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The agile organisation

Case studies of the impact of flexible delivery
on human resource practices in TAFE



Phoebe Palmieri

Australian Flexible Learning Framework
Supporting Flexible Learning Opportunities

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Background

In August 1999, the Australian National Training Authority chief executive officers endorsed the *Australian Flexible Learning Framework for the National Vocational Education and Training System 2000–2004*. The Australian Flexible Learning Framework has been developed by the Flexible Learning Advisory Group and represents a strategic plan for the five-year national project allocation for flexible learning. It is designed to support both accelerated take-up of flexible learning modes and to position Australian vocational education and training as a world leader in applying new technologies to vocational education products and services.

An initiative of the Australian Flexible Learning Framework for the National Vocational Education and Training System 2000–2004

Managed by the Flexible Learning Advisory Group on behalf of the Commonwealth, all states and territories in conjunction with ANTA.



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Key messages

This project set out to determine how practices have or need to be changed to accommodate flexible delivery and the changing roles and patterns of work that are entailed for technical and further education (TAFE) staff. Key messages to emerge relate to organisational culture, job design, workload and performance management, professional development and planning of the workforce.

- ✧ The case studies in the current project indicate that flexible learning is no longer confined to the 'early adopters', but is rapidly becoming integrated with mainstream activities.
- ✧ A substantial effort towards consistent, institute-wide customer service philosophy and the adoption of team-based structures form a good foundation to flexible learning in vocational education and training (VET).
- ✧ The philosophy and personal style of the chief executive officer and senior managers are a determining influence on the culture of the institute.
- ✧ The current human resources environment (awards, performance indicators, funding models etc.) does not prohibit flexible delivery but makes it more difficult; institutes need to expend energy they can ill afford in order to work around the barriers. Problems of workload and performance management need to be tackled as a matter of increasing urgency.
- ✧ Institutes are initiating local variations to teaching awards and agreements, but still rely on ad hoc arrangements negotiated with teams and individuals to enable flexible delivery to take place. Fair workloads are difficult to work out, and the tendency has been to allow workloads to increase until staff start to protest.
- ✧ Institutes need comprehensive and thoroughly implemented risk management strategies to avoid incurring regulatory or other liabilities as a result of the ad hoc arrangements noted above.
- ✧ Many teachers continue to work long hours on tasks that are not properly recognised or remunerated, and run the risk of burn-out, although many remain enthusiastic about the educational benefits and job enrichment possibilities of flexible delivery. A vital part of their job satisfaction is recognition, by managers and others, that the flexible delivery tasks they do are legitimate and valuable. Learners and industry clients are reporting satisfaction with flexible options.
- ✧ A high priority needs to be placed on professional development for middle and senior managers so that they are better able to understand what it is really like to work in flexible delivery, and can use that understanding to improve workload and performance management.
- ✧ Non-teaching staff are being moved to work in closer proximity to the flexible learning environment. Some have a more direct relationship with students; others work more closely with teaching centres in an 'account manager' style serving the needs of these centres and their staff. Non-teaching staff are developing a deeper understanding of the issues and impacts, but should be entitled to a greater share of professional development for this purpose.
- ✧ There is a risk in the near future that much of the educational knowledge of the teaching profession will be lost, as teachers with experience and graduate qualifications resign or retire. Certificate IV level qualifications in assessment and workplace training are not an adequate replacement for higher teaching qualifications.

Executive summary

Overview

The purpose of this project is to examine the human resource practices of technical and further education (TAFE) institutes active in flexible delivery, in order to assess the impact of flexible delivery on these practices. Four case studies were prepared using group interviews with teaching staff, non-teaching staff, managers and human resources staff in each institute, as well as an interview with the chief executive officer, and in some cases, additional interviews. Some institute documentation was also used. The case studies do not aim to be representative of the TAFE sector. Nevertheless, the similarity of findings between these four institutes, and their congruity with the findings of a companion project on the same topic, which surveyed managers in fifteen other TAFE institutes, indicates that a fairly consistent picture can be drawn for TAFE as a whole.

TAFE staff who participated in the case studies were asked to describe the range of teaching methods used in their institute (without limiting the description to flexible delivery), and the reasons why these had been adopted. They were then asked to describe the impact of the adoption of these methods on their own work and that of their colleagues, and on staff management and practices.

Summary of findings and implications

Discussion in the four institutes revealed a great deal of similarity in the difficulties experienced in managing the human resources aspects of flexible delivery. Allowing for variations in organisational culture and external circumstances, there was also broad consistency in approaches to solving the problems. The institutes are making a serious attempt to be fair to their staff as well as providing excellent service to their clients. Flexible delivery brings enrichment and enjoyment to many staff. Nevertheless, a high degree of stress and exhaustion is reported by many teaching staff in particular.

Organisational culture and structure

The institutes employ a wide range of delivery methods, both traditional and non-traditional. Newer modes tend to be used in combination with more traditional modes. There is a strong emphasis on workplace activity, and eagerness to satisfy the needs of both enterprise and individual clients. Not all staff see themselves as working in flexible delivery, but it is obvious that everyone is aware of the need for flexible approaches to suit clients' needs. Although there is a way to go before everyone is fully involved, flexible delivery has gone beyond the 'early adopters' in all four institutes.

Organisational structures are becoming flatter and more team-based. Non-teaching staff work more closely with teaching staff than previously. In some cases, this is because they are in direct contact with students (as in flexible learning centres); in others, because non-teaching staff are deliberately associated with teaching centres in an 'account manager' type of relationship, and are encouraged to see their purpose as supporting the teaching and learning process. This leads to a more integrated structure, with some institutes looking for a 'whole-of-institute' culture.

The chief executive officer and senior managers play a large part in setting the tone of the organisational culture as well as the strategic directions, and their recognition and support for the efforts of staff are highly valued.

Work design and management, working conditions

Job design, recruitment and selection

In addition to teachers, institutes employ various teaching-related classifications, such as workplace trainers, tutors and lecturers. Their employment adds flexibility and may bring budget savings (although opinions are divided on this), but this practice is unpopular with teachers who fear erosion of their conditions and professional status.

Non-teaching as well as teaching staff are selected for open attitudes and adaptability as well for their job skills. They need to be able to communicate well with teaching teams and with students.

Job descriptions are not always updated to reflect the current situation. This is not a major problem, but means that clarification of duties at the recruitment stage is especially important.

Teachers are enthusiastic about teaching and about being able to make a difference to students. However, discussion of workloads generated a great deal of emotion in the interview sessions, and many teaching staff claimed that they were overloaded and exhausted. Because funding models and reporting systems are mostly based on classroom teaching conditions, they do not accommodate flexible teaching methods easily. Activities such as online interaction with students are often not recognised as being real work, and so they are often undertaken as an unrecognised, unpaid extra. All staff find that externally imposed systems such as the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) and user choice have created far greater loads of recording, reporting and auditing, while administrative support has decreased.

Workload management and working conditions

Teaching awards (even with some amendments to improve flexibility) make distinctions between 'teaching' and 'non-teaching' duties, distinctions which no longer reflect what teachers do, and it requires some ingenuity on the part of teachers and managers to negotiate workloads which are manageable but still fit into the terms of the award.

The way in which workloads are negotiated varies between institutes: some are done individually between the teacher and the team manager, while others are done by the teaching team as a whole. Institutes are continuing to pursue ways of managing this task in order to produce efficient results while being fair and equitable to staff.

Teachers can contribute to making their workloads manageable by setting realistic boundaries and service standards for duties, such as their availability to students. To date, not all teachers have translated their self-management skills into the flexible delivery environment.

Flexible delivery often requires staff to travel away from campuses, work at home or work late at night and on weekends. This has implications for non-teaching staff such as facilities, library and technical staff. It also adds complexity to workload management for teachers, as awards and procedures in many cases do not make it easy to recognise these as legitimate activities or to compensate staff for extra work.

All this makes the job of managers at all levels, but especially at team leader level, more complex, particularly since the proportion of middle managers has been reduced. They therefore need high-level skills and excellent communication and team-building skills to do their job well and to cope with their loads.

Performance management

The difficulties associated with workload management for teaching staff carry over into performance management. Institutes are establishing planning and monitoring systems which have a common aim of ensuring that program delivery, staff activity and professional development are all considered in relation to the institute's goals and strategies. The institute as a whole, and each unit within it, now needs a broader span of skills to encompass all of its activities. Performance therefore needs to be considered at the team level as well as at the individual level.

From the staff point of view, understanding and recognition of their work is a very important factor in job satisfaction, and this can result as much from incidental comments by a manager as from more formal recognition initiatives.

Employee relations

Frictions are caused by the workload issues mentioned above, and also by the closer contact of non-teaching staff with students, which causes some debate about how to ensure that service standards are maintained. A further issue is the employment of teaching-related classifications, such as tutors and workplace trainers, on conditions different from those of teachers. Staff in all four institutes acknowledged this, but also demonstrated goodwill and a determination to understand each other's points of view.

Teachers report that working closely with industry clients produces not only excellent training but also benefits to both sides from a better understanding of each other's role.

Occupational health and safety

Attention is needed—and paid—to the wellbeing of staff who are carrying heavy loads and working under stress. A particular area of concern is the safety of staff who travel long distances. The use of computers and mobile phones also receives attention, with the aim of avoiding over-use and other injuries.

Professional development

Formal staff development programs such as LearnScope, and programs devised within institutes, have contributed significantly to the adoption of flexible delivery. Informal activities such as buddying and mentoring are also successful. Most staff development programs have been directed at skills development for teachers. However, non-teaching staff also need to take part in professional development to enable them to understand and support the institute's teaching and learning directions. Professional development for managers now needs to be given a high priority, since it is essential that managers understand in a more detailed way what flexible delivery means for staff actually involved in this mode of delivery.

Of particular concern in all the institutes are the qualifications of teachers. Although the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, now the required credential, is useful in some ways, it does not include an adequate focus on the principles of teaching and learning. Many staff at all levels expressed a fear that this knowledge will be lost in coming years if no higher qualification is required. All four institutes have entered into arrangements with universities to facilitate access to educational qualifications for their staff.

Workforce planning and succession planning

Institutes are looking for a flexible workforce able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances. In employing new staff, they look for adaptable attitudes and, in some cases, generalist skills, in some instances filling the specialist niches with sessional staff from industry.

They also seek flexibility in staffing to suit variations and fluctuations in training needs. Flexibility may be gained by redeploying positions that become vacant to the area in which they are most needed; flexibility may also be gained by the use of sessional and contract staff.

Although sessional and contract staff bring these advantages of flexibility, and in some instances possess specialised industry skills, there are also disadvantages. When they attend only for short periods each week, it is difficult to find ways in which they can participate fully in the life of the institute—to enable their expertise to be shared with other staff, and to ensure that the institute's intellectual capital is not downgraded. In many (although not all) cases, they may have high-level industry knowledge, but they possess only the minimum required educational training. The potential therefore exists for loss of educational expertise and deprofessionalisation of the workforce. Many staff express anxiety about this situation. In some states, the number of non-permanent staff who can be employed is limited by government policy or industrial agreement.

Managers have a more complex job in the flexible delivery environment, and need higher level educational leadership as well as managerial skills. They need to have a good understanding of the nature of the work their staff are doing. This is partly a matter of recruitment and professional development, but it also has implications for the way in which their work is understood in the institute, and for succession planning, to ensure that managers can be replaced.

Introduction

Research questions

The aim of the project was to determine:

- ✧ how human resource practices of training organisations have been changed to accommodate flexible delivery and the changing roles of their staff
- ✧ what have been the implications of these changes for funding and other aspects of delivery.

Flexible learning and flexible delivery

In 2001 the Flexible Learning Advisory Group adopted the following definition of flexible learning which states:

Flexible learning is an approach rather than a system or technique; it is based on the skill needs and delivery requirements of clients, not the interests of trainers or providers; it gives clients as much control as possible over what and when and where and how they learn; it makes use of the delivery methods most useful for the clients, especially, but not only, online technologies. (KPMG Consulting Australia & LifeLong Learning Associates 2002, p.82)

The full definition can be found in appendix 1 of this report.

Flexible delivery is a term less used than it once was, because now the emphasis in this field of study is usually on the ramifications of flexibility for the teaching and learning process rather than the processes used to deliver teaching and learning. In this report the institutional side of flexibility rather than the learner's side is being considered.

Research on aspects of flexible learning has proliferated in recent years—in Australia and elsewhere. The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), through the Australian Flexible Learning Framework, has been active in this field. Much has been discovered about the design, teaching and learning practices and support of flexible learning, and during this process it has become evident that the work of teachers and other staff has changed considerably.

Design of the research

The four participating institutes were selected because they were not only active in the adoption of flexible learning, but also active in pursuing organisational change to support it. The inquiry took the form of group interviews with staff of each institute, the groups consisting of teaching staff, non-teaching staff, managers, and human resources staff. Groups varied in size from three to thirteen; in some cases, more than one group from a particular category were interviewed. In addition, extra interviews were conducted with one or two individuals, covering similar ground in a less structured manner. Supplementary material was obtained from documentation provided by the institutes.

The chief executive officer of each institute was interviewed individually in three of the institutes; in the fourth, the chief executive officer participated in a group interview.

During the interviews, flexible delivery as a concept was not stressed. Rather, participants were asked to describe the range of methods of delivery of which they were aware, and to discuss experiences and practices in relation to these. The reason for this emphasis was that the terms 'flexible delivery' and 'flexible learning' are still defined as specific modes by some people, and some innovative and inventive staff do not see themselves as involved in flexible delivery. It was seen as important in this project to embrace the whole range of traditional and non-traditional teaching and learning.

Research findings

A companion project, conducted by Canberra Institute of Technology, examines the same subject by means of a survey of managers in fifteen TAFE institutes (McNickle & Cameron 2003). The findings of the two projects were remarkably consistent, and were further supported by a validation workshop attended by members of some of the institutes which had participated in the survey project.

A validation workshop which was held on 30 September 2003 and included both experts and representatives from several of the institutes participating in the survey project, discussed the findings of both projects and confirmed their validity while adding some additional details.

Structure of report

In the following chapter a summary of the issues identified in the literature is presented. The findings and the implications of the case studies form the basis of the following chapter. The appendices contain the full definition of flexible learning, the research instruments and the detailed case studies.

Summary of issues identified in the literature

Introduction

A literature review forms an appendix to the report entitled *The impact of flexible delivery on human resource practices: Survey of TAFE managers* undertaken by Cathy McNickle and Narelle Cameron from the Canberra Institute of Technology. This review should be consulted for a detailed understanding of the human resources environment, including details of industrial awards and agreements. A summary of the issues identified by the review is presented here to provide the context for the current case studies.

Interest and participation in flexible learning has been growing since the 1980s, and has been embraced enthusiastically by many practitioners, as well as by government agencies at national and state/territory levels. It has had a far-reaching impact on the work of teachers and trainers, and in the light of other changes which require a flexible approach, such as the introduction of competency-based training, training packages and the increase in workplace training, continues to exert a substantial impact on their work.

