand [my emphasis]. . . It’s a bit of a challenge but they’re really good. They try to take on board all the suggestions that we have [and] what we want to do here [my emphasis]. (Participant 10)

In contrast, lack of customer focus was observed by participants as being an obstacle to meeting the needs of students. One participant commented: ‘It’s frustrating when you see people treat them as a student number and dismiss their enquiries that come through’ (Graham in press, p. 6). While in some instances, this lack of customer focus was thought to result from poor staff attitude, there were other examples where poor customer service resulted from competing priorities that caused a lack of time to appropriately deal with student enquiries (Graham in press). For example, there was a perception that managers and supervisors were, at times, not concerned about service provision that would facilitate positive student outcomes. One participant commented:

We help people fix wireless problems, which can take a couple of hours each time, sometimes. We’re not supposed to, when the wireless network was rolled out . . . we were told, if we get questions about it, just to tell people that if they can’t work it out, they can’t use it. But none of us do that.

These examples illustrate the importance of recruiting and retaining professional staff, at all levels, who are perceived to have the right attitude. From this perspective, both students and other staff (academic and professional) are viewed as customers deserving of service at a level that satisfies the required outcomes rather than service at a level that simply answers the presenting problem. Once such staff are recruited, it becomes crucial to retain those staff, so that they can provide a resource to other staff, as well as directly to students. When there is a perception of positive attitudes, interaction is enhanced between professional staff and students, other professional staff and academic staff; hence, the formation of pedagogical partnerships is facilitated, leading to positive student outcomes. The data from my study highlight the importance of having good relationships with others, as well as effective and efficient work structures and
processes so that staff are empowered to provide the service that students need, which not only contributes to positive student outcomes, but also returns job satisfaction.

**Job satisfaction**

Job satisfaction may be defined as a ‘generally favorable job attitude’ (Grant 2008, p. 52). Importantly, job satisfaction has been linked with customer satisfaction (Nebeker et al. 2001), and with more general organisational benefits such as reduced absenteeism and turnover, and enhanced creativity and commitment (Chen et al. 2006; Harrison, Newman & Roth 2006). Being able to form pedagogical partnerships in the domains of technology, knowledge and attitudes, contributed to the job satisfaction for the professional staff in this study. In addition, the intrinsic motivation of being able to assist students effectively, thereby contributing to positive student outcomes from admission through to graduation, provided a high level of job satisfaction for participants in this study: ‘She [a student] came in tears and went away very happy, feeling confident that she could handle it [the assignment], and find the things she needed to answer those questions. That for me is a real win . . .’ (Graham in press, p. 8). Intrinsic motivators have been associated with job satisfaction in a number of studies (for example, Coster 1992; Herzberg 1987). In addition, it is recognised that satisfaction is also associated with engaging in intrinsically interesting activities (Ryan & Deci 2000a).

Both intrinsic and prosocial motivation was evident in participants’ behaviours and attitudes: ‘Some of the participants expressed prosocial motivation – the desire to benefit other people – in addition to intrinsic motivation’ (Graham in press, p. 7). Intrinsically motivated behaviours are based on the inherent satisfactions of the behaviours themselves (Deci & Ryan 2004) and require that three basic needs are satisfied: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan & Deci 2000b). Prosocial motivation is the desire to benefit other people, and the combination of intrinsic motivation and prosocial motivation is a good predictor of higher levels of persistence, performance and productivity (Grant 2008). The professional staff in this study were intrinsically motivated by their work, displaying ‘the inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to extend and exercise [their] capacities, to explore, and to learn’ (Ryan & Deci 2000b, p. 70), which gave them job satisfaction. Moreover, since
professional staff in this study were intrinsically motivated by activities that contributed to behaviours and services that led to positive student outcomes, job satisfaction is an enabler for pedagogical partnerships.

Indeed, job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation may be viewed as underpinning pedagogical partnerships in the three other domains discussed above. The autonomy, competence and relatedness that are fundamental to intrinsic motivation are also embedded in pedagogical partnerships, and require professional staff to encompass changing knowledge, skills and attitudes. It is increasing professionalisation and changing identities of professional staff, discussed in Section 2.3, that are enabling professional staff to enter into pedagogical partnerships with their key clients.

2.3 Professionalisation

Basically the question of who higher education professionals are and what they do touches upon a broad range of issues in higher education research, such as professionalisation, organisational research, governance, and management.

(Kehm 2012, p. 2)

As Kehm (2012) correctly suggests, the work and identities of professional staff in higher education are complex. During the course of this research project, the generalised theme of professionalisation emerged. Set in the context of the growing professionalisation (Graham 2012c) of the occupation of ‘new higher education professionals’ (Kehm 2012, p. 1), the associated theme of changing identities of professional staff emerged strongly (Graham 2012b, 2013). Changing work practices in relation to student outcomes is discussed in a third journal article (Graham in press). This section of the meta-statement brings together these discussions.

Growing professionalisation

Over the last two decades, increasing numbers of professionals have worked within large organisations, rather than operating as self-employed practitioners (Evetts 2010), contributing to the growth of ‘organisational professionalism’ (Evetts 2005, p. 9). Similarly, professionalisation of higher education workers is growing, and is part of more general changes in universities (Blümel 2008; Gornitzka & Larsen 2004; Szekeres
Frameworks for the professionalisation of university administrative staff have been developed by Gornitzka and Larsen (2004) and Blümel (2008), providing similar conceptualisations of this process (Graham 2012c). Using Blümel’s framework, Szekeres (2011) argues that some progress has been made towards the professionalisation of professional staff in Australian universities. Table 6 compares my case study data with the two European frameworks, suggesting some, but not complete, alignment of the case study data with the frameworks. Accordingly, my case study illustrates progress towards professionalisation, consistent with the contention that ‘while we are some way down the track to there being a profession, “higher education worker”, there is still some way to go’ (Szekeres 2011, p. 688).

### Table 6: Case study findings in relation to two frameworks for the professionalisation of university professional staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The emergence of a common cognitive basis.</td>
<td>The development of a specialised body of practical and problem-solving knowledge that becomes systematised.</td>
<td>Participants described their development of shared understanding of relevant knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An increase in requirements for formal qualifications required to hold university administrative positions.</td>
<td>The establishment of an academic program of study, qualification and training.</td>
<td>Most participants held degree-level qualifications, with several having more than one tertiary qualification and the median qualification level was a Bachelor’s degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The growth and formalisation of networks between university administrative staff.</td>
<td>A professional association or occupational network, which regulates entrance into the profession, provides a basis for knowledge exchange and licensing of qualifications.</td>
<td>Most participants were members of relevant professional associations – the more senior the participant’s position, the more their involvement in associations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An increase in formal status of university administrative positions.</td>
<td>Increased status and autonomy in decision-making.</td>
<td>Participants expressed their ability to make autonomous decisions, and the satisfaction thereby gained.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The contentious nature of the growing professionalisation of professional staff may result, in part, from the diverse range roles of professional staff, which has been noted and discussed by a number of authors (Graham 2010; Sebalj, Holbrook & Bourke 2012; Szekeres 2011). This diversity of roles indicates there is a need ‘to find new ways of
understanding and describing their [professional staff] contribution’ (Whitchurch 2006a), including an improved understanding and description of the changing professional identities of professional staff (Whitchurch 2006b). Professional identities are ‘perpetual works-in-progress’ (Clarke, Brown & Hailey 2009, p. 347) and, set in the context of growing professionalisation, participants in my study illustrated changing professional identities.

**Changing identities**

The extensive changes that have taken place over the last 25 years in Australian universities and their external environments, described in Section 1.2, have impacted on the roles of professional staff and their relationships with academics (Dobson & Conway 2001; Macfarlane 2011; McInnis 1998; McMaster 2002; Szekeres 2006, 2011). In the decade from the mid-1990s there was a shift upwards in the median level of professional staff positions, with outsourcing of lower level jobs such as cleaning and security (Dobson 2006) and a general movement from low-level clerical workers to higher-level professionals (Szekeres 2005). In addition, there has been a subsequent move by professional staff into the senior executive management of Australian universities (Szekeres 2011). Moreover, there has been a blurring of the boundaries between professional and academic roles, noted in Australia almost two decades ago (Hoare 1995; Moodie 1993; Pickersgill, van Barneveld & Bearfield 1998), with the blurring originating from both academic and professional directions (Hoare 1995). Although this trend has continued, tensions remain, with fragility of relationships between professional staff and academics being noted (Szekeres 2011), and concern expressed about the up-skilling of professional staff and the de-skilling of academics (Macfarlane 2011). As a result of these changes in the roles of professional staff, there have been consequent changes to their professional identity.

