



NATIONAL FORUM

FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING
AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

**Disciplinary Excellence in Learning, Teaching and
Assessment (DELTA)**

June 2018

Key Elements to Consider

1. Strategy and Capacity Building

Leadership, Policy Development, and Professional Development of Staff

Teaching and learning enhancement (T&LE) is concerned with the unit's alignment with the institutional and other strategies and its support for building staff capacity.

- T&LE is situated within and informed by external policy and internal priorities. In particular, T&LE takes into consideration the key priorities identified by the institution, and the additional priorities of their academic unit including, for example, reviews and professional body or other regulatory requirements.
- Successful T&LE requires senior leadership and a committed team representing all key stakeholders to drive enhancement and evaluate progress. Engaging students in substantial ways at all levels should be part of this criterion.
- T&LE requires consideration of the capacity of academics to deliver on the enhancement strategy. In addition, it requires clear identification of enhancement priorities, resourcing and how any organisational system opportunities/challenges that might impact on the success of the enhancement initiative will be incorporated or addressed. T&LE may include development of specific policy initiatives.
- Building staff capacity through planned professional development requires that there is an appreciation of the current knowledge, skills and competency base of staff, and that consideration has been given to the professional development needs of staff. In addition, professional development opportunities (accredited, structured non-accredited, unstructured accredited, collaborative non-accredited), that are aligned with the [National Framework for Professional Development for Those Who Teach in Higher Education](#), are planned and provided for staff to meet these needs. Staff are facilitated to engage in their professional development.

2. Design of Learning

Designing Curriculum, Connections and Collaboration; Learning Environment

T&LE takes into consideration the organisational decisions, structures, process and practices that are required in the design of learning. It emphasises the importance of making connections and collaboration to enhance learning. This design is situated in the changing learning environment.

- Successful T&LE requires systematic and coherent planning of curriculum activities³, including co- and extra-curricular activities. This can include designing and enhancing graduate attributes/programme outcomes linked with societal and institutional needs; programme mapping; programme coherence; programme structure and alignment; inclusive learning and assessment design; the design of students' co- and extra-curricular activities; management and oversight of effective design.
- Curriculum design is informed by academic-led research and research into teaching and learning processes and practices.
- T&LE requires consideration of the important connections and collaborations that support student learning. These can include the enhancement of interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary learning and of the international and national connections in the curriculum. In addition, T&LE can include the development of connections with industry, the workplace, employers and other relevant stakeholders. Developing other relevant flexible student learning environments, such as work/industry/internship placements is also included. Connections can also be designed for students through development of communities of practices/networks, online learning forums, networks, societies, eLearning groups, etc. Development of intra-institutional collaboration of the key stakeholders in order to maximise impact on student learning is also important. Active partnership and collaboration with students should form a strong part of this consideration.
- T&LE requires consideration of the design of an effective and efficient learning environment including design of the digital learning environment, the physical learning environment (infrastructure), library/learning commons, laboratory resources and other learning spaces.

¹ The term 'curriculum' refers to its wider definition, inclusive of: 'structure and content of a unit (subject); the structure and content of a programme of study; the students' experience of learning and the dynamic and interactive process of teaching and learning' (Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006).

3. Teaching and Learning Practice

Engaging Teaching/Learning Approaches, Supporting Students in Transition, and Blended/Online Approaches

Teaching and learning practices are central to T&LE. They include increasing the engagement of students in their learning and supporting them in this process, in particular during times of transition. Recent emphases include the development of more blended (or online) approaches to learning.

- T&LE takes into consideration the implementation of innovative and engaging teaching and learning approaches that are in alignment with the institution's strategic plans and with programme outcomes. T&LE requires maximising student engagement in the curricular and co-curricular activities, including the development of students as partners. Successful T&LE requires supporting diverse student cohorts and implementation of inclusive approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. In addition, it should support proactive access and retention policies for diverse student groups.
- T&LE process and practice is informed by academic-led research and research into teaching and learning processes and practices.
- A key current focus for enhancement is supporting students in the transitions in their curricular activities and through guidance, mentoring, student peer support and specialised students learning supports (e.g., maths support/first year student supports).
- In addition, the current focus on T&LE includes the development of the blended/online teaching and learning environment and maximises the potential of the unit's and institution's digital capacity and digital skills.

4. Assessment OF/FOR/AS Learning

Assessment Purposes and their Rationale

Assessment is a key driver of student learning and has been given particular recognition for this in some current enhancement of teaching and learning policies and practices.

- T&LE requires systematic, coherent, creative planning and development of assessment approaches within a programme. Applicants should show the extent to which they have engaged with developing effective, engaging and fit-for-purpose assessment within their discipline. This should include a recognition of the different ways in which assessment drives and demonstrates learning (i.e., assessment of, for and as learning). Enhancement plans should not just consider assessment that is summative and made public for the purpose of certifying student learning (Assessment OF learning), but also those that occur throughout the learning process and provide feedback to students and staff (Assessment FOR Learning) and those used, often in class/online, for the purposes of developing students' self-monitoring skills (Assessment AS Learning).
- Given the unique identities of the disciplines, assessment should strive to be authentic and innovative to motivate learners in their programme(s) of study. The extent to which diverse, inclusive and innovative approaches to assessment that challenge and energise students and enhance a wide spectrum of their knowledge, skills and capabilities is encouraged should be demonstrated.
- In focusing on assessment, applicants should be able to show some of the important ways in which they have struck a balance between competing assessment challenges. How can assessment strategies be creative, engaging and motivating while at the same time being sustainable, efficient, valid and reliable? Demonstrating excellence in assessment approaches⁴, as they relate to assessment purposes, will be an important part of the application process.
- The discipline group's assessment policies and procedures should highlight their commitment to a student-centered approach to assessment and feedback: developing students' abilities to peer-review and self-monitor so they can regulate their own learning and demonstrating a commitment to students as partners in Assessment OF, FOR and AS learning.

² Adapted from Bloxham, S., & Boyd., P. (2008). *Developing Effective Assessment in Higher Education: A Practical Guide*. Maidenhead: Open University Press McGraw-Hill.

5. Evidence-Based Informed Approach

Evaluation, Scholarship of Teaching and Research-Informed Teaching

T&LE should be evidence-based and should inform the incremental steps required for planning enhancement.

- T&LE takes into consideration the qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the impact of teaching and learning approaches at programme, module and/or sessional level. For example, through learning analytics, student feedback (e.g., ISSE), focus groups, student evaluations of teaching (SETs), module feedback, mid-unit feedback, staff peer review of curriculum design, and peer observation of teaching. Enhancements should use this evidence to generate change to teaching and learning practices, policies and/or procedures.
- T&LE supports the scholarship of teaching and learning⁵ by encouraging, for example, sharing of disciplinary teaching practices, presenting at teaching and learning conferences and research into and dissemination of teaching and learning approaches within disciplines.
- T&LE should be evidence-based and informed by feedback, participation and involvement from various stakeholders, including students themselves. It should encourage the development of strong approaches to research-informed teaching. The impact of discipline-led academic research and research into the T&L process and practice should be explicit in the decision-making process.

³ See also the definition of scholarship as used in the [National Framework for Professional Development for Those Who Teach in Higher Education](#)