In current practice, teachers and trainers may indeed use traditional ‘chalk-and-talk’ methods, but may, also or instead, take self-paced classes using print or online resources, work individually with students in learning centres on campus, in the workplace or in the community, or support distance students using print, telephone, online services or other media, teach in workplaces or conduct workplace observations and assessments, organise and monitor work placements, or work with students and their employers in a variety of other ways. The question arises whether the current frameworks are adequate to plan, manage, report on and remunerate such activities.

What has not changed, however, is the framework within which teaching and learning take place. Funding and performance reporting models continue to be based on the teaching of groups of students in classes.

Teaching awards and agreements differ between jurisdictions. Some make reference to flexible delivery; two make provision for the employment of tutors or trainers on slightly different conditions; and in the Australian Capital Territory and Western Australia, provision is made for a response to unique or new business situations through negotiated flexible employment conditions (Australian Industrial Relations Commission 2000a, 2000b). All prescribe the weekly or annual hours allocated for teaching contact, preparation and correction, administration and professional development.

Performance data are collected at state/territory and at national level. The regimes for doing this have been adapted over the years, but are still recognised as being unfriendly to the measurement of performance in the flexible delivery environment. Indeed, as noted by Stewart-Rattray, Moran and Schueler:

It is difficult to judge performance in the new environment using criteria and tools developed for a different set of assumptions about, and practices in, vocational education and training. This is the crux of the challenge facing the assessment of success in implementing the goals of the *Collaborative Framework*. The assumptions and practices underlying current data collection regimes are, by and large, taken for granted—e.g. the norm is that teaching occurs in a classroom using a limited range of pedagogies and technologies, with a specified number

of contact hours. Over the next 5–10 years, as the process of mainstreaming flexible learning accelerates, these assumptions and regimes will need to be adapted or replaced to suit the evolving flexible training environment. (Stewart-Rattray, Moran & Schueler 2001, p.35)

The case studies in the current project indicate that flexible learning is no longer confined to the ‘early adopters’, but is becoming integrated with the mainstream of activities at a faster rate than Stewart-Rattray, Moran and Schueler predicted. Therefore, the need for assumptions and regimes to change is becoming ever more urgent.

Changes in the work undertaken by teaching staff are noted above. However, the nature of the ‘teaching force’ has also changed. Over the past decade there has been a substantial increase in the number of contract and sessional staff employed in TAFE, although some states and territories are reversing this trend or prescribing limits to the proportion of non-permanent staff who can be employed. In addition, some additional classifications have been introduced: workforce trainer, tutor, lecturer, are some of these. Staff in these classifications are employed on somewhat different conditions from those of teachers and at different pay scales. There are implications in these changes for the shape of the workforce in areas such as workforce planning, work management and employee relations, and these are discussed in the report.

Teaching staff are not the only ones whose work is affected by the adoption of flexible delivery. The opening of campuses for longer hours, the establishment of learning centres in libraries, and the introduction of continuous enrolment and self-paced learning are issues that affect non-teaching staff. There is little in the literature to assist in analysing this impact.

Framework of human resources issues

The companion project (McNickle & Cameron 2003) used a framework of eight key human resource activities as a starting point for their work. These activities are job design, human resources/workforce planning, recruitment and selection, performance management, training and development (or professional development), pay and conditions, and occupational health and safety. The human resource literature for Australian VET, and discussion with key stakeholders, suggests that workload management is also a significant issue, which fits within a range of these other variables. Because of its importance, they have drawn it out as a ninth variable in this context and then used it as part of the analysis framework for projects.

For ease of cross-reference, this report uses similar terms, with some regrouping to suit the nature of the material.

Findings from the case studies

Summary of findings

The interviews revealed a broadly similar picture in the four institutes studied. Although each institute displayed a different organisational ambience and culture, the issues raised were very similar. Differences were the result of local influences and of organisational priorities, as well as external factors such as government reporting requirements and relationships with unions.

All four institutes demonstrated one striking feature: their central priority was to find flexible ways to satisfy the varied and diverse needs of their individual and industry clients, and their staff show creativity and dedication in striving to do so. In each instance, the chief executive officers had articulated a strong personal vision to all staff about how the institute should pursue its central priority. Stresses and frictions exist within the institutes, but a desire to overcome them with goodwill is evident.

Workloads are increasing in size and complexity. The stresses caused by this fact are exacerbated, for both staff and managers, by industrial agreements and regulatory structures which have not kept pace with current practice. It is difficult to plan work in a way which recognises the tasks to be done and apportions them fairly; and it is equally difficult to manage and report on performance in a way which reflects the actual activities.

Issues of health and safety arise when staff work away from the institute—in industry, at home or elsewhere. Travel time, travel costs and safety are of particular concern, as is the responsibility for safety of trainees in workplaces.

Professional development continues to be an important underpinning component of flexible delivery. Concerns emerge, however, about the adequacy of Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training for teachers, because it does not provide the depth of understanding of teaching and learning which are considered essential to maintain high-quality standards. A need is evident for professional development for managers and non-teaching staff.

All staff are more closely connected with the teaching and learning process than they were in the past, and in some institutes, non-teaching staff work closely with teaching teams. These staff therefore need to understand how flexible learning actually works, and the effects it has on both staff and students.

These closer relationships, as well as different job roles, need to be reflected in job descriptions and in the selection of staff who are adaptable and willing to work in these new relationships.

Staff profiles are not changing significantly, although institutes are looking for ways to make them more flexible to suit changing training needs.

Organisational culture and structure

In all cases, the adoption of flexible delivery was driven by a combination of business and educational drivers. Providing education and training to meet the needs of individual and enterprise clients, reaching new markets, achieving efficiency in an environment of budget constraint, and responding

to the call of governments for innovation and competitiveness are universal drivers. The degree of flexibility seen as desirable varies from 'we will find a way to satisfy the needs of every client', to 'we will negotiate flexible solutions as far as we can while maintaining our organisational integrity'.

The variety of delivery methods within institutes ranges across traditional classroom teaching, self-paced classes and workshops, and individual study undertaken independently or in learning centres. Training in enterprises (on-job, work-based or workplace-based) may be done by TAFE staff, or enterprise staff in conjunction with, or under the supervision of TAFE staff. TAFE staff also conduct workplace assessments, site visits and observations. Online learning takes place both on and off campus, and paper-based distance education still has a place in flexible delivery. In many programs, a mixture of modes is used. Some staff are involved in preparing online and other learning materials. An increasingly important component of the teacher's activity is liaison with current and potential industry clients. Although the label of 'flexible delivery' is not always attached to their teaching by staff, it is clear that, in these institutes at least, the will and the ability to be flexible to meet the needs of clients has moved far beyond the 'early adopters' and into the mainstream of activity.

The choice of modes, and flexibility or otherwise of arrangements, are determined partly by the readiness of staff, but to a greater degree by the nature of the program, the requirements of the industry concerned, and the situation and preferred styles of students. For example, bakery teachers at the Hunter Institute work overnight in industry to teach apprentices in the workplace. TAFE Tasmania has, over a number of years, developed a close relationship with the Hobart Botanic Gardens which has resulted in TAFE staff not only teaching in the workplace, but also the Garden's trainers working with TAFE students. On the other hand, when TAFE Tasmania introduced flexible alternatives to its hairdressing program, it found industry clients asking for a return to traditional patterns of campus delivery.

Team-based working with a flatter management structure is a feature of all four institutes. As a result, there are fewer middle managers. This is advantageous in that there are fewer levels between grass-roots staff and management staff. Nevertheless, this system means that both senior and middle managers have a wider span of responsibility, which often encompasses a variety of staff. Heads of teaching centres have always been sandwiched between the demands from below for better resources to support teaching, and the demands from above for greater efficiency and productivity. They must now, in addition, encourage their staff to diversify their teaching methods while working within funding and reporting systems that assume and reward traditional class teaching. Their job is a difficult one, and demands higher level leadership ability as well as managerial skills.

Three of the four institutes espoused a 'one-institute' culture, in which non-teaching as well as teaching staff are encouraged to see their role as supporting teaching and learning. To a greater or lesser extent, non-teaching staff work with teaching teams in an 'account manager' type of relationship; that is, each member of such staff works with nominated teams and is the single point of contact for staff in those teams on relevant subjects. Technological support is no longer a mysterious and hidden activity, but is of day-to-day importance for students and teachers of online programs. The fourth institute attempted this approach, but has partially returned to a more centralised administrative structure, with the aim of achieving better economies of scale. This approach leads to the adoption of 'whole-of-organisation' business approaches in which 'back' and 'front' office services and technologies are more closely linked.

In all four institutes, the influence of the chief executive officer is clearly enormous, not only in determining strategic directions, but also in setting the tone of the organisational culture. The staff interviewed spoke of their chief executive officers with respect and often with admiration. A sense that the chief executive officer and senior management are supportive of their efforts clearly makes an enormous difference to staff morale. Most staff were well aware of the educational and political imperatives driving the institute's directions.

Non-teaching staff generally seemed to be invigorated by their closer connection with teaching and learning.

All of the institutes are conscious of the need for staff with skills and aptitudes that support their flexible orientation. This involves planning the staff profile, recruiting suitable people and ensuring that skills and knowledge are not lost when staff members retire or move on to other jobs.

Summary of messages emerging

The costs and benefits of employing trainers, tutors and similar classifications should be carefully assessed to ensure that they will achieve the desired outcomes and that the benefits outweigh the potential for friction resulting from the different teaching-related classifications.

When recruiting, it is important to target staff who are likely to be enthusiastic about flexible delivery—skills can be learned, attitude is more difficult. Flexible, open-minded attitudes are as important as specific skills when recruiting. Recruits are likely to have to adapt to change, and to upgrade their skills frequently.

Job descriptions need to be reviewed and revised periodically to reflect the changing nature of work. In relation to teaching staff, job descriptions need to include specifications of the educational expertise required, and an outline of the range of duties, which may include both teaching and other teaching-related duties, such as design of learning materials and liaison with industry clients. They also need to recognise that not all teachers will do the same work; tasks will be apportioned between members of teaching teams, and an individual's work may vary over time.

For non-teaching staff, job descriptions need to reflect the ways in which they support teaching and learning within the institute's structure, and to recognise the closer relationships with teachers and students.

Job design for managers needs to take account of qualities such as educational leadership and negotiation skills, in addition to those qualities previously considered necessary.

Employee relations

The different classifications (teachers, tutors, workplace trainers, lecturers etc.) which have been utilised to accommodate flexible delivery have already been mentioned. These classifications attract not only different rates of pay but also different duties (especially teaching and non-teaching duties) and different working conditions (whether or not eligible for time off in lieu, overtime payment etc.). Since the tasks of the different classifications overlap to a large extent, there is some resentment of the different conditions. This can result in friction within teaching teams. Some teachers consider that their status as professionals can be eroded as a result.

Stress factors caused by workload problems have been described above. Change is widespread and rapid in all institutes, and in many areas of their endeavours. The Hunter Institute is dealing with this issue by setting up a health, welfare and environment team which looks after mental and physical health and monitors occupational health and safety compliance. It attempts to guard against excessive change for change's sake by reviewing the need and impact. As a member of human resources staff noted: 'No matter what changes we plan, we look at the data first to see if the change is justified'.

Changing workplace relationships are interesting to note. Teaching and non-teaching staff work more closely together, and become more interdependent (as in the case of information technology staff working with teachers on the development of online learning resources). This has necessitated conscious efforts to understand each other's work and the varying conditions and constraints within each works. Some tensions are noted between teaching staff and non-teaching staff who are in direct contact with students, since non-teaching staff are sometimes perceived as encroaching on

teachers' territory. On the other hand, the experience can enrich the working lives of both teaching and non-teaching staff.

Staff working with enterprises in the workplace noted the value and satisfaction derived from the close working relationships formed with clients. These were beneficial to the client in the high quality of training achieved; the TAFE staff improved the currency of their industry skills and the institute's reputation in the industry was enhanced.

Summary of messages emerging

When utilising a variety of teaching/training classifications, it is important that staff as well as managers have a clear understanding of the reasons for their introduction. It is also crucial that the relative costs and benefits are assessed. They should be used only when there is an education or training benefit as well as a budgetary advantage.

Stress is a fact of life in a constantly changing environment. Institutes can help by ensuring that the need for change is reviewed and assessed before action towards change begins, and by monitoring and supporting the wellbeing of staff.

Staff should be encouraged to acknowledge and deal with the tensions arising from the shifting work relationships between teaching and non-teaching staff, and to capitalise on the enrichment potential resulting from these shifting relationships.

Similarly, they should be encouraged to develop good working relationships with industry clients, and the benefits to all parties should be promulgated.

Workload management and working conditions

Of all the issues canvassed with teaching staff, that of workload management was the one constantly raised and which generated the most heated discussion. It is very clear that teachers are enthusiastic about the educational value flexible delivery has for students and its capacity to enrich their teaching life. It is equally clear, however, that many of those who embrace it are becoming exhausted and, in some cases, disillusioned. All the institutes are taking action to rectify this situation, and with some success, although this is uneven within each institute. The causes of the problems and the solutions being tried will be discussed a little later. In the first instance however, it may be helpful to examine in detail how some of the changes in teaching practice are contributing to the problem. These are examples, and more are given in the case studies themselves.

Groups in classes or trade workshops are likely to be self-paced, using print or online resources as a source of instruction. This means that a number of different competencies—perhaps up to a dozen—will be in progress across the group. The teacher's role is to help students solve problems as they experience them, and to encourage and motivate those who are struggling. This way of teaching is of great benefit in a group of students possessing varying aims and abilities: those who wish to complete their study as fast as possible are not held back, while those who need extra time to gain the skills have a better chance of succeeding. In a class where students were proceeding through the competencies at the same pace, the teacher would have a good grasp of the subject as a whole, but be focused on one competency at a time. With flexible delivery, he or she must be prepared to deal with any competency in detail at any time. Rather than dealing with all the group's questions about competency A before proceeding to competency B, the same questions about each competency may be asked by students individually at different times. The consequence is either a difficulty in giving sufficient attention to each student, or more time spent out of class in providing extra support.

More teaching now takes place away from the campus, on site in enterprises, or on visits for workplace assessments or observations. These activities may take place within normal teaching hours or at night or weekends. Travel to the sites may be involved, sometimes over long distances. Arrangements for compensation for out-of-hours teaching are prescribed in awards, and generally do not permit time off in lieu to be taken. Whether and how to count travelling time is a knotty problem, resolved in some cases as teaching time, in others as non-teaching time, and in still others, as uncompensated. The availability of institute vehicles, or compensation for using private cars when they are unavailable, is a compounding problem.

Students today have greater expectations of support from their teachers, and are more prepared to demand it. On campus, this means that students are more assertive in approaching teachers with questions at any time, and the experience with telephone-supported students is similar. Online students, communicating on the web or by email tend to expect responses immediately, no matter what time of day or night.

Why is it difficult for institutes to manage these changes in ways which are fair and equitable to teaching staff, while working within budget constraints and satisfying the needs of students and employers?

The most pervasive problem is the construction of teaching awards and reporting systems which, despite their acknowledgement of flexible delivery, are still based on structures which assume classroom conditions. Reporting of performance is generally measured in contact hours, and it is difficult to account for time spent on the telephone or computer. Similarly, it is difficult to make a meaningful division of teachers' time into 'teaching' and 'non-teaching' duties. Planning for online contact, workplace supervision and other activities are also problematic areas.