‘Professional identity is not a stable entity, it is complex, personal, and shaped by contextual factors’ (Clarke, Hyde & Drennan 2013, p. 7). As noted in my paper (Graham 2012c), professional identity has been defined as professional self-concept based on the attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences of working lives (Ibarra 1999; Schein 1978). Accordingly, changes in work roles are accompanied by changes in professional identity, since new roles require new skills, behaviours,
attitudes, and patterns of interactions (Ibarra 1999). With the changing context of higher education, professional staff are increasingly working in changing environments in which they need to take on new responsibilities and increasingly complex work. In Australia, there is a growing body of literature on the changing identities of professional staff (Berman & Pitman 2010; Dobson 2000; Small 2008; Szekeres 2011). In Europe, substantial research has been undertaken on this topic, some of which is in English (for example, Krücken, Blümel & Kloke 2009; Schneijderberg & Merkator 2013), while in the United Kingdom (UK) Whitchurch has contributed extensively to the discourse on professional identities (2006b, 2007, 2008a, 2008c, 2010).

Also in the UK, Middlehurst discusses the development of ‘borderless professionals’ (2010, pp. 239-243). Such *borderless professionals* will need to both develop and demonstrate a range of professional capabilities. These capabilities will, perforce, include IT skills, as well as a range of interpersonal skills such as networking and negotiating skills, and aptitudes such as intercultural sensitivity and political understanding. Higher education professionals of the future will work across boundaries, challenging the status quo and require strong conceptual and intellectual skills. In Germany, Schneijderberg and Merkator propose an ‘overlap model’ (2013, pp. 79-80) for professional identities within higher education. Their model is based on the existing binary divide of academic and administrative staff, with the addition of ‘higher education professionals (HEPROs)’ in between (2013, p. 79), with ‘academic overlap’ and ‘administrative overlap’ creating space for interactions (2013, p. 80). This model is conceptually similar to that of Whitchurch, with the HEPROs equivalent to *unbounded* and *blended* professionals (Whitchurch 2008a, 2009).

Based on a range of research into professional identities and her own empirical research, Whitchurch developed a typology of professional identities with four categories for professional staff in higher education: *bounded*, *cross-boundary*, *unbounded* and *blended* (2008a, 2009). Bounded professionals are defined as concerned with ‘the maintenance of boundaries to ensure continuity of processes and structures’ (Whitchurch 2008a, p. 382) within a ‘well-defined organisational or functional location’ (Whitchurch 2008b, p. 385). In contrast, cross-boundary professionals work in ‘perimeter’ roles (Whitchurch 2008b) and use ‘boundaries, and knowledge of space on either side of them, to reinforce institutional capacity on an
ongoing basis’. Somewhat similarly, unbounded professionals have ‘disregard for boundaries and a focus on institutional development for the future’ (Whitchurch 2008a, pp. 382-383). Both cross-boundary and unbounded professionals originate in mainstream professional roles, albeit operating on the borders of academic space (Whitchurch 2008c). In distinction, blended professionals do not originate in professional roles, but occupy dedicated appointments that span both professional and academic domains (Whitchurch 2008b). In doing so, they cross internal and external institutional boundaries, and contribute, along with unbounded professionals, to the development of a third space between professional and academic domains (Whitchurch 2008b, 2009). Blended professionals are often engaged in project work (Whitchurch 2008c) and will typically have a postgraduate qualification, many at doctoral level (Whitchurch 2009).

Participants in my case study demonstrated characteristics of all four categories of professional identity (Graham 2012b, 2013). Four case profiles, featured in my paper (Graham 2013), were used to illustrate the different professional identities, through analysing behaviours and attributes of individuals, and mapping these behaviours and attributes to descriptors for the professional identities developed by Whitchurch (2008a, 2009). These case profiles are examples of professional staff who provide various services that facilitate student learning, particularly related to the development and use of technology: the IT support officer (ITSO) who works in a central IT department, the senior disability services officer (SDSO) working in a central student services office, the centrally based information services librarian (ISL) and the faculty-based educational designer (ED). These narratives are situated within the context of changes to technology in higher education, and they illustrate that the identities of professional staff are changing and are moving towards the third space described by Whitchurch (2008b), which is illustrated in Figure 10. A brief analysis of these case profiles is provided below, with reference to the analysis and individual mapping discussed in my earlier paper (Graham 2013), whilst a composite mapping of behaviours and attributes to identity characteristics is provided in Table 7.
The four case profiles

As described in my paper (Graham 2013), the IT Support Officer (ITSO) worked in a standard IT support role, rotating through five different functional areas on a quarterly basis: phone support, online support, face-to-face support at a centrally based counter, computer lab support and staff desktop support. The work required in these five different areas, although specialised, was fairly routine. For example, when providing face-to-face counter support there was little discretion required or permitted in this activity, reflecting the bounded nature of this role. Nevertheless, although required to solve only a limited range of immediate and routine IT problems, the ITSO demonstrated the ability to contextualise IT problems encountered by students within a broader learning experience, which allowed solutions to be found that contributed to achieving positive student outcomes. This understanding of the broader context gave meaning to the work, and the ITSO was therefore willing to go beyond routine technical assistance, voluntarily, to ensure positive outcomes. As such, the identity of the ITSO comprised two parts – technical expertise, and knowledge of university processes – thereby demonstrating characteristics of both bounded and cross-boundary professional identities. Moreover, the ITSO recognised that this understanding might not be possible for others in similar roles who lacked institutional knowledge, thereby suggesting that the cross-boundary nature of this ITSO had developed freely, over time.
The Senior Disability Support Officer (SDSO) had disability services experience both inside and outside the higher education sector (Graham 2013). The SDSO provided a wide range of support to students who were registered with the university’s special needs service, including one-on-one consultations with students, referral to other services, liaising with academic staff concerning their specific needs, ensuring that special exam provisions were accommodated, and working with faculties that have practical placements to ensure appropriate accommodations were made. This SDSO clearly articulated the changes to the special needs services that had been either triggered by or facilitated by changes in technology, and which required working across boundaries within the university. The SDSO focused on building relationships and developing key alliances, avoiding the isolation that can occur for bounded professionals (Whitchurch 2008a). The SDSO acted as a nodal point for students with special needs, building key relationships with academic staff and operating on the borders of academic space, as well as forming alliances with other professional staff for institutional development. In addition, the SDSO recognised benefits to more general student learning that were provided by the special needs services, demonstrating thinking beyond the boundaries of the SDSO role. Thus the SDSO demonstrated characteristics of both a cross-boundary professional and an unbounded professional (Whitchurch 2008c).

The Information Services Librarian (ISL) had worked in university library services both in Australian and overseas, and held both Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees (Graham 2013). The ISL provided information services to students and staff, involving a combination of general and tailored activities. Typical activities included delivering just-in-time support to students and staff at the research help desk, liaising with academics to determine specific research skills required by students in forthcoming assignments in order to develop and deliver workshops to address those needs, and developing and delivering generic information skills workshops. In addition, the ISL was creating a new space by developing a flexible, online option for one of these supplemental instruction activities. The ISL articulated a focus on the future, both in relation to institutional development and also in relation to their project current work, which is a characteristic of unbounded professionals (Whitchurch 2008a). By working in collaboration with academics, and by creating new services to directly support
student learning, the ISL was contributing to the creation of a third space between professional and academic domains, in which professional services are oriented towards partnership with academic colleagues (Whitchurch 2008b). As such, the ISL demonstrated characteristics of both an unbounded and blended professional (Whitchurch 2008b, 2009).

Prior to entering the university sector, the Educational Designer (ED) had experience teaching academic literacy skills and, subsequently, writing material for on-line academic literacy courses in a private college of further education (Graham 2013). The ED had a Master’s degree and was employed in the development of a new professional degree program. The ED was responsible for developing a consistent and complete structure for the new program, ensuring that the requirements of external professional stakeholders were met. In addition, the ED was sourcing a suitable curriculum management system for providing learning analytics and tracking learning outcomes. Another key project was the management of a sector-wide website for the collaborative development of learning materials for this professional course. The ED worked with academic staff in a highly collaborative environment, with a focus on achieving the required outcomes. The ED identified the importance of professional networks, which extended well beyond the institution and are a characteristic of a blended professional. In working in a team with academic staff, taking on ‘quasi-academic roles’ (Whitchurch 2008b, pp. 379-380) through curriculum development, teaching and assessment, research and co-authoring peer-reviewed publications, the ED demonstrated working in the third space. The ED in this study clearly illustrated characteristics of blended identities holding a dedicated appointment, albeit nominally a professional role, that spanned both professional and academic domains.

Table 7 maps behaviours and attributes of the ITSO, SDSO, ISL and ED to characteristics of the four categories of professional identities, which is a composite of the mappings shown in my earlier paper (Graham 2013). In doing so, a visualisation is provided of the movement towards unbounded and blended identities in the third space. That movement of professional identities has occurred concurrently with changes in technology is not surprising, given the massive changes that technology has brought into our lives more generally. Indeed, almost two decades ago, Gavin Moodie foreshadowed the blurring of professional and academic roles resulting from new
Table 7: Mapping of identity characteristics and individual behaviours
(after Graham 2013; Whitchurch 2008a, 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional identity (Whitchurch 2008a, 2009)</th>
<th>Identified characteristics (Whitchurch 2008a, 2009)</th>
<th>Identified examples of behaviours (Graham 2013)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ITSO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bounded</td>
<td>• Prescribed/closed-off processes, systems or regulations</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Process/information oriented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Technical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Based on service/support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provides advice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Knows the answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-boundary</td>
<td>• Facilitates interpretation between functions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses interpretive, translational knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Strong ties within prime functional area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Weak ties to institute or sector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Constructs institutional alliances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Negotiates agreement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contributes to ongoing decisions &amp; outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unbounded</td>
<td>• Creates new activity or knowledge space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses knowledge or experience from outside sector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contextualises knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Future oriented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Represents nodal points in networks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Strong ties with project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Creativity, originality and innovation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Institutional development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blended</td>
<td>• Accommodates the ambiguities of third space between professional and academic domains</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Undertakes research into institutional activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Embeds and integrates professional and academic knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Forms alliances with key partners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Enters and understands academic discourse or debate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Constructs professional networks, internally and externally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Offers academic credentials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Achieves credibility in academic debate or space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ indicates examples of behaviours that were identified (Graham 2013)
☐ indicates no behaviours were identified
technology: ‘The distinction between academic and general [professional] staff will be further eroded as technologies are introduced into the teaching-learning process’ (Moodie 1993, p. 8).

2.4 How do professional staff contribute to student outcomes?

In investigating this question, three key conceptualisations emerged: the Professional Staff–Student Outcomes Framework, pedagogical partnerships, and professionalisation. These conceptualisations provide a framework for understanding how, and to some extent why, professional staff contribute to student outcomes.

Development of the Professional Staff–Student Outcomes (PSSO) Framework allowed investigation of the research questions for this project. Using the PSSO Framework and case study methodology, analysis of interview data in my research led to the emergence of the concept of pedagogical partnerships. Furthermore, the PSSO is currently being used to investigate the work of professional staff at one university in the UK.

Data from my case study demonstrated that it is through the formation of pedagogical partnerships that professional staff contribute to student outcomes. This outcome is consistent with the approach of symbolic interactionism, which ‘focuses on interaction rather than on personality, society or the influence of others’ (Charon 2009, p. 40). In particular, as illustrated in Figure 9, this contribution is made through interacting with others and providing behaviours, environments and processes that are welcoming and efficient, as well as by providing a comprehensive range of services and facilities. Conditions such as changing technology, increasing staff knowledge, perceived positive attitudes and the resultant job satisfaction, act as enablers for the development of pedagogical partnerships.

The phenomenon of changing identities, which is set in the context of growing professionalisation of professional staff, emerged in this study as both an enabler and a driver for the development of pedagogical partnerships. Hence, the concept of changing identities can be thought of as both a how and a why in relation to the contributions of professional staff to student outcomes. 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.

Combined, these frameworks indicate the increasing and diverse contributions that professional staff make to student outcomes, particularly by providing behaviours, environments and processes that are welcoming and efficient, as well as by providing a comprehensive range of services and facilities. This is based on their increased expertise from formal qualifications and their own professional networks, enacted through pedagogical partnerships with students, other professional staff, academic staff and, at times, external stakeholders. This is enabled and driven by changing identities and a blurring of the boundaries between academic and professional staff.
Section 3 Wrapping up

‘I think those kind of interactions [of professional staff with students] are not really valued or recognised.’ (Participant 8)

The purpose of this doctorate was to investigate the work of professional staff in relation to student outcomes, from the perspective of professional staff themselves. For too long, professional staff have been ‘invisible workers’ (Szekeres 2004, p. 7) in higher education. As noted by the participant above, the work of professional staff is often neither noticed nor appreciated for its worth. In particular, this research project focused on the work of professional staff in relation to student outcomes, which has received little previous attention. Through this research, two significant, original contributions to the knowledge and practice of higher education work emerged: the Professional Staff–Student Outcomes Framework, and pedagogical partnerships for understanding the contribution of professional staff to student outcomes. Specifically, it was found that professional staff contribute to the achievement of positive student outcomes through interactions with others, providing behaviours, environments and processes that are welcoming and efficient, as well as by providing a comprehensive range of services and facilities. In addition, a third conceptualization became evident – that of growing professionalisation with the key theme of changing identities – which extended the Whitchurch typology of professional identities (Whitchurch 2008a, 2009) to more junior professional staff than had been the subject of Whitchurch’s investigations.

3.1 In summary

The driver for this research project was a pragmatic interest in the value of the work of professional staff. As a member of professional staff, I was concerned to understand and to communicate how professional staff contribute to the core business of higher education, particularly in relation to the achievement of positive student outcomes. With increasing external pressures and external accountabilities, I believe it is imperative that the work of all staff in higher education is understood, valued and employed optimally, to enhance the future prospects of universities.
Consistent with this practice-based perspective, I adopted a pragmatic constructivist paradigm with a symbolic interactionism approach as the foundations for my research. Using a two-stage methodology of a Delphi study followed by a case study, I adapted the Schmidt Delphi method and used semi-structured interviews to collect my data. In the Delphi study, I used statistical methods and derived Kendall’s coefficient of concordance to analyse the data. Using the Professional Staff–Student Outcomes Framework I developed from the Delphi study, I coded the interview data from the case study with the assistance of the online coding tool, Dedoose.

As a practitioner, my desire to contribute to professional practice and the dissemination of knowledge about professional practice led me to undertake this research as a professional doctorate by portfolio. The approach has enabled me to address three difference audiences – the academe, the profession and the workplace – in a direct and timely manner, with a range of appropriate artefacts. This portfolio contains only a small sample of these artefacts, yet together the meta-statement and portfolio artefacts demonstrate the doctoralness of this research project.

Emerging from the data, three key conceptualisations formed, which provide a framework for understanding how, and partly why, professional staff contribute to student outcomes. I have named the first conceptualisation the Professional Staff–Student Outcomes Framework (PSSO), and have defined the second as pedagogical partnerships. Finally, growing professionalisation provided the context for changing identities of professional staff.

As no suitable frameworks were found for investigation of how professional staff contributed to student outcomes, I developed the PSSO Framework. The PSSO Framework and case study methodology allowed for analysis of my interview data. From this analysis, the concept of pedagogical partnerships arose, with the data indicating that it is through the formation of pedagogical partnerships that professional staff contribute to student outcomes. Conditions such as changing technology, increasing staff knowledge, perceived positive attitudes and the resultant job satisfaction, act as enablers for the development of pedagogical partnerships. Lastly, the phenomenon of changing identities emerged as both an enabler (how) and a driver (why) for the development of pedagogical partnerships.
While it is evident that some observers believe that professional staff have nothing to do with the achievement of successful student outcomes (Bokor 2012), my study, through this meta-statement, the portfolio artefacts as well as the non-portfolio artefacts, demonstrates otherwise.