The four case study institutes are all attempting to deal with these difficulties.

TAFE Tasmania and the Australian Education Union have negotiated a memorandum of understanding under the award which deals with teachers engaged in flexible delivery. The prescribed 714 annual teaching hours, plus duties other than teaching, can be replaced with a total of 1300 working hours per year (plus 100 hours for occupational health and safety requirements for those working on campus). These hours can include workplace contact, working at home and travel, as well as on-campus work. Arrangements are negotiated individually between teachers and their supervisors. Discussions are currently (July 2003) being held to determine whether, and under what conditions, it is possible to move away from the concept of hours altogether, towards a 'working week' concept, more like that customary for other categories of staff. To support the memorandum of understanding, the institute has revised management practices. These include, for example, introducing workers' compensation insurance for travel, and reviewing travel arrangements for time allocation and occupational health and safety. However, the memorandum of understanding has not solved all problems and it is presently used (wholly or in part) by only about two-thirds of the teaching staff.

In Queensland, Southbank is currently negotiating with the union over a 'sub-agency' agreement, an amendment to the award for the educational staff of TAFE Queensland. In this agreement, annualisation (the averaging of weekly hours) is being reviewed to allow for future flexibility to meet the target of 30% online delivery with current staff. An advantage of this agreement will be its recognition of team-based work, so that equitable treatment will be possible for staff undertaking different duties within the same team. The chief executive officer had chosen not to codify arrangements in the early years of flexible delivery, preferring to let issues and solutions emerge over time. Now, however, he believes the time is ripe to formalise arrangements.

At the Hunter Institute, the chief executive officer would welcome renegotiation of workplace conditions if this could be achieved with the union, and notes the frustration to innovative staff when there is an insistence on keeping to the letter of the award. As she comments: 'Flexibility happens almost in spite of the award'. Some managers expressed the view that an enterprise agreement would be more satisfactory than a state award.

East Gippsland, frustrated by the inflexibility of the award, created a category of 'trainer/assessor' to provide for workplace training activities. An industrial relations case resulting from this award has been shelved, and it is hoped that a new structure for Victorian TAFE teachers will produce more flexible arrangements.

In all four institutes, workloads are negotiated with supervisors, either individually or as a team. Staff satisfaction with this process is very variable. Greater satisfaction is achieved when the manager demonstrates support for and trust in staff members. Most importantly, staff appreciate the manager's understanding and recognition of the work they do and when he/she encourages a shared understanding among team members. A number of teachers observed that, on the occasions when they were at the computer communicating with students, other staff and managers did not recognise this as 'real work'. They were most appreciative when it was recognised. Discussion in the interview groups indicated that the managers who were most successful in achieving harmonious team operation within this context were those who exhibited high-level educational leadership as well as administrative management skills.

As one approach to workload management, East Gippsland has articulated a policy of not 'ripping off' its staff, and of openness in staff management. Although staff say that this aim is not always realised (some report that the workload is still not properly recognised), they are aware of the policy, respect the efforts of their managers, and acknowledge the pressures from above and below to which managers are subject. They appreciate a culture in which innovators are not punished for mistakes they may make.

A further way of dealing with workloads is by encouraging self-management. Students' demands and the strain they cause was frequently mentioned by teachers. However, other teachers and managers noted that there were ways of dealing with at least some of these. For online and distance students service standards can be set; for example, emails and telephone messages will be dealt with within 24 or 48 hours. For on-campus students lists of available times for teacher consultation can be provided and posted. One teaching centre at the Hunter Institute has designated an office where teachers can meet students at their listed times of availability. Teachers' quiet working areas are off limits to students.

When staff work at home, consideration must be given to costs and conditions. In most cases, staff use their own computers. These may or may not be adequate for the work to be done. The cost of internet access is generally a matter for negotiation with the institute, as is recompense for costs such as heating and lighting. East Gippsland made use of an initiative of the Victorian Office of Training and Tertiary Education to obtain laptops for many of its staff, and the use of laptops is also increasing in other institutes.

Workload management is an issue for others as well as teachers. The pressure under which managers work has been mentioned previously. On the one hand, they must deal with staff who are trying to achieve reasonable working conditions and resources. On the other, there is pressure from above to reduce budgets, increase productivity and generate income. As a teacher at TAFE Tasmania noted, this is true for managers at all levels, up to the chief executive officer. All industries today are familiar with the trend for employees to work for longer and longer hours. Southbank has noted within its own culture, a competitive tendency among managers and is consciously dealing with this by encouraging the habit of working more moderate hours.

Along with these difficulties, there has been an enormous increase in the quantity of recording and reporting. The Australian Quality Training Framework, while not necessarily making radical changes to practice, insists on a far greater degree of documentation of procedures and recording of students' progress and other matters. Other policies and initiatives such as user choice, traineeships and New Apprenticeships also involve more paperwork. Teachers and managers report this as a significant problem, and one to which no useful solutions have yet been found.

In this environment where institutes must find ways to work innovatively within structures that do not encourage innovation, risk management is especially important. Rather than thinking about how systems can be manipulated, a better approach, as the chief executive officer of the Hunter Institute noted, is to identify the approach to be taken, and then to ask: 'How can we then ensure that we cover all bases to minimise risk?'

A barrier to flexibility identified by teachers in several institutes relates to the increasingly common practice of allocating global budgets to teaching teams, from which they must buy in services. This is acceptable for support services such as human relations and financial services, but buying in teachers' time from other teams (to assist in specialist areas) is seen to be prohibitive. This may be because teaching staff are unused to calculating total costs (that is, not just hourly rates), but in at least one case, it is because the teaching centre must pay for the imported time, while the commercial income which is generated is returned to general revenue, and is not available to the teaching centre.

Summary of messages emerging

Teaching awards and reporting systems do not readily accommodate flexible delivery. Reporting in terms of contact hours and performance in terms of productivity targets are incompatible with flexible delivery. Opinion is divided on whether 'annualised hours', as used in Queensland, help or hinder flexibility. Although it is possible to achieve flexibility within these structures, a risk management approach must be taken to avoid exploiting teachers or overstepping legitimate boundaries.

Varied teaching modes, more individual interactions with students, and a greater load of recording and reporting, have greatly increased teachers' workloads. Managers need to understand the nature and extent of the work involved, and institutes need to recognise it in negotiating workloads and conditions. Open communication is needed to achieve and recognise equitable workloads. The complete time and cost implications of working away from the campus need to be recognised and included in the negotiation of workloads and conditions.

Staff may need assistance to learn how to make their work more manageable.

Middle and senior managers need high-level leadership and negotiation skills to achieve these outcomes.

Performance management

The problems associated with workload management discussed previously in this report apply also to performance management. In particular, it is difficult to ensure that staff comply with industrial, legislative and government regulations when these do not reflect the work they are expected to do.

Southbank Institute now includes an impact analysis as a part of all project plans, along with training needs analysis and delivery plans. The impact analysis includes data on such items as staff time, learning resources, costs and facilities. As well as assisting with the planning of financial, human and other resources, the impact analysis provides a structure which can facilitate the planning of workloads and the appraisal of performance.

We have already seen that manager recognition of staff efforts is beneficial to staff work and morale. It is essential that managers and team leaders become thoroughly familiar with all aspects of the work that their staff undertake. This practice not only facilitates the calculation of a fair workload but also helps in establishing whether staff are managing their own work realistically; for example, setting boundaries for times of availability to students. The manager has a duty not only to manage the performance of individuals, but also to share information about the contribution of each

individual's work to the team's outcomes. In this way the friction and resentment caused by perceptions of unequal loads can be minimised. This applies also to the tensions between teaching and non-teaching staff. Problems of disputed 'territory' must be resolved if the team is to work well.

The trend to team-based working means that performance must be considered in terms of the team as well as the individuals in it. With the large span of activities now expected from a team, it is unrealistic to expect that all members of the team will be equally good at all tasks, even when professional development is available. To take a hypothetical example, a staff member who is talented in the development of online learning resources may be an introverted person not well suited to the outgoing 'meeting and greeting' needed for liaison with industry clients. But both sets of skills may be equally important to the team. An important ability for the manager is being able to determine the skills profile needed for the team as a whole, and to apportion each type of work to the staff members best able to accomplish these. Therefore goals must be set both for the team and for each individual, and performance assessments carried out similarly.

The performance review and development system devised by East Gippsland offers one means for achieving this. Goals are set for the institute, the team and the individual. Individuals' goals are expected to contribute to team and to institute goals. When a staff member falls short of a particular goal, this is noted as a professional development need rather than a failure. Professional development applications are once again related to individual and group goals, and include suggestions on how the benefits gained will be shared with other staff. This system provides for career development, and on a wider scale, for workforce development, as well as for performance assessment.

Summary of messages emerging

The overriding requirement in performance management is that managers familiarise themselves with the whole spectrum of the work of their staff in sufficient detail to enable them to recognise its value and role.

Managers' skills must include the ability to negotiate and apportion work fairly, and to communicate openly so that all members of the team can be confident of equitable workloads. Goal-setting and performance review should be done both for the individual and for the team, and should relate to the broader goals and directions of the institute. These activities are important for the institute's success in its core business, but they also contribute to team development and the career development of individuals. A challenge for managers is to work within budgetary constraints while creating an environment in which mistakes (which inevitably accompany innovation) are permissible within a risk management framework.

Open communication, the sharing of information and the development of a team ethos are all essential if harmony is to be maintained when staff are working in quite different ways. Managers must possess the essential skills of leadership and negotiation to ensure the harmonious and equitable workplace.

Occupational health and safety

Institutes have occupational health and safety responsibilities not only for persons on their premises, but also for staff working away from the campus and, in some circumstances, at home. The initiative of the Hunter Institute in this regard was noted above; a particularly useful feature is that staff of the team visit a different campus every month to ensure that all staff have been included.

The issue of travel has been mentioned earlier in this report. However, not only the time and cost of travel must be considered; safety is equally important. When long distances are travelled (like the eight hours between Mallacoota and Bairnsdale for East Gippsland staff), it is necessary to guard

against fatigue. Sharing the driving between two or more staff members is one way to achieve this. Another is to plan several visits on the same journey and include rest and refreshment stops, so that the journey is broken. The problem of how travelling time should be counted has already been highlighted. Reimbursement for travel costs is an associated issue. Staff at one institute, where no time allowance or petrol reimbursement is made for workplace observation visits, noted that staff will accept this for a time, but then will become disgruntled.

Where one or two teachers are in charge of workshop groups where heavy equipment is being used, the question arises of how to ensure adequate supervision to prevent accidents, and who is liable if an accident does occur. A similar matter is safety in the workplace. Employers are responsible for maintaining safe workplaces; institute policy generally states that a teacher who suspects that a workplace is unsafe should decline to work there, but some teachers find it difficult to leave their students in such conditions, and feel uncertain about who is responsible for the students' safety.

When staff are working at home, the liability for their safety is an issue. TAFE Tasmania negotiates with staff individually on the need for, and cost of, insurance.

The ergonomics of long periods of computer use is another matter of which institutes as well as individuals need to be aware, in order to avoid postural and other injuries. Similarly, the use of mobile phones needs to be monitored in the light of unresolved health concerns, and the use of mobile phones while driving should be absolutely forbidden.

Summary of messages emerging

All employees need attention paid to their occupational health and safety. Where training takes place on industry sites, the institute needs to prepare a clear policy on teachers' and trainers' responsibilities and as well as that relating to trainees, including guidelines for action when risks are identified. The policy and guidelines should be well publicised and compliance should be mandatory.

Institutes should prepare and promulgate policies and guidelines on matters with occupational health and safety implications, and especially the following:

- ✧ travel, including its classification among duties, compensation and safety
- ✧ working at home, including workcover provisions and compensation for costs incurred
- ✧ the safe use of mobile phones and computers.

Institutes should devise risk management strategies to cover the foregoing issues and the management of workloads and work conditions more generally.

Professional development

A great deal of funded professional development has taken place over recent years, including schemes such as LearnScope, Flexible Learning Leaders and Reframing the Future, as well as state/territory-based initiatives.

The majority of this effort has been directed at teachers, and has focused on technological skills, online teaching and learning and change management. The impact is apparent in the greatly increased readiness of teachers to take up flexible learning methodologies. In some cases, participants in such initiatives have gone on to spearhead the culture change in their institutes. Examples are the establishment of the Institute of Teaching and Learning Innovations Centre (ITALIC) at the Hunter Institute by two former Flexible Learning Leaders, and the appointment of another Flexible Learning Leader as Manager for Alternative and Online Learning at Southbank. In

both cases there is a responsibility for encouraging and supporting staff in taking up new teaching methods. TAFE Tasmania has appointed a General Manager for Learning with responsibility for supporting flexible delivery.

Informal professional development, such as mentoring and buddying, is helpful both in skills development and in culture change. It may range from organised programs with formal mentors or shadowing, to low-key, almost incidental events such as helping a colleague at the next desk to learn a new feature of a software program.

Information sharing is a vital part of professional development. This may take the form of organised, institute-wide sessions such as the staff breakfasts at Southbank, or it may occur by organising staff meetings at a time when all the centre's staff (including sessionals and casuals) can be present, as is done at East Gippsland.

All the institutes expressed concern at the replacement of previous teacher training qualifications with the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training as the required credential for teaching staff. This was introduced to ensure that minimum standards could be guaranteed for training in the workplace. It does not, however, deal at any depth with teaching and learning, and this qualification is not seen as a means of enhancing the professionalism of teaching staff. Indeed, it was viewed with some disappointment by participants in the case study interviews.

The deficiencies of the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training are expected to be increasingly felt as older staff, who have studied teaching and learning at a more intense level, retire, leaving behind those with industry skills but with no deep knowledge of teaching and learning processes.

The institutes are therefore exploring further qualifications which staff can be encouraged to undertake.

The University of Tasmania offers a Bachelor of Adult and Vocational Learning, and TAFE Tasmania negotiated with the university to remodel the program to comply with the requirements of the Australian Quality Training Framework. The learning team at this institute is investigating teaching and learning standards to see what other avenues might be pursued.

Southbank has entered into a cooperation arrangement with Queensland University of Technology, which enables the institute to offer degree studies to teachers.

The Hunter Institute has negotiated with the University of Newcastle to adapt a teacher education program to its needs, and this has been a great success, with staff keen to participate in it. They regard the certificate IV as 'a good functional tool for developing basic skills' (according to the chief executive officer), but insufficient for staff who are expected to be innovative and creative.

East Gippsland has entered into an arrangement with RMIT University to conduct a work-based masters program for its staff.

It is acknowledged as important to include sessional staff in professional delivery, but it is difficult to achieve within budgetary limits. In Tasmania, sessional staff are entitled to a week's paid induction, but have little additional entitlement.

Staff in the case study institutes pointed out the need for non-teaching staff to participate in professional development-related flexible delivery. For library staff, administrative staff in teaching centres and those in flexible learning centres who deal with students on a day-to-day basis, it is necessary for them to be familiar with the teaching methods used and the support needs of students. They should also develop a clear understanding of the ways in which they can help students, and the limitations to the help they can offer. Staff in non-teaching branches of the institute need to understand the reasons for the adoption of flexible delivery, the ways in which it operates in the institute, its impact on staff, procedures, infrastructure and facilities, and the ways in which they can support or hinder its implementation. Staff at TAFE Tasmania referred to a teacher in business studies who takes departmental administrative staff on workplace visits to meet students and

employers, as a way of increasing their awareness of the industry point of view. At East Gippsland, administrative staff in the Flexible Learning Centre, and some library staff, are studying for the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training.