3.2 From ‘Support and Success’ to ‘Pedagogical Partnerships’

When I commenced this doctoral journey, I was using the working title: *Support and Success: Contributions of general staff to student outcomes*. Since starting this research project, conditions in higher education have continued to change – one of these changes has been the generalised change in Australia in nomenclature from *general staff* to *professional staff*, as discussed in Section 1.2. Accordingly, in May 2010 I changed the working title to: *Support and Success: Contributions of professional staff to student outcomes*. As I gathered my data, and increasingly during analysis, it became clear to me that this working title no longer adequately described the study or reflected its findings. As a result, in September 2012 I changed the title to *Pedagogical Partnerships and Professionalisation: Changing work and identities of professional staff at one Australian university*. Although the title no longer makes explicit the focus on the contributions of professional staff to student outcomes, the findings of this study have become much more extensive than just activities that contribute directly to student outcomes. In itself, the final title alludes to the growing professionalisation that provides a context for the study, which is acting as both a driver and an enabler for the pedagogical partnerships. Pedagogical partnerships provide the means for contributing to student outcomes – the changing work – while changing identities is a major theme in the growing professionalisation found in this study. These changes demonstrate part of my changing understanding as I undertook the doctoral journey. Signs of this doctoral journey may be noted in various artefacts and Appendices contained in this portfolio.

3.3 Significance and impact

The significance of my research arises from three main factors: the need to place ‘teaching and learning at the centre’ of university business (Fullan & Scott 2009, p. 55);
the large numbers and high proportion of professional staff in universities – ‘more than half the total staff population of Australian universities’ (Graham 2012c, p. 439); and the gap in knowledge about the work of professional staff, particularly in relation to student outcomes as there is ‘little research into the contributions that professional staff make to the core business of learning and teaching’ (Graham 2012c, p. 438). Not only does my research fill a gap, it fills a significant gap in both practice knowledge and theoretical framework, both in Australia and overseas: ‘The area of your work is totally unexplored in my institution’ (Regan 2012, pers. comm., 24 January). Hence, my research has significance across all three audiences for this professional doctorate: academe, profession and workplace.

At the time of writing this meta-statement, my research is already having impact. Indeed, one advantage of taking the portfolio approach to my doctoral research has been the impetus to produce artefacts, some of which are included in this portfolio. These artefacts have influenced professional and workplace conversations as well as academic discussions.

*Academic impact*

To date, my first journal article (Graham 2010) has been cited by two other authors in journal articles (Sebalj, Holbrook & Bourke 2012; Szekeres 2011) and in one book chapter (Schneijderberg & Merkator 2013). The two journal articles are both from the *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management (JHEPM)*, which published my own paper, which also indicates interest in my work by my peers who read this journal. The Schneijderberg & Merkator chapter (2013) is in a book that has its roots in Europe (Kehm & Teichler 2013) and indicates a wider readership of my work. The presentation I gave at the academic conference in December 2011 (Graham 2011a) led to the replication of my Delphi study in the UK (Regan 2012, pers. comm., 24 January and 3 March). Both papers I submitted to *JHEPM* have been published: (Graham 2010) and (Graham 2012c). This is not insignificant, as the journal’s current acceptance rate is about 25% (Dobson 2012). In addition, I have been asked to review three journal articles in the last five months for the *JHEPM*, suggesting that I have attained a certain reputation in my field. This activity has both academic and professional impact, since both academic staff and professional practitioners read this journal.
Professional impact

The Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management (JHEPM) is the official journal of the Association for Tertiary Education Management (ATEM) and the LH Martin Institute. Consequently, it is read by professional staff, particularly those who are members of ATEM. In addition to professional impact in Australia, I have had professional impact upon an international audience. Via my research website (Graham 2012a), I have had visitors from universities in a diverse range of countries, including Canada, South Africa, Singapore and Greece, as well as many from the USA and the UK. I also had my first paper (Graham 2010) cited in one professional report written in the UK (Cooke 2010). Moreover, for the presentation I gave at the Association of University Administrators (AUA) annual conference (Graham 2011b), I received very positive feedback with above average ratings on all criteria (Ashcroft 2011, pers. comm., 22 September). I have also recently had a paper published electronically in the AUA peer-reviewed journal Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education, which will be in print in 2013 (Graham 2013).

Workplace impact

The timing of my current research outputs is opportune, as UTS is about to commence negotiations on the Enterprise Agreements with relevant unions, the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) and the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU). Although there has yet to be response to my management report (Graham 2012b) from the members of the UTS Senior Executive to whom it was sent, there has been interest in my research from both the UTS Human Resources Unit (Carroli 2012, pers.comm., 2 November) and the NTEU (Viset 2012, pers. comm., 1 November). More personally, undertaking this doctoral research has provided me with greater personal professional insights, allowing me to be more effective in my role as a tertiary education manager. For example, I have developed a pathway scheme through which research staff in my work unit\(^6\) can apply for promotion from HEW Level 7 to Academic Level B. This proposal has been signed off by the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Booth 2012, pers. comm., 20 November), and will begin to be implemented. Currently, this scheme is unique at UTS, but it has generated interest from other academic units (Hume 2012, 2013).

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\(^6\) The Institute for Sustainable Futures, UTS.
pers. comm., 29 November). In time, similar schemes may be implemented in such units.

3.4 Implications for practice and policy

Imagining more productive relationships in higher education, in ways that do not look nostalgically backwards to an older, more elitist system, may be part of the first steps towards realising universities as more humane places in which to practice. (Clegg & McAuley 2005, p. 13)

There may be a perception amongst academic staff that professional staff are remote from academic activities (Wallace & Marchant 2011). However, my research demonstrates that professional staff, across a range of different roles and seniority levels, are interested in and engaged in supporting positive student learning outcomes. The improved understanding of the work of professional staff that has been generated by this research project provides opportunity for substantial changes to practice and policy. Building on Whitchurch’s (2008a, 2009) typology of bounded, cross-boundary, unbounded and blended professionals, the analysis in Section 2.3 shows that the professional staff in my case study span all four professional identities and show movement towards the third space. Although Whitchurch (2008a) developed her framework for professional staff at management levels, my study extends the framework to more junior roles, reinforcing Whitchurch’s contention that third space work is ‘indicative of future trends in professional identities’ (2008b, p. 377). Yet, like the ‘overlap model’ (Schneijderberg & Merkator 2013), the Whitchurch typology describes a linear continuum of professional identities from ‘routine’ professionals through to ‘traditional’ academics. This limitation may miss a deeper complexity of higher education professional identities, which I address in my matrix model.

Rather than a binary divide between professional and academic staff, or a continuum from professional/administrative to academic roles, I am proposing a matrix structure as a framework in which to locate all university staff: the Roles Matrix (Figure 11). The dimensions of this matrix are academic focus/skills, encompassing both teaching and research, and management focus/skills. By conceptualising the roles of all university staff in a two-dimensional matrix the concept of the third space, with unbounded and blended professionals, is accommodated, as shown. However, the matrix model is
significantly more accommodating than either the Whitchurch typology or the ‘overlap model’ (Schneijderberg & Merkator 2013). The two-dimensional matrix could be extended into a third dimension (thereby becoming a cubic space) in order to delineate specialisations such as different academic disciplines or professional functions; however, this third dimension might unnecessarily complicate the model, and it is my contention that all positions could be mapped to the two-dimensional matrix.

Figure 11: Roles Matrix: a two-dimensional conception of university roles

Three key benefits arise from this matrix conceptualisation, which relate to understanding and developing the capabilities of all staff. Firstly, an improved understanding of the organisational capabilities of the institution could be generated, by mapping individual roles to this matrix. Secondly, a clearer view of the potential pathways for career progressions for staff would become apparent. Finally, an
understanding of the equivalent value of different roles could be developed. These three points will be explored below.

Firstly, mapping all roles in an institution to the two-dimensional Roles Matrix shown in Figure 11 would enable an improved understanding of staff capabilities across all functions. Such an improved understanding would benefit the institution by enhancing workforce planning through ‘supply analysis’ (Anderson 2004, p. 363), as the mapping would help to identify both capacity and gaps in the workforce. Workforce planning, or capacity planning, is a key part of business planning (Turner 2010), and should be part of an organisation’s overall talent management (Conlon, Norman & Sorensen 2010). Moreover, having better understanding of organisational capacity will assist in its development, management and alignment with institutional strategic directions, which will contribute to the achievement of organisational strategic goals.