The need for managers to understand the nature and diversity of flexible teaching, and its impact on work practices, conditions and morale, has been highlighted earlier. The need applies not only to heads of teaching centres, who are in daily contact with this work, but it is also relevant to senior managers who are involved in setting institute goals and strategies, and in setting budgets and productivity targets. It is vital that they also understand what it is that they are asking of staff.

Summary of messages emerging

Professional development initiatives related to flexible learning over recent years have had a positive impact on the skills levels of teachers, and have contributed to the adoption of flexible delivery beyond the 'early adopters' and at least into the 'early majority' of staff.

Professional development, both formal and informal, continues to be important in maintaining currency of industry knowledge and technical and pedagogical skills.

The Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training is not, in itself, sufficient training to sustain a professional teaching body with sufficiently high levels of skills and understanding of teaching and learning issues. Arrangements negotiated individually between institutes and universities show signs of filling the gap, but such arrangements need to be more formally recognised in industrial agreements.

The importance of professional development for non-teaching staff is beginning to be recognised, and in some institutes, emphasis is placed on their need to develop a thorough understanding of teaching and learning issues.

A high priority needs to be placed on professional development for managers at all levels, to support them in understanding the nature of flexible delivery and its impact on staff, and to develop the skills necessary to lead and manage in this environment.

Job design, recruitment and selection

In all four institutes, a number of positions are filled with staff (classified variously as workplace trainers, tutors or lecturers), who attract a lower salary than teachers, have a higher weekly allocation of teaching/training hours, and less time for non-teaching duties. The main reason for this development relates to cost-saving. It was pointed out by one human resources staff member that the budgetary impact needs to be carefully considered, as the saving in cost of teaching time must be balanced against the prohibition on these staff performing other duties which must then be carried out by teachers. Dissatisfaction with this situation is reported by many teachers, who consider that it adds to the deprofessionalisation of the teaching community and erodes their conditions.

Two institutes reported that the job descriptions of teachers had not been updated to reflect the nature of their current work. While this is undesirable in principle, it did not seem to be a handicap in practice, since job requirements were worked out at interviews and subsequently, during work planning and performance reviews.

Although none of the institutes reported specific instances where they considered the needs of flexible delivery when recruiting non-teaching staff, it is evident that administrative staff in teaching centres need the capacity to communicate effectively with students and teachers, and to work as part of the teaching team. Administrative staff, technical staff and others need the ability to communicate with teaching teams, and an attitude compatible with supporting teaching and learning activities rather than working autonomously in their own positions.

Workforce planning and succession planning

Staff profiles are being fine-tuned rather than significantly changed, as many of the required attributes are already present. One element that has come under scrutiny is the balance of permanent, contract and casual teaching staff.

In Queensland, the government urges institutes to increase the proportion of permanent staff, and Southbank has so far converted 100 contract positions to permanency. About a third of the staff are part time.

Similarly, the Tasmanian Government discourages the use of sessional staff, so that the scope to change the staff profile is limited.

The New South Wales Government has negotiated with unions an agreement that a 55/45 balance will be struck between full-time and part-time staff in TAFE. The Hunter Institute is developing a five-year workforce plan—considering recruitment strategies, identifying staff who are likely to retire, how they should be replaced and where replacement staff should be located. This institute's way of increasing staff flexibility is to employ more generalist staff, such as general cookery teachers rather than those for specialist positions such as bakers.

East Gippsland, on the other hand, with the aim of having a 'just-in-time' staff profile; that is, one which can readily change to meet changing needs, is using a higher proportion of sessional staff. A tension is acknowledged between the need for multi-skilling and the need for specialisation, to cope with faster changes in industry. In the mix, teaching expertise is required to give guidance to those with industry skills.

In all of the institutes, vacated positions are carefully considered before they are re-filled, to see in which part of the institute the replacement can best be used.

The need noted above for departmental managers to exercise higher level leadership skills means that more careful attention must be paid to succession planning, to ensure that the managers can be adequately replaced when they leave.

Although planning of the non-teaching staff profile is less deliberate, there is an emphasis on selecting those who favour working closely with teaching teams. An important issue identified concerned retiring older teachers who possess not only experience but formal training in teaching skills. New appointees tend to be selected for their industry knowledge, and may not have the underpinning understanding of teaching and learning.

Summary of messages emerging

Although staff profiles are changing gradually rather than radically, it is important to ensure that staff planning and recruitment strategies will meet the evolving skills needs of the institute.

This may be accomplished by means of a workforce plan, identifying where and how skills may be directed. Alternatively, where government provisions allow, it may be achieved by using a higher proportion of non-permanent staff. If the latter course is chosen, care is needed to ensure that the knowledge capital of the institute is maintained in higher level teaching as well as in industry skills.

Workforce planning must take account of non-teaching needs to ensure that the teaching and learning process is properly supported.

Consideration of succession planning is needed to ensure that managers with special knowledge and leadership qualities can be replaced when they leave.

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Appendix 1: Definition of flexible learning

Flexible learning is an approach rather than a system or technique; it is based on the skill needs and delivery requirements of clients, not the interests of trainers or providers; it gives clients as much control as possible over what and when and where and how they learn; it makes use of the delivery methods most useful for the clients, especially, but not only, online technologies.

It has ten characteristics, all of which must be met if flexibility is to be achieved.

These characteristics can be grouped as follows:

Driving forces

- ✧ emphasis on meeting client needs, recognising that each learner and enterprise has unique, complex skill needs, giving learners and enterprises greater influence over what is taught, where, when and how
- ✧ convergence of technologies, their impact on the workforce and the advent of a knowledge society

Learning choices

- ✧ greater choice for learners and enterprises in the *what* of training: including curriculum content, length and make-up of qualifications
- ✧ greater flexibility for learners and enterprises in the *where* and *when* of training: mixing and matching on-campus teaching and remote delivery (workplace and home), and offering more flexible forms of access, entry and exit
- ✧ greater variety for learners and enterprises in the *how* of training: especially through the use of self-instructional learning resources and online technologies

Enablers

- ✧ shifts in the nature of teachers' work and the processes and technologies they use, including the encouragement and support of learner-centred approaches
- ✧ more flexible organisational systems and structures to support the above—including integrated student management and learning systems, appropriate funding models, and changes in the organisation of work
- ✧ policies and processes which integrate each of the above elements
- ✧ use of appropriate technologies to support each characteristic
- ✧ collaboration and strategic alliances that encourage shared experience while strengthening competitive positioning.

(KPMG Consulting Australia & LifeLong Learning Associates 2002, p. 82)

Appendix 2: Interview schedules

Draft interview questions for HR [human resource] staff

- 1 In general terms, how has the introduction of flexible delivery changed the work and nature of your organisation?
- 2 Which staff have been affected by the introduction of flexible delivery?
- 3 In what ways have they been affected?
- 4 What changes in HR practices have been made in order to accommodate flexible delivery?
- 5 What are the implications of these changes for matters such as occupational health and safety?
- 6 How has HR practice been influenced by other factors, specifically:
 - ◆ the general organisational context
 - ◆ business approach and direction
 - ◆ the targeting of specific learner/client groups e.g. small business, regional communities
 - ◆ resource allocation and planning processes
 - ◆ organisational, reporting and funding constraints?
- 7 Are there aspects of HR practice that you think have not yet changed or that need to change further to meet the needs of flexible delivery?
- 8 What has been the impact of these changes on HR staff?
- 9 What has worked well/not so well in your efforts to change HR practices? Why?
- 10 What factors have helped or hindered your organisation in changing its HR practices?
- 11 Which changes in HR practices do you consider are most/least important in supporting flexible delivery?

Draft interview questions for managers

(Note: emphasis will vary according to level of managers)

- 1 What types of delivery does your organisation offer?
- 2 Which of these types of delivery is most commonly used?
- 3 How do delivery modes vary between teaching centres/organisational units?
- 4 How have delivery modes in your organisation changed over the last 3–5 years?
- 5 Does your organisation plan to add or subtract modes in the next few years? If so, which and why?
- 6 What factors have influenced your organisation's choice of delivery modes, in the past and now?
- 7 What has been/would be most helpful in introducing more flexible modes of delivery?
- 8 Which types of staff in your organisation are directly or indirectly affected by the move to flexible delivery?
- 9 In what ways have they been affected?
- 10 What impact have these changes had on middle and senior managers?
- 11 What employee relations infrastructure is in place in your organisation for the various categories of staff?
- 12 What changes in HR practices have been made in order to accommodate flexible delivery?
- 13 Are there aspects of HR practice that you think have not yet changed or that need to change further to meet the needs of flexible delivery?
- 14 What has worked well/not so well in your efforts to change HR practices? Why?
- 15 What factors have helped or hindered your organisation in changing its HR practices?
- 16 Which changes in HR practices do you consider are most/least important in supporting flexible delivery?

Draft interview questions for non-teaching staff

(Note: as many categories of staff as possible to be included)

- 1 What types of delivery are you aware of in your organisation?
- 2 Why have these modes of delivery been adopted?
- 3 Which types of staff in your organisation are directly or indirectly affected by the move to flexible delivery?
- 4 How have you and your immediate colleagues been directly or indirectly affected?
- 5 From your point of view, what are the benefits and disadvantages of flexible delivery for students and staff?
- 6 What changes have you seen in staff and work management practices as a result of the introduction of flexible delivery?

Draft interview questions for teaching staff

(Note: include full-time, contract and sessional teachers)

- 1 What types of delivery are you aware of in your organisation and in your own work unit?
- 2 Why have these modes of delivery been adopted?
- 3 How have you and your immediate colleagues been directly or indirectly affected?
- 4 How do you distinguish between 'teaching' and 'non-teaching' duties in your work?
- 5 From your point of view, what are the benefits and disadvantages of flexible delivery for students and staff?
- 6 What changes have you seen in staff and work management practices as a result of the introduction of flexible delivery?

Appendix 3:

East Gippsland Institute of TAFE

Context of flexible delivery in the institute

East Gippsland Institute of TAFE is a small institute serving a region of small-to-medium-sized towns and small rural communities, including some which are isolated, not by long distances, but by difficult roads and poor communications infrastructure. The main campus is at Bairnsdale; a number of other campuses range from a substantial one at Sale to very small learning centres in small communities.

This institute was claimed to have ‘no future’ a decade ago. It realised that, as a small institute in a geographically large region with a small and dispersed population, it had to do better to survive, and that it would not survive without income from satisfied commercial clients. Thus it made a commitment not only to excellence but to demonstrating excellence.

As a result, the institute adopted a principle of finding a way to meet the needs of every enterprise and individual client. Multiple traditional and newer modes of delivery are used, alone or in blended forms. There is a strong emphasis on taking training to the workplace, and so staff take part both in on-site training and in workplace assessments. On campus, self-paced classes and workshop groups are in evidence, supported by (usually print-based) workbooks, or conducted in computer labs. Print-based distance study is supported by visits from teachers, email and telephone discussion. In some programs, web cams and teleconferences are used to link class groups on different campuses. Online study is available in some programs. The Flexible Learning Centre acts as a drop-in centre for students who wish to work independently. It also hosts more structured activities.

Changes in teaching have been driven not only by industry and individual learners (both groups demanding more flexibility). Other drivers include national and state agendas which push for ‘any time, anywhere’ training, and by an increase in legislative requirements for training in some industries. Greater competition from private providers is also an influence. Competition from interstate TAFE institutes has not been felt as yet, but the managers noted that, just as Victorian institutes are directing their gaze interstate, so metropolitan institutes are looking towards regional areas for enrolments, so this institute has to work hard to maintain its student base.

Managers in the institute noted, however, that flexible teaching practices were more evident in some areas than others, and for some clients more than others. One observed that ‘we will bend over backwards for people in employment’. Others remarked that the teaching mode and the degree of flexibility offered to students depends in part on the way in which a particular industry works: some seek delivery modes which suit shift workers or those who are geographically scattered, while others find that a more traditional pattern suits their needs.

Although all staff are affected to a greater or lesser degree by the increasing flexibility of delivery, it is teachers whose work has changed most dramatically. They are enthusiastic about the educational benefits and enriching qualities, but find the increased quantity and complexity of work exhausting. More specifically, their comments can be summarised as follows:

Positive aspects

- ✧ benefits to employers and students
- ✧ opportunities available to more students, who are often very appreciative of the flexibility shown by the institute
- ✧ more focus on the learner as an individual
- ✧ the empowerment of teachers, who gain in understanding of educational possibilities and in skills and confidence, and derive much satisfaction from enriched work
- ✧ an increase in skills levels, particularly computer skills.

Negative aspects

- ✧ greater workloads, more time demands, the need to be more organised
- ✧ more paperwork and computer work through increased recording requirements
- ✧ more administrative work
- ✧ time demands of recognition of current competencies/recognition of prior learning and enrolment
- ✧ time-consuming and tiring to be constantly working out flexible options.

Workforce planning

Today's students include a higher proportion of young people, who expect the latest in technology. This gives rise to a need for constant upskilling of staff in technology, but also in industry practice, as they are expected to keep up to date here too. It can be hard to keep up with the pace of change. One way to deal with this is to ensure that there is an adequate proportion of staff with excellent teaching skills, who can give guidance to those who have concentrated on industry knowledge. The tension between the push for multi-skilling, and the need for specialisation poses a difficult challenge for team leaders especially.

The institute's approach to workforce planning and succession planning in the face of these varied needs is to seek a 'just-in-time' staff profile. This works in two ways. Whenever a vacancy arises through resignation or retirement, an assessment is made of the skills mix required in the work unit concerned in order to satisfy its objectives, and from there the skills gap that a new appointee must fill is identified. New recruits are sought who not only have these identified skills, but who also have the flexibility of mind that will enable them to extend their skills into new areas in the future.

This process is assisted by the fact that the institute's strategic directions are now embedded in most of its operations, including information technology plans (IT), team and individual performance agreements. Although these are not yet perfect, managers feel that they 'have had a red hot go', and are in a good position to assess staffing needs for the present and the immediate future.

Some changes have been made to the staff profile. The institute has increased its proportion of sessional staff (to varying degrees according to the needs of different teaching centres); it looks for flexibility in the skills and aptitudes of staff it employs; and it makes use of social responsibility in the community. On this last point, local industries who have benefited from TAFE training of their staff express a desire to give something back to education, and sometimes make their employees available to undertake workplace assessment and to teach specific competencies as sessional staff. Despite these changes, however, and compared with other institutes, East Gippsland staff are long-serving, and still mostly energetic and dynamic.

A question that exercises the senior manager is how a publicly owned TAFE institute can continue to be relevant when technological and other industry change happens so fast. They stress the need

to partner with companies, rather than proclaiming themselves the educational edifice with the knowledge to impart. The value of TAFE lies in its ability not just to transmit knowledge but to create it and manage it within the community. Small institutes especially, they say, need to push the boundaries of creativity.