Secondly, allowing staff to maximise their careers by facilitating progressions that might not be obvious or even possible with the current binary divide between academic and professional staff, has both individual and organisational benefits. Currently, career progression for professional staff typically has two routes: appointment to a different role at a higher HEW level, or reclassification of a current role to a higher HEW level. In contrast, academic promotions have well-established, formal, merit-based procedures that are clearly defined (Moodie 2002), which apply to individuals and provide ‘a mechanism for the recognition and reward of academic staff’ (University of Technology, Sydney 2012). Nevertheless, there are limitations to academic promotions, usually based on quotas at academic Levels D and above. For both professional and academic staff, more flexible options for career development could be of individual benefit. Significantly, there are signs that the binary divide is starting to crumble in some locations. For example, there are increasing numbers of professional staff in senior executive roles in Australian universities (Szekeres 2011), and the Library Professional Staff promotions policy and the associated procedure at Latrobe University are structured very much like typical academic promotions (Latrobe University 2012). In addition, the Enterprise Agreement that is currently under negotiation at Curtin University is a single agreement for both professional and academic staff (McGowan 2012). These examples illustrate recognition of institutional benefits that accrue from having a more flexible approach to career progression for professional staff.
Finally, an understanding of the equivalent value of different roles could be developed, thereby allowing the development of a single pay spine that would permit equal pay for equal value of work. There are several general organisational advantages of embedding equal pay for equal value of work, including a positive impact on female workers, a more effective use of skills and improved human resource management, better working relationships, and positive effects on organisational reputation (International Labour Organisation 2011). Within the context of the higher education sector, implementation of the principle of equal pay for equal value of work could be framed using the Roles Matrix and a single pay spine. A single pay spine and lines of ‘iso-pay’ – that is, lines connecting roles of equal pay – are shown in Figure 12. 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, ‘to serve The University and its students’ (Sharafizad, Paull & Omari 2011 p. 47). This is contingent on recruiting and retaining the right staff, be they professional or academic, which would be facilitated by implementation of the Roles Matrix and a single pay spine.
While the Roles Matrix and the single pay spine with its lines of ‘iso-pay’ are not mentioned in any of my portfolio artefacts, I plan to eventually write a more detailed exposition of the conceptualisations for publication. These conceptualisations, along with an associated single enterprise agreement for all university staff, are somewhat radical proposals that have significant human resources and industrial relations implications. Non-salary benefits and conditions such as flexible working arrangements and systems to ensure necessary work–life balance across all roles would also need to be provided equitably to all staff. Given these potential complexities, it would be useful to learn from the UK experience, where equivalence was determined across all professional and academic positions (other than clinical academics) (Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff n.d.), and a single pay spine has been implemented progressively across UK universities since 2006 (University and College Union n.d.). The UK implementation did not conceive of a matrix approach, however, and a binary divide remains between the roles for academic and professional staff.

Figure 12: Single pay spine showing lines of ‘iso-pay’
3.5 Recommendations for further research

The lesson has to be humility: no perspective, no matter how useful, can tell us all there is about any situation. (Charon 2009, p. 183)

This research project approached the question of how professional staff contribute to student outcomes from one approach only: a pragmatic constructivist epistemology with a symbolic interactionism approach, viewing the research topic from the perspectives of professional staff themselves. Furthermore, because the research was conducted with only 14 participants at a particular university, at a particular time, the results are necessarily focused. However, the strategy of limiting the number of participants to 14 made the study manageable, yet allowed for both major and minor themes to be revealed (Guest, Bunce & Johnson 2006). Although this case study was intended to be illustrative, responses to my artefacts suggest a resonance with many professional staff and a level of ‘reader or user generalisability’ (Merriam 1998, p. 211).

Further investigation is needed into the work and identities of professional staff, including pedagogical partnerships and professionalisation, to verify and consolidate these findings. Such research could include replication studies using the PSSO Framework, as is currently being undertaken in the UK, and similar case studies at other universities. Also, different methodologies could be used to provide different views of this research question, including using different sources of data to validate the results. This would provide greater insight for university senior managers, supervisors of professional staff, and academic staff who work with professional staff.

Even so, my research has provided original contributions, to both professional knowledge and practice, of significance and impact. Firstly, two conceptualisations – Professional Staff–Student Outcomes Framework and the concept of pedagogical partnerships – provide a means for understanding the contributions of professional staff to student outcomes. Finally, the key theme of changing identities, contextualised within growing professionalisation, became evident across a wide range of professional staff, which extended the Whitchurch typology of professional identities (Whitchurch 2008a, 2009).
## Appendices

### Appendix I. Prebble Propositions

**Appendix Table A: Description of Prebble Propositions**

*(after Prebble et al. 2004)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Support Propositions</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Institutional behaviours, environments and processes are welcoming and efficient</td>
<td>Students’ enquiries are dealt with promptly, knowledgeably and with a friendly manner, and the institutional and physical environment meets their needs and expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The institution provides opportunities for students to establish social networks</td>
<td>Student clubs, societies and activities are supported, and facilities and events are provided to support socialisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Academic counselling and pre-enrolment advice are readily available to ensure students enrol in appropriate programs</td>
<td>Students are provided with high quality advice and information concerning program choices, and links are established with secondary schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Lecturers are approachable and accessible inside and outside class times for academic discussions</td>
<td>Students benefit from regular and meaningful formal and informal contact with academics, particularly when a learning community is developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Students experience good quality teaching and manageable workloads</td>
<td>The quality and teaching methodologies can have an impact on student outcomes, as can a manageable workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Orientation and induction programs are provided to facilitate both social and academic integration</td>
<td>Both academic orientation and general orientation programs can improve student outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Students working in academic learning communities have good outcomes</td>
<td>The deliberate use and facilitation of learning communities has a positive impact on student outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. A comprehensive range of institutional services and facilities is available</td>
<td>Student outcomes are improved by the provision of services and facilities that support both the social and academic integration of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Supplemental instruction is provided</td>
<td>Academic support programs in programs that students find difficult improve student outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Peer tutoring and mentoring services are provided</td>
<td>Students benefit from well-designed and well-run peer tutoring and mentoring programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The institution ensures there is an absence of discrimination on campus, so students feel valued, fairly treated and safe</td>
<td>When diversity is welcomed and valued, and students feel physically and psychologically safe, student outcomes are improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Institutional processes cater for diversity of learning preferences</td>
<td>Students have different learning styles, which need to be accommodated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The institutional culture, social and academic, welcomes diverse cultural capital and adapts to diverse students’ needs</td>
<td>The diverse backgrounds of students should be affirmed and accommodated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix II.  Introduction letters and consent form – Delphi study

Faculty Managers’ letter

17 April 2009

Carroll Graham
Doctor of Education student
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Main Campus
PO Box 123 Broadway
NSW 2007 Australia
T: +61 2 9514 4975
F: +61 2 9514 4941
Carroll.Graham@uts.edu.au
www.uts.edu.au

[Redacted]

Dear

Support and Success: Contributions of general staff to student outcomes

My name is Carroll Graham and I am a doctoral student at the University of Technology, Sydney. In addition, I am a member of staff at UTS’s Institute for Sustainable Futures.

I am conducting research into how general staff contribute to student outcomes, and I am now formally contacting you as Faculty Manager [redacted] for approval to approach staff in your faculty to assist with my research. I would welcome your support of my research, which is outlined on the attached information sheet.

In the first stage of my research I will be using the Delphi Method, which requires the use of an expert panel to complete a series of two or three surveys. Between each survey round, the results will be analysed, and then fed back to the panel members for re-consideration. The panel members do not meet and they complete the surveys at their convenience within a specified timeframe (usually 2 weeks from receipt of each survey). Each survey should take no more than 10-20 minutes, for a total commitment to this research stage of about half an hour to one hour. Confidentiality will be maintained, as all survey results will be de-identified prior to my analysis.

The expert panel will comprise a number of experienced general staff, who are considered experts in their work. Specifically, I am seeking to survey general staff who have significant experience in higher education (greater than 5 years) from a range of different positions — including administrative, technical, marketing, curriculum development, student support and so on — thereby providing a representative group of experts with expertise in the normal operations of general (support) staff within the context of faculties or schools. As such, I would appreciate your approval to approach staff in your faculty who meet these criteria. In order to provide an audit trail for my research, could you please indicate your response to my request in writing?

If you have any questions or comments about this research, please contact me by email on Carroll.Graham@uts.edu.au or by phone on 9514 4975.

Yours sincerely,

Carroll Graham
Carroll.Graham@uts.edu.au

Ethics approval: UTS HREC REF NO. 2008-331A

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY
Dear [Redacted]

Support and Success: Contributions of general staff to student outcomes

My name is Carroll Graham and I am a doctoral student at the University of Technology, Sydney. In addition, I am a member of staff at UTS’s Institute for Sustainable Futures.

I am conducting research into how general staff contribute to student outcomes, and you have been referred to me as a member of general staff who is considered highly competent, and who would be capable of contributing to my research study. I would welcome your assistance with my research.

The study will comprise a series of two or three surveys in which you are asked to rank 13 propositions for student support, which will be specified and defined. This survey will be put to a number of general staff, such as yourself, who are considered experts in their work. Specifically, I am seeking survey participants who have significant experience in higher education (greater than 5 years) from a range of different positions — including administrative, technical, marketing, curriculum development, student support and so on — thereby providing a representative group of experts with expertise in the normal operations of general staff within the context of faculties or schools. Unidentified demographic data will also be collected.

Between each survey round, the results will be analysed, and then fed back to you and the other participants for re-consideration and re-ranking. This method is known as the Delphi Method, and the survey rounds continue until consensus is reached — this is usually achieved in two or three rounds.

Each survey should take no more than 10-20 minutes of your time, for a total commitment to this research of about half an hour to one hour.

I am contacting you to seek your participation in this research activity. You are under no obligation to participate in this research, and you may withdraw at any time without prejudice or penalty.

Confidentiality will be maintained, as all survey results will be de-identified prior to my analysis. While I will know that you are participating in the survey, I will not reveal your identity to the others, nor will I be able to associate a particular survey response with you.

If you have any questions or comments about this research, please contact me by email on Carroll.Graham@uts.edu.au or by phone on 9514 4975.

If you are willing to give your consent to participate in this study, please complete and sign the enclosed consent form, and return in the internal envelope provided by Friday 22 May. I will then sign and return a copy to you for your records.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Carroll Graham
Carroll.Graham@uts.edu.au

*Ethics approval: UTS HREC REF NO. 2008-331A*
Doctoral meta-statement

Participants’ information sheet

Carroll Graham
Doctor of Education student
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Main Campus
PO Box 123 Broadway
NSW 2007 Australia
T: +61 2 9314 4675
F: +61 2 9314 4641
Carroll.Graham@uts.edu.au
www.uts.edu.au

Doctor of Education Research Topic

Support and Success: Contributions of general staff to student outcomes

Carroll Graham is currently undertaking a Doctor of Education (EdD) at UTS in the field of professional practice in higher education. The underlying aim for a professional doctorate, such as the EdD, is to extend to the development of professional practice by making a contribution to professional knowledge through research. Carroll’s research topic examines the work undertaken by general staff in Australian universities and will focus on how general staff contribute to student outcomes.

In its 1995 report, the Review Committee for the Higher Education Management Review commented that the need for careful consideration of the issues of general staff should be self-evident. Nevertheless, as a professional population, general staff remains under-researched with little known about its contribution to higher education. Over the last decade, the roles of general staff have been changing, particularly as general staff have become increasingly well qualified. While the importance of general staff is highly significant to the efficient functioning of universities, its contribution is hidden and unmeasured. During the same period, accountability in higher education has been increasing. Students have become more assertive about getting value for money, while government scrutiny has increased and external audits have become more common. The attainment of student outcomes is emerging as an important measure of a university’s quality and competitiveness, providing feedback on how well the university is achieving its goals.

Carroll’s research will help fill the gap in knowledge about the work of general staff, specifically in relation to student outcomes. It will expand the professional knowledge in this general field, adding to the growing body of work being published by general staff, about general staff. Using a portfolio approach to presenting her research outcomes, Carroll’s work will speak to a variety of audiences, including general staff themselves. Carroll has worked at four different universities in NSW, in a range of general staff roles.

Carroll Graham
Carroll.Graham@uts.edu.au

* Ethics approval: UTS HREC REF NO. 2008-331A
Participants’ consent form

**University of Technology Sydney**

I (participant’s name) agree to participate in the research project “Support and Success: Contributions of general staff to student outcomes” (UTS HREC REF NO. 2008-331A) being conducted by Carroll Graham, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of the University of Technology, Sydney, PO Box 123, Broadway, NSW 2007 for her degree of Doctor of Education, under the supervision of Dr Tony Holland, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of the University of Technology, Sydney, PO Box 123, Broadway, NSW 2007.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to examine the work undertaken by general staff in Australian universities, and it will focus on how general staff contribute to student outcomes.

I understand that my participation in this research will involve completion of up to three short questionnaires that may be done at a time and location to suit my convenience, and which will take up to 20 minutes to complete each questionnaire.

I am aware that I can contact Carroll Graham (carroll.graham@uts.edu.au) or her supervisor Dr Tony Holland (tony.holland@uts.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the research. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from this research project at any time I wish, without consequences, and without giving a reason.

I agree that Carroll Graham has answered all my questions fully and clearly.

I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way.

I understand that the data will be stored securely and then destroyed 5 years from publication of the research, as is required by the AVCC Guidelines.

__________________________  __________________________
Signature (participant)       Signature (researcher or delegate)

**NOTE:**
This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (ph. +61 2 9514 9772 Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au) and quote the UTS HREC reference number (UTS HREC REF NO. 2008-331A). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix III. Questionnaires – Delphi study rounds 1, 2 and 3

Round 1

Delphi Study — “Support and Success: Contributions of general staff to student outcomes”

In the table below are listed 11 propositions for student support, with corresponding descriptions. Please read all the propositions and their descriptions, and then rank these propositions from 1 to 15 in order of the importance that you believe general staff contribute to each proposition. Please use “1” for the most important proposition and “15” for the least important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Student Support Propositions</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Institutional behaviours, environments and processes are welcoming and efficient</td>
<td>Students’ enquiries are dealt with promptly, knowledgeably and with a friendly manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The institution provides opportunities for students to establish social networks</td>
<td>Student clubs, societies and activities are supported, and facilities and events are provided to support socialisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Academic counselling and pre-enrolment advice are readily available to ensure students enrol in appropriate programs</td>
<td>Students are provided with high quality advice and information concerning program choices, and links are established with secondary schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lecturers are approachable and accessible inside and outside class times for academic discussions</td>
<td>Students benefit from regular and meaningful formal and informal contact with academics, particularly when a learning community is developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Students experience good-quality teaching and manageable workloads</td>
<td>The quality and teaching methodologies can have an impact on student outcomes, as can a manageable workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Orientation and induction programs are provided to facilitate both social and academic integration</td>
<td>Both academic orientation and general orientation programs can improve student outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Students working in academic learning communities have good outcomes</td>
<td>The deliberate use and facilitation of learning communities has a positive impact on student outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A comprehensive range of institutional services and facilities is available</td>
<td>Student outcomes are improved by the provision of services and facilities that support both the social and academic integration of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Supplemental instruction is provided</td>
<td>Academic support programs in programs that students find difficult improve student outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Peer tutoring and mentoring services are provided</td>
<td>Students benefit from well-designed and well-run peer tutoring and mentoring programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The institution ensures there is an absence of discrimination on campus, so students feel safe, fairly treated and safe</td>
<td>Students need to feel safe, valued and respected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Institutional processes cater for diversity of learning preferences</td>
<td>Students have different learning styles, which need to be accommodated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The institutional culture, social and academic, welcomes diverse cultural capital and adapts to diverse students’ needs</td>
<td>The diverse backgrounds of students should be affirmed and accommodated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You may write any additional comments on the reverse side of this form. If you have any questions, please contact me on the email address shown below. When complete, please place this survey in one of the envelopes provided. I will come to collect this survey on 29 May 2009.

Thank you for your assistance! Carrol Graham (carrol-graham@uts.edu.au)

* Ethics approval: UTS HREC REF NO. 2008-311A

Debhi Study — “Support and Success: Contributions of general staff to student outcomes”

Please write any comments you might like to make concerning the propositions or the contributions made by general staff to student outcomes.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Please complete the ranking survey on the reverse side of this form.