Workload management

The most notable result of the varied delivery methods now in use at East Gippsland is that there is less emphasis on the student group and more on working with the individual student.

Teachers now need to be more flexible and more organised. When students work in classes in self-paced groups, they will be working on a variety of competencies at any particular time, and this is more time-consuming for teachers, who will have to deal with each competency with each student. Each competency will thus be dealt with ten or more times rather than just once.

Individualised learning is interesting for the teacher as well as the student, but is very time-consuming. The effort of constantly juggling different activities is very tiring. Teachers tend to act almost as a help desk, not only encouraging students to pursue their learning activities but responding to questions about content, use of learning resources and problems with technology. But if a teacher is responsible for, say, 16 students in an eight-hour self-paced module, the time allowance is effectively only half an hour for each student, so it is difficult to provide the level of attention needed. One teacher suggested that teaching a class of 20, which includes two 'flexible' students, is like taking three separate classes.

It is hard to generalise, however, as groups of students differ greatly; those coming immediately from school were noted as being 'high maintenance', while those in later years of programs are more strongly motivated to complete.

The decline in literacy levels, and increase in long-term unemployment levels (some East Gippsland students are second- or third-generation unemployed) form an additional impetus for flexible, tailored teaching methods, but at the same time mean that the teaching path to competency achievement is longer and more stony.

When students do not attend a campus, the teacher is generally their only point of contact with the institute, and thus tends to provide initial administrative, library and information technology support. It can be hard to estimate the time required for these activities, and it is necessary to try to work out a formula in conjunction with the team leader. These students often have little idea about facilities such as student counsellors or the student advisory group, although these services are described in material issued on enrolment. For some, this is of little importance; when teachers consider it is important for their students to be aware of these services, they may offer a more formal induction process.

Support for distance students has extended considerably from the old days of purely print-based instruction with occasional workshops. Although content delivery for these students may still be print-based, they receive support by email and telephone, including telephone contact outside teaching hours, and may expect to contact the teacher at home when necessary. Often, teachers will try to find ways to include them in classes occasionally. Although the number of these students is small, those who persist with their studies tend to be well organised and to expect good support. Apart from activities such as correcting assignments which are built into the distance teacher's load, the extra support tends to be given as an unpaid extra, often before and after the teaching day and on non-teaching days. 'A little bit here, a little bit there amongst the non-teaching duties—you can't really distinguish between them', as one teacher said.

When the teacher's load includes a large number of 'flexible' students, then the workload and the stress load are found to be directly proportional to the number of students, and the expectation by these students that teachers will be available whenever required. When teaching only in

conventional classes, non-teaching (preparation and correction) time was seen as breathing space when teachers could work quietly 'off stage'. This quiet time is no longer available when response to students is a constant demand. 'The student demand part of our duties has exploded, but none of the other parts have shrunk', as one teacher put it.

Non-campus teaching can involve a good deal of travelling time, especially for staff in country institutes. How this time is counted depends on the teaching centre. It may be counted as assessment or unscheduled duties, or it may attract time off in lieu or overtime. This last option is not available to staff working under the TAFE Teachers' Award, but is available to workplace trainers who are employed on non-teaching conditions. (Time off in lieu was offered to all teachers as part of the last enterprise bargaining process, but was not accepted by the Australian Education Union.)

Sometimes, teachers report, they 'don't have time to take the time off'; sometimes workplace visits are arranged during term breaks. Each workplace visit is counted as a fixed quantity of teaching time, regardless of the actual time spent. The institute is still grappling with ways to assess workloads, and it is generally up to team leaders to negotiate as they see fit with their own teams. Support for students, for example in computer labs, may not count as teaching; this presents an issue for how teaching time at the Flexible Learning Centre is recognised.

In the opinion of some staff, non-teaching duties such as liaison with industry and travel between sites takes up a disproportionate amount of time. Apart from student-related duties such as workplace assessments, some teachers consider that industry visits are undertaken at least partly to satisfy the pressure to increase student numbers and completions. Another point of view, however, suggests that these activities are an integral part of the institute's efforts to satisfy the needs of its clients. Sessional staff take part in marking, visits to training, city program delivery and other activities as well as face-to-face teaching.

The workload imposed by additional recording and reporting requirements such as those of Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) and the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) is enormous, and exacerbated by their incompatibility with flexible teaching. One teacher complained that 'flexible delivery is supposed to include many modes, but governments will only accept paper'.

A further external matter which causes problems for flexible study is related to the rules which Centrelink has about training, which are incompatible with what the institute sees as educational needs. Centrelink requires students to take a full-time load, while the Flexible Learning Centre's policy is to assess the amount of study each student can realistically manage, and enrol only to that amount. The view of staff is that the more flexible the institutes becomes, the greater the administrative load to track students' progress and provide administrative services. Compliance is a huge issue with Australian Quality Training Framework and Office of Training and Tertiary Education auditing and reporting of outcomes. It is very difficult to report on completions in flexible study; for example, in a case where a module is started in one enrolment period and completed in the next. Staff are all the time trying to work around obstacles set by government and other external systems.

The move away from traditional modes presents challenges to the boundaries of teaching activities, and especially to the measurement of activity. When the delivery method calls for much preparation and individual student contact, 21 hours of class contact can be too much. The basis of 24 hours a week for 15-student groups is no longer useful. What, then, is a fair workload? Solutions are negotiated within teaching teams, to the satisfaction of staff and their supervisors, but not always strictly according to the award. Activities such as telephone discussions and assessments are counted within student contact hours.

Module completion is not a suitable reporting method, as it does not take into account the variable completion times in self-paced programs, nor the fact that a quantity of staff time may be expended even when a student does not complete a module. As one manager suggested, 'bureaucrats don't see teaching and learning as a co-production between TAFE and the student—all the responsibility is

on the institute'. Institutes are not paid when a student drops out part of the way through a traineeship, or even when a student discontinues after gaining the satisfactory outcome of obtaining employment part of the way through a program.

Online students are recognised as part of the teaching load by means of a formula of an agreed number of hours (3 or 4) per competency per student; but this only applies if the student makes progress in the competency.

Changes to the work of non-teaching staff have been caused by the closer contact with students in teaching centres and, especially, in the Flexible Learning Centre. Staff working with flexible learning students are more actively involved with technological support and directing students to sources of information. When teachers are not present in the Flexible Learning Centre, administrative staff may be approached for help about learning matters; here, a balance has to be sought between the need to provide as much assistance as possible to students, and the danger of giving incorrect information about program content. Students who enrol on the promise of flexibility may fit a period of study on campus into a tightly scheduled day, and so it is important that they have the facilities and support to achieve what they have planned. This situation has led to some tensions between teaching and non-teaching staff, and consideration is being given to how to resolve the problem.

Responding flexibility to clients' needs has increased and made more varied the workload for administrative staff. Systems are needed to track the variety of payment arrangements that can be made (up-front or pay-as-you-go), and this requires more interaction with the finance department. Similarly, commercial activities and liaison with current and prospective clients leads to interaction with marketing staff. Both teaching and teaching support staff have had to broaden their networks into VET, community services, industry group, local learning and employment networks and other arenas.

Service branches such as finance tend to have set procedures which may not encourage flexibility, but there is a move to decentralise roles to teaching centres, and to teaching and administrative staff, as in the case of entering student information on to the system, which is done by the student's teacher.

Conditions and employee relations

Managers at East Gippsland strongly affirm their commitment to a fair and equitable workplace, and this determination is recognised by staff. The principal barriers to the achievement of satisfactory working conditions are the externally imposed budgetary constraints, which impose constantly increasing workloads; the current funding and performance report models, which do not support flexible delivery; and the teachers' award, which makes outdated distinctions between the teaching and non-teaching components of the teacher's work, into which flexible delivery fits uneasily.

This brings up the question of how staff can work and be managed flexibly within the existing teaching award, which did not support some current training practices. As it grappled with this problem, the institute created a category of 'trainer/assessor', under the Professional, Administrative, Clerical, Computing and Technical (PACCT) staff award (the only award available for this purpose). These staff make use of off-the-shelf teaching, learning and assessment materials; they do not have the preparation and correction load carried by teachers under the teaching award. This led to an industrial relations case. The case has, however, been indefinitely deferred at the request of the Australian Education Union. It is hoped that the new Victorian TAFE teachers structure will offer suitably flexible classifications and arrangements. In the meantime, however, whenever a vacancy arises in a teaching centre, a decision is made whether the need is to train (i.e. to deliver pre-prepared packages) or to teach. Generally staff and staffing matters are seen by managers to have been well managed. They acknowledge, too, that this institute is more fortunate than some. It is a comparatively young organisation which has grown rapidly over the past decade, and is still in a

period of growth rather than contraction. The ratio of 'old' or conservative staff is therefore small. The priority currently placed by governments on rural and regional needs has to a degree alleviated financial pressures, but on the whole, the institute has been self-reliant through careful management of its public funding and commercial income.

Enterprise clients often require non-standard hours of duty; for example, in equine studies where racing apprentices work from 3 am to 6 am. In this situation, employing the trainer on non-teaching conditions enables time off to compensate for working at these hours, and this is an arrangement that is popular with staff. In another area, a childcare teacher does not want to be paid overtime, but prefers to work on several consecutive Saturdays, then take an equal number of Saturdays off. Unconventional arrangements such as these will continue to present challenges to managers until the award is updated to accommodate current practice.

When office spaces are not separated from classrooms, as in some teaching areas, there is little visual barrier, and so some teachers feel as if they are constantly 'on stage'. The question of who has offices and who has open working space is a problem one for many staff.

Some teachers who used to do their preparation and correction at home now find that this is not possible because of the need to make use of the internet and other equipment and resources. Some report that their managers do not trust them to work at home, but that they need to do this in order to obtain sustained concentration time.

The employment of trainers on non-teaching conditions causes friction with teachers because of the differential treatment of non-teaching and non-attendance time.

Working in the flexible delivery environment, managers see it as crucial that they can negotiate successfully with staff and engage them with the team's and institute's vision. Their efforts are underpinned by shared values, and especially a determination that they will not exploit their staff or work them into the ground. Managers, like other staff, feel that they are under stress, but they have identified the problem and are putting systems in place to redefine their roles and workloads. A particular aim is to reinvest in the capacity of the institute in the fields of systems management and organisational development. This is done not by succession planning *per se*, but by a philosophy of recognising individual skills and matching them against the needs of the organisation, which constantly evolve and change. One characteristic which is encouraged in all managers is the ability to think laterally.

The institute stresses openness in staff management, and especially in dealing with problems. To encourage creativity and (within limits) risk taking, there is a principle that staff are allowed to make mistakes. Probationary periods for new staff are looked on, not as something to be feared, but as a support structure which can be invaluable in establishing new staff into their work and the institute culture.

Teachers acknowledge that management's aim is to avoid exploiting them, but feel that this aim is not always realised. Managers do not always understand the burden that flexible delivery imposes, or how much teachers are burning the candles at both ends. Although there are compensations of enrichment and job satisfaction in flexible teaching, some teachers fear that they are not far from burning out. Teachers recognise that managers do listen to what their staff say and do their best to acknowledge the difficulties, but at the same time, are driven by the imperative to generate income and save on budgets.

The workforce at East Gippsland is not strongly industrialised (20–30% are union members, and most of these are the more long-standing staff). There is a relationship of respect between staff and managers, aided by the attitude of managers whereby they will be fair and reasonable in their demands.

Teaching staff have had to develop new working relationships because of the need to deal with other departments. For instance, the use of online resources necessitates working with information technology services. No longer operating independently within their own spheres, each needs to

understand the working environment, and especially the time constraints, of the other. For many, this is a quite startling change, which may extend outside the institute to relationships with industry clients.

Staff are generally aware of how jobs are changing, and of the increasing 'busyness'. There are some tensions between non-teaching and teaching staff over the relationships with students, which teachers tend to see as encroaching on their territory. This can be a problem.

Staff meetings are seen as an important way of sharing information and experience and of solving problems. Times for these are negotiated to fit in with staff attendance times; one centre holds meetings from 4.30 to 6 pm.

Negotiations are taking place to increase the level of workplace release so that teaching staff can upgrade their industry-related skills.

Occupational health and safety

Occupational health and safety is an important issue for trainers and assessors working on site in industry. The employer is responsible for this in the workplace, but from time to time, the trainer will judge that a workplace is unsafe. The institute's policy is that trainers should decline to continue in this case, but this can be a hard decision to make for trainers who are dedicated to their students' learning. They are required, however, to be aware of and to comply with the institute's risk management policy.

As in other rural institutes, a good deal of travel takes place, and more with the increase in on-site assessment. The journey from Bairnsdale to Mallacoota, for instance, may take eight hours for a one-hour assessment. Planning is therefore needed to organise visits to other centres on the same journey and maximise the ratio of contact to travel time. Trainers are entitled to time off in lieu for travel. Teachers are not entitled to this; the union preferred the granting of 27 days of non-attendance time annually instead. The institute does not recognise the 27 days, but instead counts travel time as 'non-scheduled duties', and allows the equivalent of two weeks a year of time in which teachers can work from home as long as they have put in a written plan.

Performance management

Flexibility demands a changed mindset on the part of staff, but it can be hard for people to move out of the comfort zone of long practice. Many staff are keen to adopt new practices, but a number are not. Resignations by these staff are seen as opportunities to acquire more forward-looking staff members.

The distinction between teaching and non-teaching staff (in teaching centres) is becoming less marked in the contemporary environment. When teaching on campus takes place outside the traditional hours, facilities need to be open, clean and secure, computers need to be available and information technology support is needed. Libraries may make arrangements for overnight access, or for borrowing by students who do not attend campuses. All these staff therefore need close relationships with teaching teams and input into decisions about the when, where and how of teaching. Support services staff and teaching teams need to understand each other's work, and the institute is starting to introduce measures to encourage this. Naturally, frustrations occur, and it is seen as important for staff to talk to each other about these. The balance of non-teaching and teaching staff (both in numbers and in categories of staff) is important in order to set and maintain service standards.

As non-teaching staff develop closer links with students, some teaching staff feel that their roles are being encroached upon. This is exacerbated by the encouragement of administrative staff to obtain their Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. In the Flexible Learning Centre,

administrative staff need to know what is in the modules in order to be able to answer students' questions. One teaching centre has solved this problem by employing a former teacher as administrative officer.

Those staff who are prepared to take a risk enjoy the change and challenge of the environment. There is a transition point when teachers realise that administrative staff taking on the new roles noted above can free up teachers' time to be more creative in their approaches. Some feel threatened at first, some continue to feel threatened, but some embrace the new opportunities. It is the manager's job to observe this, and make sure that staff are properly supported and properly trained for the work that is expected of them. Staff tensions need to be considered from the student's point of view also: if they mean that good support and information are not available to students, they must be dealt with immediately rather than being allowed to work themselves out.

The institute's performance review and development system is of help here. This system enables staff and their managers to review their performance against the team's and the institute's goals and directions. Staff can identify their own goals, and shortcomings against these can be expressed as staff development needs rather than as faults. Staff development applications are expected to relate to the individual's, the team's and the institute's goals, and to include suggestions on how the skills and knowledge gained will be shared with other staff.

Teams have developed baseline data to further the flexibility of their teaching approaches. This is an iterative process, and better measures are expected to be incorporated in future rounds.

Professional development

Professional development needs have broadened from skills related to the staff member's own academic area to include subjects such as computer and information technology skills and the use of systems such as QLS, the institute's student management system.

Non-teaching staff are assisted to gain new skills, either by informal help from teaching and non-teaching colleagues, or through departmentally funded professional development. The institute provides good opportunities for professional development.

All staff must be computer skilled. Administrative staff in the Flexible Learning Centre are all studying for the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, and so are some library staff.

Appendix 4: TAFE Tasmania

Context of flexible delivery in TAFE Tasmania

TAFE Tasmania is the single TAFE institute in the state. It also constitutes the statutory TAFE authority for the state. Providing the context in which this could become possible was the creation of one institute from the five smaller bodies which previously composed TAFE in Tasmania, and the concomitant shift from a geographical to an industry focus. The institute has the advantage of a board whose membership, drawn from industry and the community, aligns it closely to business directions and with enterprises. The state government sees it as a strategic force in certain of its initiatives, such as call centre training.

As a result, the main focus for the institute is on workplace delivery and strategies to support it. Blended modes are prominent; for example, workplace assessment of competencies studied on campus; workplace assignment of staff; and auspicing of workplace and work-based training.

The institute uses a variety of delivery styles, in keeping with its philosophy of meeting the needs of industry and private clients by providing the learning method that suits them best. Arrangements are negotiated individually to meet needs. As teaching becomes more customer-focused, many staff in the institute feel that learning is enhanced as it is closer to the workplace. A principal driver for flexible approaches has been the implementation of training packages, which has been fully embraced by the institute. A further consideration in increasing flexibility is budget constraint: arrangements that will minimise unit costs are always being sought. Other influences on training delivery include reporting and auditing requirements such as the Australian Qualifications Training Framework. The philosophy underpinning the move to flexible delivery is supported by state government and Commonwealth Government policy which emphasises the provision of basic competency training for those aged 45 or more and for persons who have been retrenched, and also e-learning literacy. Tension about flexibility arises especially under 'User Choice', with its accompanying competitive tendering arrangements.

Delivery includes workplace training (the dominant method in some disciplines), on-job and work-based training, simulated workplace learning, teacher-centred classes, online learning, team-based project learning, workplace projects, online learning through regional access centres, and print and technology-based distance learning. These are supported by print workbooks and other self-paced materials. Enrolment is available all the year round in some programs. Enterprise training may take place in enterprise learning centres, and may use TAFE staff for activities such as auspiced assessment.

The institute's mission is to be an 'agile organisation'. The question has been how to achieve this. There are 65 teaching teams, and they are trying to free them up to become centres like small businesses. All funding is channelled through the teaching teams, who then buy services as needed from other parts of the organisation. An aim is to move from generalist management to management of functions. Senior managers have functional responsibilities. Instead of faculty heads, teams consist of teachers with a teacher/manager. At present, this structure is in a developmental stage and different stages of development have been reached.

Structural changes accompanied this shift. The role of managers changed from management of institute functions to management of functional teams, and a flatter, team-based structure was adopted. Responsibility and accountability were devolved as far as possible, so that each team

managed its own budget, with responsibility not only for teaching activities but for buying non-teaching services (facilities management, student services, financial service, human resources and so on) as required.

All staff were affected by these changes, to a greater or lesser degree. Technical staff found that their work encompassed a wider range of duties; for example, to satisfy the requirements of enterprise clients for computer laboratories, accompanied by the need to maintain materials and oversee aspects of access such as the use and security of passwords. The closing of some campuses, and changes in the opening hours of others, affected general support staff, while many staff were affected by the less structured learning environment and the introduction of ongoing enrolment.

The teaching team structure works well because of the shared understanding it creates among teaching staff, but it tends to emphasise the divide between teaching and non-teaching staff. Some non-teaching staff feel less valued because their roles are defined as 'support' to teaching rather than having their previous functional definitions.

The role of non-teaching staff has become very important; for example, to ensure that staff are always available in those programs where students can enrol on any day. This has been very challenging for management. They have taken on a 'private' theme, 'managing Tasmania', as a way of thinking about how to develop the management skills of managers in Tasmania. This has resulted in a substantial change in thinking about many administrative processes, with the result that non-teaching staff are in many instances working more closely with students. A Flexitrain centre is being established in the library on each campus as a drop-in flexible learning centre. Teaching and non-teaching staff, as well as students, are coming together to decide how the centres will work. This closer interaction is highly valued by staff. Twenty-four-hour access centres have been trialled, but were little used, as potential users preferred to study at home.

TAFE Tasmania has appointed a general manager for learning, and a question now posed is how her team is to support flexible delivery. They have put effort and resources into nurturing the early adopters; their task now is to bring along the next wave. They are promoting a community-of-practice model, establishing a core group of people who are really interested in working out ways to involve other people. An emerging whole-of-organisation strategy for flexible learning features a range of strategies for knowledge sharing, including communities of practice.

A specialist community of practice for assessors has been running for the past year, and now feels ready to bring in more staff, perhaps by inviting specifically targeted people and offering them mentoring. The group was set up with a focus on the Australian Quality Training Framework, and has evolved to consider wider topics.

An example of the institute's evolutionary approach to flexibility is shown in its relationship with the Botanic Gardens. In working to make training relate as closely as possible to the needs of the Gardens, programs have included visits to the workplace (including pre-training visits), and training taking place in the workplace. The relationship between the Botanic Gardens and the institute has evolved into a fully developed enterprise partnership delivering significant benefits to both parties. As a part of this relationship, the Botanic Gardens now pays a trainer to teach TAFE students.

An event unique to TAFE Tasmania was the development in 1999 of a memorandum of understanding between the institute and the Australian Education Union. This outlined arrangements to trial a method of measuring and managing the work of TAFE teachers. Its purpose was to increase the institute's capacity to meet the demands of training packages and flexible delivery, and to enable greater efficiencies in delivery. It describes three delivery modes:

- ✧ direct learning, which includes face-to-face delivery, assessment activities and recognition functions
- ✧ distance learning, which includes off-campus and technology-based modes, and encompasses delivery and support activities and development and maintenance of learning resources

- ✧ workplace assessment, which incorporates on-the-job assessment and related activities including travel and record keeping.

Teachers have a load of 1300 hours per annum for delivery activities, plus 100 for development activities. Those who work only in direct learning mode have a further division of duties into 714 hours of teaching, 42 hours of assessment and related activities, and 544 hours of duties other than teaching. The load for teachers in the other two modes is a blanket 1300 hours. Pro-rata arrangements are made when a teacher works in more than one mode. Similar but slightly different arrangements apply to team leaders and to teachers working in student services.

While the memorandum of understanding has not solved all difficulties related to workload planning and management, and indeed it is not universally applied within the institute, its influence is felt both at the practical level and in the acknowledgement by staff that attempts are being made to provide a fair and reasonable working framework. A great advantage was the fact that the union is internal rather than external to the institute, and a forward-thinking executive, together with a positive attitude on the part of senior management, enabled discussions to take on a flavour of organisational development rather than strictly industrial negotiations.

Workforce planning

The institute perceives little latitude in being able to change the staff profile because of the union's discouragement of the use of sessional staff. The institute is seeking to resolve this issue through the current agreement negotiations.

The permanent workforce is ageing, here as elsewhere. Redundancy programs in the 1990s influenced a number of long-serving staff to apply for redundancy packages enabling them to retire early. Undoubtedly, some separations involved staff who were disinclined to learn and adapt to new flexible delivery modes. As the state government has since given a guarantee that there will be no further redundancies in the public sector, the early separation option is no longer available to employees.

Since then, there has been little staff turnover; the level of job satisfaction across the institute is reported to be quite good, and improving.

The management of human resources work has changed in line with other organisational changes. These staff have moved from generalist to more specialist roles, each looking after a group of teaching programs rather than, for example, having a recruitment and selection specialist in the team. They thus act as account managers for a group of teaching teams, enabling them to build up rapport with staff members who know they have a single point of contact about human resources matters. This relationship extends to attendance at teaching team meetings. The human resources staff see themselves as more in tune with the institute's teaching and learning, although they would like to move further in this direction. They also see that the current structure provides for shared information and consistency, giving a capacity to build up corporate knowledge.

A consistent culture across the institute is driven through the corporate processes. The institute now sees itself as entering an era of performance management. A dedicated project officer has been employed for 18 months to design and implement a system for this purpose. The effectiveness of the chief executive officer's insistence on a 'one-institute' culture serving the teaching and learning objectives is evident in the consistency of understanding among teaching and non-teaching staff.

Although, as has been noted, work requirements and practices have changed, the teacher's job description has not been revised for ten years or so. In fact this does not cause great problems because the current requirements are taken into account in the recruitment process. The institute has a single induction process for all staff across all campuses. Flexible delivery has not changed this process.

Workload and performance management

The aim of the institute is to be flexible enough to meet the needs of all its clientele, however varied. The question arises of just how flexible in the long term it can feasibly be. The demands made by flexible delivery are multiplied by the cumulative effects of the requirements of other systems and structures imposed from outside, such as the Australian Quality Training Framework and training packages. As the impact of these demands is hard to predict, the approach that has been adopted is to continue the push towards flexibility, although in some instances, where the load has become unsustainable, more manageable approaches have been sought.

The complexity of teaching, and especially its organisation, has increased considerably. For many teachers, there is now little class delivery. For others, delivery still takes place in the classroom, but is self-paced. This means that the teacher must prepare for all units at once, instead of preparing a unit at a time as they are taught. Some teachers reported that they might spend four days of the week on the road, coming to campus for only half a day. Some teachers spend a good deal of time rewriting learning packages to suit the mixed group method, focusing on the varied learning styles of individuals, and working much as an instructional designer.

Training packages mean that several different competencies may be in progress in one group. Where specialist teachers were previously used, now one teacher has to be able to facilitate learning across many competencies, and to cope with the subject matter of several competencies at a time. In many cases, the desirability of using sessional teachers is evident, as a means of making use of the specialist skills that exist in the community. Sessional teachers are often found to be more flexible about requirements such as out-of-hours teaching. The view expressed by some that the use of sessional teachers offers savings is seen by others to be mistaken. Although the hourly rate is less, they are paid only for their teaching and lesson preparation time, and the wider expertise and non-teaching activities are lost. Others, however, note that unit costs are determined by the price of staff hours, and that permanent staff rates are not affordable for some delivery.

Some anxiety is felt about the impact on the integrity of learning of the need to deliver within a set price. Will methodologies chosen with an eye on the price support a first-class learning experience? Staff tend to be more aware of their accountability than they used to be. As autonomy is pushed down to individual teachers, they and their managers are more cognisant of their roles as professionals. They know that if programs are going to offer more flexible approaches, they must succeed at their first attempt: the budgetary pressures mean that there is no room for things that don't work.

Full-time staff report that they are working harder. They will often teach 24–30 hours a week, but have less time for preparation. Such teaching may take place in periods of six or so weeks, followed by two weeks on non-teaching duties.

Some teachers (for example in horticulture) have no face-to-face contact at all, but are occupied with activities such as workplace contracts and development of learning materials. In the metals area teachers go into organisations as change agents and work with senior managers; this is a very substantial shift in the teacher's role.

The experience generally is that teaching flexibly leads to a richer work life and increased value to the community. But confidence is needed to make the shift from being the older style teacher who is fully in control of all activity to the newer style; it can be difficult. Some clients, both enterprises and individuals, have unrealistically high expectations about the skills and presentation of the teacher.

The number one priority then, is to ensure that students get the programs they want; second to this is the provision of quality learning resources. The onus is on all staff to make sure that students have a valuable learning experience; if this does not prove to be the case, funding can be lost. This situation carries its pressures, but also has the positive effect of encouraging staff to do their utmost to reduce drop-outs.

In considering the patterns of group and individual teaching and duties other than teaching, the main difference is considered to be the greatly increased intensity of activity and demands. Previously, the load would consist of 17 teaching hours a week over a 42-week year, and the number of students would make no difference to this. Now, the load depends on how the team leader views activities. Some teachers feel that there is a perception that 'if you're reading, you're not really doing anything', and it is agreed that it is more difficult to be aware of what people are doing. The memorandum of understanding contains ambiguities about the definition of teaching. The measurement of student contact hours is also unclear. Differences of opinion exist about whether, for example, working with students on the job constitutes teaching or practical supervision. All these things make it very difficult to determine what is a fair load within a teaching team, let alone across teams. Team leaders must attempt to work out equitable loads within their existing budget limits. Nevertheless, most teachers feel that if they complain about an excessive load, their team leaders are prepared to renegotiate.

The calculation of workloads is easier in the case of permanent teachers, as the negotiations are done on a team basis. In the case of sessional teachers, the negotiation is more ad hoc, and the result will take into account the nature of the program, the level of the students, and the complexity of the problems involved. After going through the process a number of times, the managers have a fairly good rule-of-thumb idea of a reasonable workload. A prevailing view is that staff will speak up if they are overloaded, but not if they are underloaded, so the practice is to 'push till they push back'—the 'squeak factor' as one manager expressed it. This is done with the knowledge that staff are reasonable and professional, and those who are interested and energetic in their work are honest. But nevertheless, although there is pressure to achieve well in terms of budget, online learning cannot achieve as many hours as face to face. There is also pressure to keep workloads fair and equitable within the team.

A huge increase in administration was noted: student tracking, student records, assessment, and clerical matters such as car hire. The sign-up of new students, from being a routine part of enrolment, has become almost a whole job for some teachers with two or three large industry clients. A fax is received from the New Apprenticeship Centre advising of a new student, upon which the teacher visits the student and employer and works out what units are to be undertaken, by what delivery method, and with what learning assistance. The documentation requirements of the Australian Quality Training Framework are also believed to be demanding although they have greatly improved quality and consistency in processes.

All these requirements can make it difficult to concentrate on the business of teaching flexibly, although the more creative and learner-focused approaches are more rewarding. There is less funding to bring in specialists to enrich the learning, and so teachers on staff have to encompass the specialist material. At the same time, there is a perception of pressure to satisfy the commercial imperatives of mounting more programs rather than enriching their teaching expertise. Because teaching centres have to charge commercial rates to bring in teachers from other parts of the institute to enrich their programs, flexibility between teams is limited. On the other hand, in areas where larger numbers of sessional staff are used, full-time staff must deal with the paperwork that sessionals are not paid to do.

As a consequence, the way in which teams are managed is changing. Individual teachers do their own timetabling, so the manager has less control. Instead, managers look at outcomes in terms of contact hours, student satisfaction and other performance indicators.

The role of the manager changes along with that of the teacher. Team managers are responsible for selecting trainers suited to the clients. The manager's relationship with team members now includes helping them to move forward into the new ways of doing things, using management development techniques such as shadowing and buddying, listening, informing and encouraging.

For these managers, the most difficult question in relation to flexible delivery, and especially to e-learning, is what constitutes a fair workload. The memorandum of understanding has helped considerably, but some staff feel that it has not provided a solution for the requirements of e-learning,

since the higher proportion of one-to-one activity that it includes means that teachers may not be able to service the usual number of students.