________________________________________________________________________

* Ethics approval: UTS HREC REF NO. 2008-311A
## Round 2

Delphi Study Round 2 — “Support and Success: Contributions of general staff to student outcomes”

In the table below are listed 10 propositions for student support, with corresponding descriptions. Please read all the propositions and their descriptions, and then rank these propositions from 1 to 10 in order of the importance that you believe general (support) staff contribute to each proposition. Please use “1” for the most important contribution, “2” for the next most important, and so on to “10” for the least important. Where possible, please use each number only once (so that there are no tied rankings).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Student Support Propositions</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Institutional behaviours; environments and processes are welcoming and efficient</td>
<td>Students’ enquiries are dealt with promptly, knowledgeably and with a friendly manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The institution provides opportunities for students to establish social networks</td>
<td>Student clubs, societies and activities are supported, and facilities and events are provided to support socialisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Academic counselling and pre-enrolment advice are readily available to ensure students enrol in appropriate programs</td>
<td>Students are provided with high quality advice and information concerning program choices, and links are established with secondary schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Orientation and induction programs are provided to facilitate both social and academic integration</td>
<td>Both academic orientation and general orientation programs can improve student outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Students working in academic/learning communities have good outcomes</td>
<td>The deliberate use and facilitation of learning communities has a positive impact on student outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A comprehensive range of institutional services and facilities is available</td>
<td>Student outcomes are improved by the provision of services and facilities that support both the social and academic integration of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Supplemental instruction is provided</td>
<td>Academic support programs in programs that students find difficult improve student outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Peer tutoring and mentoring services are provided</td>
<td>Students benefit from well-designed and well-run peer tutoring and monitoring programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The institution ensures there is an absence of discrimination on campus, so students feel valued, fairly treated and safe</td>
<td>Students need to feel safe, valued and respected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The institutional culture, social and academic, welcomes diverse cultural capital and adapts to diverse students’ needs</td>
<td>The diverse backgrounds of students should be affirmed and accommodated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You may write any additional comments on the reverse side of this form. If you have any questions, please contact me on the email address shown below. When complete, please place this survey in the envelope provided. I will come to collect this survey on Friday 12 June 2009.

Thank you for your assistance! Carroll Graham (carroll.graham@uts.edu.au)

---

Delphi Study — “Support and Success: Contributions of general staff to student outcomes”

Please write any comments you might like to make concerning the propositions or the contributions made by general staff to student outcomes.

---

Please complete the ranking survey on the reverse side of this form.

---

* Ethics approval: UTS HREC REF NO. 2008-31A
**Round 3**

**Delphi Study Round 3 — “Support and Success: Contributions of general staff to student outcomes”**

In the table below are listed 10 propositions for student support, with corresponding descriptions. Please read all the propositions and their descriptions, and then rank these propositions from 1 to 10 in order of the importance that you believe general (support) staff contribute to each proposition. Please use “1” for the most important contribution, “2” for the next most important, and so on to “10” for the least important. Where possible, please use each number only once (so that there are no tied rankings).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Student Support Propositions</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Institutional behaviours, environments and processes are welcoming and efficient</td>
<td>Students’ enquiries are dealt with promptly, knowledgeably and with a friendly manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The institution provides opportunities for students to establish social networks</td>
<td>Student clubs, societies, and activities are supported, and facilities and events are provided to support socialisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Academic counselling and pre-enrolment advice are readily available to ensure students enrol in appropriate programs</td>
<td>Students are provided with high quality advice and information concerning program choices, and links are established with secondary schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Orientation and induction programs are provided to facilitate both social and academic integration</td>
<td>Both academic orientation and general orientation programs can improve student outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Students working in academic learning communities have good outcomes</td>
<td>The deliberate use and facilitation of learning communities has a positive impact on student outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A comprehensive range of institutional services and facilities is available</td>
<td>Student outcomes are improved by the provision of services and facilities that support both the social and academic integration of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Supplemental instruction is provided</td>
<td>Academic support programs in programs that students find difficult improve student outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Peer tutoring and mentoring services are provided</td>
<td>Students benefit from well-designed and well-run peer tutoring and mentoring programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The institution ensures there is an absence of discrimination on campus, so students feel valued, fairly treated and safe</td>
<td>Students need to feel safe, valued, and respected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The institutional culture, social and academic, welcomes diverse cultural capital and adapts to diverse students’ needs</td>
<td>The diverse backgrounds of students should be affirmed and accommodated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You may write any additional comments on the reverse side of this form. If you have any questions, please contact me on the email address shown below. When complete, please place this survey in the envelope provided. I will come to collect this survey on Friday 25 June 2009.

Thank you for your assistance! Carroll Graham (carroll.graham@uts.edu.au)

---

1 Ethics approval: UTS HREC REF NO: 2008-331A

---

**Delphi Study — “Support and Success: Contributions of general staff to student outcomes”**

Please write any comments you might like to make concerning the propositions or the contributions made by general staff to student outcomes.

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Please complete the ranking survey on the reverse side of this form. Thank you!

---

1 Ethics approval: UTS HREC REF NO: 2008-331A
Appendix IV. Demographic survey – Delphi study

Delphi Study “Support and Success: Contributions of general staff to student outcomes”

As one of the experts selected to participate in the Delphi study, it would be helpful to understand your background and experience in higher education.

Please complete the survey below, and place it in the second envelope provided. Please do not to return this survey in the same envelope as the ranking survey.

1. What is your gender? (tick one) □ male □ female
2. What is your age? (tick one)
   □ under 30 □ 31-40 □ 41-50 □ 51-60 □ 61 and over
3. How long have you worked at this university? ________ (years)
4. Have you worked at other universities? (tick one) □ yes □ no
5a. If yes, how many others? ________
5b. For how long in total at other universities? ________ (years)
6. What type of work do you do in your current role? (eg administrative, technical, managerial, marketing, etc)

7. Is your current role full-time or part-time? (tick one) □ full-time □ part-time
8. If part-time, for how many hours per week? ________
9. What level* is your current role? (1 to 10, above 10)
   (* This refers to the Higher Education Worker (HEW) or Higher Education Officer (HEO) level of the position)
10. How long have you been in this role? ________ (years)
11. What level* was your most recent previous role? (1 to 10, above 10) ________
    (* HEW or HEO level of the position)
12. How long were you in this previous role? ________ (years)
13. What educational qualifications do you hold? (tick as many as apply)

   High School □ Leaving certificate
   □ Certificate III □ Certificate IV
   □ Associate Diploma □ Diploma

   VET □ Bachelor’s degree
   □ Postgraduate certificate □ Postgraduate diploma
   □ Coursework Master’s degree □ Doctoral degree
   □ Research Master’s degree
   □ Other (please specify)
   □ Currently studying (please specify)

If you have any questions, please contact me on the email address shown below. When complete, please place this survey separately in one of the plain envelopes provided. I will come to collect this survey on 29 May 2009.

Thank you for your assistance!
Carroll Graham (carroll.graham@uts.edu.au)

* Ethics approval: UTS HREC REF NO. 2008-331A
Appendix V. Introduction letters and consent form – case study

Unit Managers’ letter

[Image of a letter from Carroll Graham]

9 April 2010
Dear [Redacted]

Support and Success: Contributions of general staff to student outcomes

My name is Carroll Graham and I am a doctoral student at the University of Technology, Sydney. In addition, I am a member of staff at UTS’s Institute for Sustainable Futures.

I am conducting research into how general staff (i.e. support staff) contribute to student outcomes, and I am contacting you as [Redacted] for approval to approach [Redacted] staff in to participate in my research. I would welcome your support of my research, which is outlined on the attached information sheet.

In July 2009, I completed the preliminary, first stage of my research. This preliminary study provided information about how general staff perceived their contributions to student outcomes in relation to a set of propositions for student outcomes support. These propositions were derived in a meta-study conducted by Prebble et al. in New Zealand in 2004. A paper resulting from this study is due to be published in the June issue of the Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management.

I am now about to undertake more in-depth, focused study, which will explore how general staff contribute to student outcomes using a case study approach. Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews will be used as the primary method for data collection, and will be conducted in an agreed location, at a time convenient to the participant. Further investigations may include follow-up interviews, focus groups and document collection (including text, websites etc). These will all be conducted at times and in locations suitable for the participants.

I am seeking to recruit into my study general staff who have sound experience in higher education (greater than 3 years) from a range of different positions. As such, I would appreciate your approval to approach [Redacted] staff who meet these criteria. If you have any objections to this, could you please let me know by email at carroll.graham@uts.edu.au by COB Thursday 15 April? In addition, I would appreciate it if you could provide me with the names of staff who might meet my criterion of more than 3 years experience in higher education, as potential participants in my study.

If you have any questions or comments about this research, please contact me by email on carroll.graham@uts.edu.au or by phone on 9514 4975.

Yours sincerely,

Carroll Graham
carroll.graham@uts.edu.au

1 Ethics approval: UTS HREC REF NO. 2009-334A
2 Ethics approval: UTS HREC REF NO. 2008-331A
21 April 2010

Dear [Name]

Support and Success: Contributions of general staff to student outcomes

My name is Carroll Graham and I am a student at the University of Technology, Sydney. In addition, I am a member of staff at UTS’s Institute for Sustainable Futures.

I am conducting research into how general staff (i.e. support staff) contribute to student outcomes, and you have been referred to me as some knowledgeable and capable of contributing to my research study. I would like to meet with general staff who have at least 3 years’ experience in higher education from a range of different positions, and I would welcome your assistance with my research.

In July 2009, I completed the preliminary, first stage of my research. A paper resulting from this study is due to be published in the June issue of the Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management.

I am now about to undertake more in-depth, focused study, which will explore how general staff contribute to student outcomes. The study will comprise an initial, semi-structured interview of 60-90 minutes. The questions will be designed to elicit your views on what you do in your workplace, particularly in relation to activities that support student outcomes. For the purposes of this study, student outcomes will be thought of in terms of retention, persistence and achievement. You will also be given the opportunity to review the transcript.

Following the initial interview, there may be need for a second interview of 30-60 minutes to clarify or explore any points from the first interview.

I am contacting you to seek your participation in this research activity. You are under no obligation to participate in this research, and you may withdraw at any time without consequences, and without giving a reason.

I will be contacting you over the coming weeks to ask if you are interested in participating in this research. However, if you have any questions in the meantime, please contact me by email or phone.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Carroll Graham
carroll.graham@uts.edu.au
9514 4975

Enc. Information sheet, Consent Form, Background Information Form

1 Ethics approval: UTS HREC REF NO. 2009-334A
2 Ethics approval: UTS HREC REF NO. 2008-331A
Doctor of Education Research Topic

Support and Success: Contributions of general staff to student outcomes

Carroll Graham is currently undertaking a Doctor of Education (EdD) at UTS in the field of professional practice in higher education. The underlying aim for a professional doctorate, such as the EdD, is to extend to the development of professional practice by making a contribution to professional knowledge through research. Carroll's research topic examines the work undertaken by general staff in Australian universities and will focus on how general staff contribute to student outcomes.

In its 1995 report, the Review Committee for the Higher Education Management Review commented that the need for careful consideration of the issues of general staff should be self-evident. Nevertheless, as a professional population, general staff remains under-researched with little known about its contribution to higher education. Over the last decade, the roles of general staff have been changing, particularly as general staff have become increasingly well qualified. While the importance of general staff is highly significant to the efficient functioning of universities, its contribution is hidden and unmeasured. During the same period, accountability in higher education has been increasing. Students have become more assertive about getting value for money, while government scrutiny has increased and external audits have become more common. The attainment of student outcomes is emerging as an important measure of a university's quality and competitiveness, providing feedback on how well the university is achieving its goals.

Carroll's research will help fill the gap in knowledge about the work of general staff, specifically in relation to student outcomes. It will expand the professional knowledge in this general field, adding to the growing body of work being published by general staff, about general staff. Using a portfolio approach to present her research outcomes, Carroll's work will speak to a variety of audiences, including general staff themselves. Carroll has worked at four different universities in NSW, in a range of general staff roles.

Carroll Graham
Carroll.Graham@uts.edu.au

Ethics approval: UTS HREC REF NO. 2009-334A
CONSENT FORM – UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY

I __________________________ (participant’s name) agree to participate in the research project “Support and Success: Contributions of general staff to student outcomes” (UTS HREC REF No. 2009-334A) being conducted by Carroll Graham, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of the University of Technology, Sydney, PO Box 123, Broadway, NSW 2007 for her degree of Doctor of Education, under the supervision of Dr Tony Holland, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of the University of Technology, Sydney, PO Box 123, Broadway, NSW 2007.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to examine the work undertaken by general staff in Australian universities, and it will focus on how general staff contribute to student outcomes.

I understand that my participation in this research will involve one or two interviews that will be done in a neutral location at a time to suit my convenience. The initial interview will take about 60-90 minutes to complete. A follow-up interview, if used, will take about 30-60 minutes. I understand that the interview will be digitally recorded, that notes will be taken and that I will have the opportunity to review the transcript made from the digital recording.

I am aware that I can contact Carroll Graham or her supervisor Dr Tony Holland if I have any concerns about the research. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from this research project at any time I wish, without consequences, and without giving a reason.

I agree that Carroll Graham has answered all my questions fully and clearly.

I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way.

I understand that the data will be stored securely and then destroyed 5 years from publication of the research, as is required by the AVCC Guidelines.

______________________________
Signature (participant) ___________ / __/_

______________________________
Signature (researcher) ___________ / __/_
Carroll Graham
carroll.graham@uts.edu.au
PO Box 123, Broadway NSW 2007.

NOTE:
This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research, which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (ph: +61 2 9514 9772 Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au) and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix VI.  Semi-structured interview guide – case study

The interviews were semi-structured, and were tailored, as required, to meet the specific circumstances of each interviewee. However, the interview guide followed Patton’s framework for designing interview questions (2002), as shown below.

Background

• How did you start working in the higher education? Why do you stay?

Behaviours

• Describe a typical day for you at work.
• What direct interactions do you have with students? Indirect interactions?

Opinions/values

• What do you think helps you to get your job done? In your interactions with other staff? In your interactions with students?
• What do you think makes your work challenging?
• How do you think your work area helps to support students in starting at uni?
  Staying engaged with their studies? In achieving their goals?
• What problems do you think there are with how your area helps students?
• What is your opinion of how support staff interact with students?

Feelings

• How do you feel when you’ve helped a student or when what you’ve done leads to helping a student?
• How do you feel if you’re not able to help a student?
• How do you feel about how other support staff manage their interactions with students?
Knowledge

• What policies or procedures help you to help students? UTS? Unit? How do they help?

• Which ones are a hindrance? Describe the issues/problems caused.

• Can you describe any changes to policies or procedures that have made your work easier or harder? How has your work changed?

Sensory

• Tell me about something you’ve seen or heard in relation to support staff helping students.

Wind down

• What are your aspirations? Where do you see your career taking you?

• What else you would like to say in relation to how support staff help (or don’t help) students?

• What is the thing you find most difficult about your work?

• And finally, to end on a positive note, what is the thing you enjoy most about your job?
Appendix VII. Demographic survey – case study

"Support and Success: Contributions of general staff to student outcomes"

As a participant in this study, it would be helpful for me to understand your background and experience in higher education.

1. Name: ___________________________

2. What is your gender? (tick one) ☐ male ☐ female

3. What is your age? (tick one) ☐ under 30 ☐ 31-40 ☐ 41-50 ☐ 51-60 ☐ 61 and over

4. How long have you worked at UTS (or pre-UTS institutions)? _______ (years)

5. Have you worked at other universities? (tick one) ☐ yes ☐ no (go to Q. 7)

6a. If yes, how many other universities? ___________________________

6b. For how long in total at other universities? _______ (years)

7. Is your current role full-time or part-time? (tick one) ☐ full-time ☐ part-time

8. If part-time, for how many hours per week? ___________________________

9. What level* is your current role? (1 to 10, above 10) (* This refers to the Higher Education Worker (HEW) or Higher Education Officer (HEO) level of the position) _______

10. How long have you been in this role? _______ (years)

11. What level* was your most recent previous role? (1 to 10, above 10) (* HEW or HEO level of the position) _______

12. How long were you in this previous role? _______ (years)

13. What educational qualifications do you hold? (tick as many as apply)

   High School
   HSC certificate ☐ (or equivalent) _______
   Certificate III ☐ (in) _______
   Certificate IV ☐ (in) _______

   VET
   Associate Diploma ☐ (in) _______
   Diploma ☐ (in) _______

   University
   Bachelor’s degree ☐ (in) _______
   Postgraduate certificate ☐ (in) _______
   Postgraduate diploma ☐ (in) _______
   Coursework Master’s degree ☐ (in) _______
   Research Master’s degree ☐ (in) _______
   Doctoral degree ☐ (in) _______
   Other (please specify) ☐ (in) _______
   Currently studying (please specify) ☐ (in) _______

If you have any questions, please contact me on the email address shown below. I will collect this survey when we meet for the interview.

Thank you for your assistance!
Carroll Graham (carroll.graham@uts.edu.au)

* Ethics approval: UTS HREC REF NO. 2009-334A

THINK.CHANGE.DO
References

Note: Consistent with the UTS guidelines for privacy, details of personal communications have been omitted from this reference list (http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/referencing/harvard-uts-referencing-guide/other-sources).


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