The best support from management is seen to be based on open communication and negotiation. A number of the staff interviewed expressed appreciation of this support. It is important to have contracts worked out in detail so that everyone knows exactly what is expected of them and of others. Some managers and other staff sense a pressure to achieve targets which emanates from outside the institute and is felt at all levels; these staff feel they would like more understanding of the impact of this pressure on their own work. However, not all staff share this view.

The job of support staff, too, has changed, to become more integrated with the institute's educational directions and, in some cases, with teaching activities. For example, a technical assistant may give a workshop demonstration when the teacher is busy. But some support has been removed from teaching because of the administrative load imposed by the extensive reporting requirements of the Australian Quality Training Framework and other systems.

In spite of the problems expressed about the management of work and workloads, teachers at TAFE Tasmania are very positive about teaching flexibly. Working flexibly, when the load is reasonable, is enjoyable, and so is the closer involvement with industry, and the ability to balance being a teacher with being a part of one's industry. The positives of new ways of teaching are very exciting, but the difficulties are frustrating but, as one teacher said, 'the successes, when you've made a difference, make up for the failures'.

Pay and conditions

A central problem for the institute's progress in flexible delivery was (and still is) the recognition of teaching activities in flexible modes, where the distinction between 'teaching' and 'non-teaching' tasks is less clear than it was when only conventional face-to-face or distance modes were used. An example of a problem area is the requirement for teachers to travel between campuses or to industry clients. How should this time be classified? The current award prescribes 714 hours per year of teaching, plus 'duties other than teaching'. The memorandum of understanding, a unique achievement, provides that, for teachers engaged in flexible delivery, this arrangement can be replaced with a total of 1300 working hours per year (or 1400 if working wholly on campus, allowing 100 hours for occupational health and safety requirements). These hours would include travel time, workplace training and working at home, as negotiated individually with supervisors.

The memorandum of understanding is generally seen to be a step forward, but its implementation is not straightforward, and it has not been embraced by all staff. At present about a third of the teaching staff are working under the memorandum, a third under the old conditions, and a third in hybrid arrangements. Discussions are currently taking place with the union to consider whether it is possible to move away from the concept of hours altogether, and if so, what safeguards would be needed.

A vital factor in the success of these negotiations is the fact that, there being only one TAFE body in the state, the union is closely integrated with the staff, and discussions are similar to an organisational development process. Pressures are felt from interstate rather than internally. The local union has been helpful, for example, in discussions about possible ways to encourage staff who are reluctant to move into flexible delivery to advance their ideas. TAFE Tasmania was formed in 1998 from the previous five smaller institutes, and this change, with the associated round of redundancies, caused a good deal of resistance among staff. This has mostly been overcome, permitting the beginning of a shift in focus to engaging teachers in new teaching and learning processes.

The memorandum of understanding has brought with it a recognition of new ways of teaching and learning, and allowed these ways to be valued, while still allowing for the traditional 714 annual hours. A big issue, however, is how staff perceive the setting of targets and loads. Targets are set for teams rather than individuals, so that the work of individuals may be quite different and perceptions of unfairness may arise if the arrangements are not well understood.

Management practices to support the memorandum of understanding in dealing with non-standard duties have been introduced, such as workers' compensation cover for travel. When staff are travelling from home to conduct a workplace assessment, the question arises of when the working day should be deemed to begin. Legal advice was obtained and now the day is taken to begin at the end of the duration of the normal travel time between home and work.

Working at home is not a common practice, but unofficial arrangements are made between team managers and staff where it is needed, bearing in mind the government's support for family-friendly arrangements. The use of mobile phones and laptop computers is increasing, and this brings additional costs.

Issues related to working at home include the use of the staff member's own equipment (purchase and upgrading, running costs), the costs of heating and lighting, whether there is adequate space, and the need for and cost of insurance. These matters are negotiated between teachers and the team leader with the aim of agreeing on a fair number of hours. The memorandum of understanding is used to support the negotiations in some, but not all, cases. The negotiation takes into account the proportion of face-to-face and non-face-to-face teaching, and the total number of students.

Occupational health and safety

The need to resolve occupational health and safety issues can present difficulties to the flexible use of staff in non-traditional ways. For example, if a teacher has to work with students in several competencies over a number of campus workshop areas where heavy equipment is being used, who is liable if there is an accident? The need for induction for both staff and students is clear, but other questions are yet to be resolved. In exercising their duty of care, managers are required to take a higher level of risk and to find ways of managing it.

Arrangements for staff travel have already been mentioned. Where possible, staff travelling to similar destinations share cars, and an attempt is made to schedule the travel so that one person does not do all the driving. This is partly a safety measure to avoid fatigue but it also helps to spread the cost, especially when sessional staff are involved. The cost of public liability insurance premiums has not increased with the increase in travel.

Professional development

Professional development efforts are being totally redesigned round flexible learning. Attempts are being made to gather data on different delivery strategies and their success, including comments from students and teachers. Updating knowledge and skills in teaching and learning is a constant and apparently increasing need. So also has been keeping current with external systems such as the Australian Quality Training Framework which must be complied with.

One area of focus has been leading and managing, and especially working as a team. There has been an enthusiastic response to these institute-wide activities which have helped to overcome the suspicion about whether they could work together which existed when the four previous institutes were amalgamated. The value of complementary skills has been emphasised with the result that, as one participant said, 'we now know who to choose to do a job'.

An attempt is made to use examples of successful practice to assist other teams in their development. The Learning Team is influential as a change agent, by means of professional development, advocacy, persuading and exerting pressure.

The champions of flexible learning are known to put their hearts and souls into their work, but are not necessarily joined by supporters (although this has changed considerably). When this happens, they become burned out and disillusioned. In considering how to overcome this problem, the institute has identified a need to focus change strategies on the majority rather than on the 'early

adopters', so that the champions no longer feel isolated. Professional development on flexible learning matters has been, until recently, as one staff member expressed it, 'at the LearnScope end of the spectrum', including taster experiences followed by a deeper dip. A need is now recognised to get a greater depth of skills by means of more intensive formal and informal means. It was noted by interview participants that increased skills will not have a real impact on teaching and support for students if they are possessed by only a few staff associated with a program. All associated staff must have the necessary capabilities, and management must provide an organisational environment in which they can take effect.

A big impact on staff was felt when the requirement for certificate IV training for all teachers was introduced. The level of the qualification is seen as disappointing. It has set the tone for the delivery of training packages, but neither the program nor its delivery is seen as particularly good. Teaching staff felt that it degraded their professionalism. If the focus had been more on teaching and learning, the certificate could have provided excellent support for the use of training packages, but as it is, it was considered to be designed mainly to cater for people in industry who are part-time trainers. Another qualification, seen as more suitable for some, is the Bachelor of Adult and Vocational Learning offered by the University of Tasmania. Negotiations took place to remodel this program so that it would comply with the requirements of the Australian Quality Training Framework. A focus of the Learning Team is to investigate higher level teaching and learning standards. They are examining the Diploma of Assessment and Workplace Training to see whether some of it will be useful in the institute, but they are keen to focus on all the models of teaching and learning that have evolved and encourage their take-up. All full-time teachers now have diplomas in their professional area.

An issue noted by teachers is that staff working in enterprises have fewer opportunities to increase their skills by sharing experiences and discussing professional issues with their colleagues. Successful team management entails developing strong, close and trusting relationships with and between staff, and encouraging a culture of sharing.

Professional development for sessional staff is difficult to achieve. Their entitlement, in addition to a week's paid induction is small, but efforts are made to include them in professional development activities whenever possible. A sponsorship process is used to enable staff to get time to undertake the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, but it is hard to fund sessional staff. Staff say that they have to be very creative to incorporate professional development activities.

An interesting example of informal professional development for some non-teaching staff is that one teacher in business studies is helping departmental administrative staff to increase their awareness of clients' views by taking them along to meetings with students and employers.

The institute's people development program offers an opportunity for staff to identify their professional learning needs in consultation with a supervisor, and plan individual development programs which also relate to the needs of the organisation.

Appendix 5:

Hunter Institute of TAFE

Context of flexible delivery in the institute

The Hunter Institute is a large regional institute with its main campus in Newcastle and additional campuses in a number of smaller towns. The region has had mixed fortunes economically, but the population is loyal and maintains strong local ties. The institute has close and long-standing links with industry and with the community generally, and this influences the way it is seen by both potential clients and staff.

The need to be more flexible in teaching and learning moves the whole organisation forward, so that, in order to satisfy its strategic training priorities, it cannot help but be flexible. The need to react to a changing environment is felt throughout the organisation, to the extent that, for example, financial services have been very responsive. The infrastructure has altered to a structure of customer service officers who work with clients (teaching centres). This has been in place for three or four years. In this way, teaching and non-teaching staff work more closely together, and staff from non-teaching areas take part in faculty meetings.

There is an institute philosophy that it is possible to be responsive to customers without meeting every individual need: to provide a suitable solution while maintaining the organisation's integrity, negotiation is considered appropriate. Putting this philosophy successfully into action is assisted by the involvement of staff at all levels in the setting of strategic directions, in gaining information about customer groups, and in setting business and operational plans. The establishment of quality reference groups is of great assistance. These groups comprise members from senior management, faculties and non-teaching branches, and oversee vertical slices of the institute's operations. A driving force in the institute's progress in flexible delivery is the Institute Teaching and Learning Innovation Centre, which acts as a change champion, offers mentoring programs and workplace projects, and supports staff in their adoption of flexible delivery.

Staff are becoming more comfortable with different delivery methods. The impact on the organisation extends from budgeting and staffing to the institute culture more generally. Traditional systems such as timetabling were based on classroom teaching from 8 am to 4 pm. Although different systems have been needed to deal with current methods, this has been dealt with by working around outdated systems. There has been an emphasis on team development. More people are volunteering to be involved in innovative workplace projects. LearnScope funding has been a catalyst for change and an important factor has been the establishment of the Institute Teaching and Learning Innovation Centre and its strategic committee, with its emphasis on team development. The principal driver for changing delivery has been a change in training priorities.

Non-teaching staff as well as teaching staff feel the impact of flexible delivery, because they need to have knowledge of new systems as they are introduced. Support staff are becoming more closely involved with teaching, for example assisting with workplace mentoring. There is an emphasis on operating as a whole organisation whose purpose is to support teaching and learning. Not only head teachers, but also finance, information technology, library, human resources and all other types of staff need to share in the strategic objectives of the institute and to understand its teaching and learning objectives. They need to be included in scenario planning for the future.

There is a danger of burn-out in a culture of innovation. This is countered by an emphasis on the vital importance of the team. This broadens the support networks available to staff, and is especially necessary when multiple campuses are involved.

The faculty model is a fundamental change that has taken place in the way the institute operates. This is now well embedded. Some difficulties have been experienced in implementing it, but the strides forward could not have achieved without it. The institute's approach to team building has produced a surge of energy through the release of collective brain power and connectivity. Among important factors has been the breaking-down of barriers between administrative and teaching staff, and between teaching staff in different faculties. A greater preparedness to share ideas and learn from each other, rather than reinventing wheels, has become evident, and this is important, because it is too costly to duplicate activity in times of strained budgets.

Senior management takes responsibility for creating the environment in which innovation happens. The institute has been on a 'quality management' journey since 1997. The quality reference groups are vitally important in this journey, especially in their ability to demonstrate by modelling behaviour suitable to the organisation they are leading.

The pivot of the institute is the head teacher, and their leadership role is crucial. However, they cannot be expected to take on their role without support systems. One of these will be the new Frontline Managers program, which will include the management and leadership skills that they need.

Workforce planning

The staff profile has changed from a predominantly trade basis to incorporate growth in newer fields such as information technology and arts/media. The state government has negotiated an agreement with the unions that a 55/45 balance will be struck between full-time and part-time staff in TAFE. The institute has for some time been planning for the retirements expected in the ageing workforce, and has a policy of succession planning which means that vacancies created by retirements are not necessarily filled in the faculty in which they are created.

A five-year workforce plan has been developed, looking at recruitment strategies, identifying staff who are likely to retire, how they should be replaced and where replacement staff should be located. There is a trend towards more generalist teaching staff; for example, general cookery teachers are being recruited rather than specialists such as bakers. The five-year plan is seen as crucial in setting in place succession planning which can support the training and development plan.

Among the barriers to the successful implementation is the effort expended in encouraging students to pace themselves and not get left behind (which places undue drain on resources). The institute considers that changes are needed in state management and reporting systems, which are not as quick to change as delivery methods. The Establishment Control system is one of these. It does not easily lend itself to flexibility, but with some ingenuity it can be made to work flexibly. The institute has trialled working without an Establishment Control system, but the trial has been discontinued until another satisfactory way of capturing essential data is found. The trial involved five complex teaching sections across different faculties. The CLAMS classroom management system is not universally embraced, but is viewed reasonably positively by most.

The structure and operation of non-teaching departments has been reviewed and revised where necessary to offer the best support to teaching and learning. For example, an internal succession planning system enables human resources staff to move across sections to increase their breadth of skills.

The underlying philosophy is that non-teaching departments are in partnership with teaching centres, in a customer service relationship.

Recruitment and selection

The recruitment process has moved to online applications. This, it is considered, both makes application easier for applicants, and also models the institute culture. Online recruitment reaches a wider potential group of applicants—overseas as well as across Australia. Where necessary, interviews are held by telephone.

Workload and performance management

Once business plans have been set, teaching centres manage their own budgets.

The initial reaction to the introduction of flexible delivery was an increase in stress levels and working hours, and a blurring of the boundaries between home and work. But there is a corresponding excitement and invigoration to be derived from new ways of teaching.

In one teaching centre, the head teacher encourages teachers to try as many different teaching methods as possible to see which ones work best for them and their students.

Flexible learning means more teaching from home, at night and weekends as well as during normal teaching hours. This has advantages, but can also create problems; for example, if the home computer is less powerful or where bandwidth is low in rural areas.

Among the positive aspects of flexible delivery is the opportunity to go out into the workplace. Working part time in an enterprise keeps the teacher's skills up to date, and taking the training activity into the workplace reinforces both teachers' and enterprise staff's perceptions that they are up to date. A good sense of community is created between TAFE and industry. This has been enhanced by the actions of industry and learners as well as staff. Industry clients have grown more vocal and demand higher standards; younger students will not put up with boring training. Keeping in touch with industry needs also means sitting on state industry bodies as well as conducting site visits and client liaison to monitor trainees' progress.

Commercial activities are another relatively new element of the teacher's work. Strong links with the industry are very helpful, as future opportunities can be sought when working with a particular enterprise. The Educational Development Unit supports business growth and works collaboratively with faculty business managers to bring in the customers or business. Some teachers feel that there is not enough coordination of competition within the institute for outside business.

The increased workload is easier to manage when teachers are familiar with the content. Face-to-face student induction sessions before the online program starts, and periodic face-to-face tutorial sessions are helpful. To avoid being swamped by the level of interaction, teachers need to make clear statements about their availability, and ensure that students do not expect an instant response.

Teachers who are well experienced in managing their conventional teaching work sometimes overlook the need to take their work management practices into the online environment. They can be worried by a perceived lack of control over what happens; for example, the growing expectation of students that their email messages to teachers will receive an immediate response. It is important, therefore, to remind teachers that they can set boundaries to their availability, and make clear to students exactly what can be expected. One teacher was heard to complain: 'I can't set myself a timetable because I don't know when I'll be working', but it is important for teachers, as they hand more control of learning over to students, to maintain control of their own activities. A problem is that teachers sitting at a computer are often not perceived as working, and ways of dealing with this are needed. One teaching centre provides an office where staff can meet students at times when they have listed themselves as being available. Students who wish to see them at other times must make an appointment. A teacher in another centre puts a sign on her computer that says: 'I'm working!'

It can be seen, then, that expectations of total flexibility can form a trap for staff. A better approach is negotiated flexibility, where the teaching and support approaches being negotiated arrive at a solution which is workable for both the student and the staff member. This approach is liked by students too. Many students, as well as staff, need to be able to define boundaries of their learning time so that it is not encroached on by the other demands of life.

From an organisational perspective, the question can be asked whether staff and students have been encouraged to develop these skills of self-management. There is a perception that professional development activities have not dealt with these as comprehensively as they have with skills in teaching and in using technology.

In some centres teachers need to battle for recognition that online teaching is not the cheaper option. Head teachers do not always make allowance for the fact that some students will interact more frequently when online, and that interaction takes more time than it would in class. Extra preparation is needed for online teaching and video conferencing. Even when learning materials are available, communication about learning management and individual discussion are more time-consuming.

Travelling time can be a contentious issue. At the Hunter Institute, travelling time is paid for when teaching at a campus, but not for other types of travel such as practical observation visits. Some part-time teachers, who received no time allowance or reimbursement for petrol costs for practical observation visits, noted that staff tended to be prepared to accept this for a few years, but then became dissatisfied. Payment arrangements for travel within the institute are calculated and determined under the current award provision and recognition of some of the issues is included in the hourly rate paid to part-time teachers within the award.

A difficulty with the current accountability systems is that the teacher's work and workload may vary greatly from week to week, according to the requirements of different programs and student groups. As one teacher said, 'The Establishment Control system will reflect your 30-hour weeks but not your 80-hour weeks'. Some teachers, however, still do their teaching within a standard week: the demands of flexible delivery vary greatly between programs and teaching centres.

Staff generally feel well supported by management, although they acknowledge that the support varies greatly between faculties in nature and degree. Recognition by managers of what teachers do is a key factor in maintaining enthusiasm and good spirits. Helping to organise loads so that they are manageable, and giving release to do professional development or other activities are other ways in which staff can be supported.

The faculty system in this institute means that teachers work to head teachers and are supported by them, while faculty directors look after business directions. The friction which sometimes exists between educational and business requirements therefore exists at the interface between these types of staff. When the faculty director relates well with the head teachers, knows the staff and how they are working with their industries, the system works well. Head teachers try to build the team so that they work well together in an atmosphere of respect, sharing and assistance. One team noted an attempt to bring part-time staff more closely into the team. In this team, part-time staff work with a designated full-time staff member, sharing experiences, lesson plans and resources, almost as a mini-team. A desk and a computer are available for part-time staff. In some faculties, however, part-time staff have little support and are not integrated into the teaching team. Geographical factors were noted in these differences. In smaller, more distant campuses there are fewer facilities, and it is harder to build strong teams.

Flexible delivery has implications for non-teaching as well as teaching staff. For example, when the institute purchased a learning product from interstate, the person trained to use it happened to be a temporary staff member, so that skills were lost and difficulty in using the product was experienced when she left the institute.

Blended learning involves more non-teaching staff; for example, in the enrolment process, student administration staff will help students to access their records online and help them through

enrolment. This may often include an element of advising the student. It is therefore necessary to get away from a culture where knowledge is confined to certain silos, and move to one where knowledge is shared.

Pay and conditions

The current teaching award which has been in place for two years is flexible in some respects but not in others. It does not recognise flexible delivery and the requirements of commercial activities, such as the need for teachers in some industries to start work at 3 am. It embodies traditional assumptions about hours of duty and the distinctions between teaching and duties other than teaching, and thus has difficulty in catering, for example, for teachers who are exchanging emails with students at 11 pm. In consequence, much of this sort of work is unrecognised and is done through the goodwill of the staff members.

Flexibility happens ‘almost in spite of the award’, in the opinion of the chief executive officer. She would welcome a constructive review of teaching conditions by the union, so that teachers and managers do not need to be frustrated by outdated distinctions between teaching and non-teaching duties. The current conditions do not help the institute to provide what its clients want, and are discouraging to teachers and other staff who feel energy and enthusiasm for adopting new methods.

Teaching teams work around this situation in different ways: some will examine the activities they need to cover and negotiate with their manager to find ways of doing them; others may do the work without official recognition until the pressure becomes unmanageable. On the whole however, satisfactory arrangements are made. The process of working out how to handle workloads is made easier by a process of culture development by sharing information and experience in newsletters and other communication mechanisms.

Some managers feel that an enterprise agreement rather than a single state award would be beneficial. The current award itself does not itself present too many problems, but in order to support flexible delivery, too much must be done outside the award framework, and this causes stress and resentment among staff. Increased emphasis is currently being placed on educating teachers about their roles and responsibilities within the learning environment through online professional development programs, such as Introduction to Teaching Online, and mentoring provided by the Institute Teaching and Learning Innovation Centre.

Accountability systems, as well as teaching awards, were designed for another era when flexible delivery was not the norm. For example, the statewide Establishment Control system was once used as a time sheet system, but is now used as a management tool. Its structure does not make allowance for the unconventional working hours and working patterns which now prevail. The institute would welcome the opportunity to improve and further develop its trial ‘No EC system’.

According to the chief executive officer, risk management is important in this environment to ensure that the institute will not incur liability for errors in human resources or financial management. Managers need to believe that they can find ways to manage their staff, and that current systems will not prevent them. It is not a question, she says, of ‘How can I get away with manipulating the system?’, but of ‘We will take the approach of ... How can we then ensure that we cover all bases to minimise risk?’ The consequent load on managers itself then needs to be managed, but a competent and innovative manager will be able to make these decisions as part of their role.

Employee relations

Teachers claim that what is most important to their wellbeing is having the work they are doing recognised as legitimate and valuable. As one way of guarding against staff effort going unrecognised, the institute has introduced a staff achievements program, which encourages

managers to notice what their staff are doing and to recognise contributions. Nominations for this program can be made by any staff member.

The institute is attempting to make human resources requirements easier for staff by providing a portal through which staff can gain access to their leave forms, personal training plans and other information. The system, currently in development, will be customisable for various categories of staff. Much human resources activity is now tracked using online systems. A great deal of interaction is conducted via email, but visits are made to a different campus every month to meet and talk to staff and conduct activities such as health checks. Human resources staff are often able to propose strategic approaches on matters such as project management, business management, business risk management and people management.

Occupational health and safety

It is recognised that staff are working under pressure. A health, welfare and environment team has been established to develop corporate health and safety strategies. These include corporate gym membership, stress strategies, a flu vaccination program, and monitoring organisational health and safety compliance. An important maxim is that 'no matter what changes we plan, we look at the data first to see if the change is justified'.

In addition to the institute's concern for the wellbeing of its staff, outside influences such as organisational health and safety and other types of legislative frameworks impose on employers an onus to protect their staff. They are not always easy for TAFE teachers and trainers conducting flexible delivery in workplaces to work within, as they were generally designed to deal with the relationships between owners and occupiers of premises rather than the TAFE environment.

Professional development

Initial staff training and induction at the Hunter Institute takes the form of a CD-ROM which is issued to new staff before they take up their positions. It includes an introduction to the organisation, policies, entitlements, career opportunities and so on. It also includes material on matters such as legislative requirements and occupational health and safety requirements with which staff are expected to comply. The package has been designed to be used in the manner of a flexible learning program.

Managers consider that they need skills to decide which staff should be trained for what purposes. If training is confined to a core group of people, the loss of any of these people means the skills and knowledge are lost to the institute. There is therefore, a need to capture and share knowledge. This situation is exacerbated when the proportion of contract and seasonal staff increases.

Those who are embracing flexible delivery are no longer only the 'early adopters' but a stronger wave, which includes many newly appointed staff. The Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training is a good functional tool for developing certain basic skills, but a higher level of training is required for staff who are expected to show innovation and creativity, to take risks and to open their minds to new ideas. Many staff have made a career choice to come from industry into TAFE, and it is in the institute's interest to enable them to teach to their highest capacity. A great success has been a teacher education program negotiated with the University of Newcastle. Staff regard it as a privilege to participate in this program.

Appendix 6:

Southbank Institute of TAFE

Context: flexible learning at Southbank Institute

Southbank Institute is situated in inner metropolitan Brisbane, and has the largest enrolment of any Queensland institute. It has a long relationship with its community, and especially with local industries.

Flexible learning includes face-to-face teaching (in conventional and self-paced class or workshop groups), workplace training and assessment, online services on and off campus, print-based study on and off campus, and other methodologies. The institute has set a strategic goal of achieving 30% of delivery online by 2006, and so (for a good proportion of the staff) online tends to be synonymous with flexible delivery.

The chief executive officer sees flexible learning as a means of meeting both business and educational agendas of the institute. He acknowledges strong business motives for this aim, and considers that, with amortisation of front-end costs over the period, financial benefits will be achieved. Business will be substantially increased, he asserts, and the institute will be able to reach potential learner groups that it cannot reach at present, and provide better quality learning for its existing learners.

A further driver for the adoption of flexible delivery is the change in demand for programs. Class sizes in some areas have dropped, but flexible delivery has meant that it is still viable to provide the program. However, those who consider online learning is cheaper are failing to calculate the cost comprehensively; not only teachers' time and resource provision must be included, but also the cost of institute services and facilities.

Four eLearn centres provide support for students working online from home or work or at the centre, with staff on site to provide assistance, supplemented by a telephone hotline. Staff associated with the eLearn centres are champions of flexible learning, and spearhead the professional development and information-sharing activities aimed at achieving a flexible learning culture across the whole of the institute.

An important catalyst for change has been the Manager for Alternative and Online Learning, who is responsible for the eLearn centres and who has been working to move online learning forward by means of formal and informal information sharing, knowledge building and community building. In the last year, an enormous change in acceptance and more positive views have been observed through this approach. Others in the institute, especially the associate directors, have also had significant influence.

The chief executive officer considers it important that staff understand the business side of flexible delivery. It is a means of increasing the business, an add-on not a replacement for more traditional activities. But it carries the added benefit that jobs become more interesting and varied, and teachers can be more valued as professionals. It is his opinion that staff are not threatened by flexible delivery, but see it as good educational practice, supporting the quality and customisation objectives of the institute. A number of the staff interviewed spoke highly of the chief executive officer's vision, and reported that they had benefited from aligning themselves with it, and being supported by it. Some, however, are less enthusiastic.

Workforce planning

The staff profile of the institute has not changed a great deal in response to flexible delivery, although some changes have been made to staffing arrangements. Workplace trainers have been introduced, partly because they are seen to be more economical. There is pressure from government (and support from the chief executive officer) to increase the proportion of permanent staff, and so far a hundred contract positions have been converted to permanency. One-third of the staff are part time although, as elsewhere, the workforce is ageing and staff are tending to stay on rather than retire.

The ageing workforce is seen by some as a conservative influence, though others consider that acceptance of or resistance to change is not necessarily related to age—some younger teachers can be resistant, while older teachers can be inventive and flexible.

In general, the staff feel that Southbank is adapting very well to the changing environment, and making changes in its organisational culture to suit the new environment. A degree of discomfort was noted by contract teachers, however. These staff feel under pressure to perform well if they are to retain their positions.

In order to achieve the flexible delivery goals, a few new staff have been brought in, but more emphasis has been placed on making the maximum use of existing staff; for example, by providing funding for replacement casual staff to release full-time staff to develop learning resources. This also serves the purpose of giving teachers a break from their usual duties to re-invigorate themselves; it carries an ancillary benefit of rewarding long-serving staff. It is the intention of the institute that staff should not feel threatened by change. This aim is only partially successful, but it is the uncertainty of the external environment as much as internal developments that causes discomfort to some staff.

So many innovation projects have taken place over the last few years that, in the words of the chief executive officer, 'There is a sense that staff are becoming not so much change-fatigued as punch-drunk'; some, for example, neglect to take leave when they should. This has become a managerial issue, and a decision has been made to put a brake on bright ideas for a year or two, and to publicise to staff that that is the case. Fortunately, staff and managers recognise that flexible delivery is now well past the novelty stage and integrated into the institute's core business.

Workload management

Among the causes of change in their work and work environment, teachers nominated the introduction of training packages, the reduction in administrative support, the demands of auditing for the Australian Quality Training Framework and privacy compliance, and the need for audit trails to support flexible delivery. All these increased the level of administrative work, and so were reported to place heavy demands on teachers, and to make it difficult to achieve required 819 annual contact hours. As one teacher remarked, 'If we've survived, we're change champions'.

Some teachers found that the introduction of training packages had, in effect, downgraded their conditions. Class sizes have increased, resources reduced and literacy levels are lower than they used to be (demanding more intensive teaching). One teacher reported class sizes of up to 50. These teachers say that they make use of their maturity, experience and skills to cope with this situation, but have to come to work earlier and do their preparation and correction in the very early hours of the morning. Workplace and work-based teaching are specific to the needs of the organisation or individual, rather than generic programs, and so the time needed to develop, teach and supervise such programs, and therefore the cost, is far greater than those of traditional programs. Workplace trainers are under constant scrutiny from their clients and are expected to perform at the highest level; employers have high expectations and can be very critical.

The demands of multiple auditing and reporting systems are perceived by most staff to impose a heavy burden. The Australian Quality Training Framework, for example, does not require most institutes to change their teaching and administrative practices greatly, but it does insist on a far greater degree of documentation. This may or may not improve the quality of training; it certainly takes time to do, and generally there is no leeway in workloads to allow for this task. Non-teaching staff in some quarters find it difficult to understand why teachers feel oppressed by the amount of auditing, and consider that documentation should not be a problem if the activity processes are correct; some friction is caused by this.

It should be noted, however, that one contract teacher stated that her teaching methods had not changed in more than ten years in the institute. She will be prepared to start teaching online when the institute provides internet access for her at home.

In discussing these changes and how the institute manages them, the chief executive officer expressed a view that it is better not to codify new ways of managing in advance, but to monitor as events unfold. Now, however, having monitored developments for some time, he considers that codification must take place in order to avoid the burn-out resulting from staff carrying unrealistic loads. He acknowledges that a single solution will not fit all needs. With this in mind, the institute is introducing a planning tool which will gather information on the requirements of programs and assess the staffing and other resources which will be necessary to run them. This will allow consideration of the various delivery options against the budget available. He considers that this will enable informed decisions to be made about how best to run programs. He notes, however, that this method is unpopular with staff, who are uneasy about the scrutiny to which they feel they will be exposed.

Teaching staff report that they are very stressed (and claim that their students know they are stressed). They face demands from below (students who have increasingly high expectations and the ability to articulate them) and above (the requirement to achieve more outputs with lower levels of resources).

The work of teaching is increasingly team-based, but negotiation of workloads is done individually rather than in the team. Award structures, too, are interpreted individually. But, they say, there is a reluctance on the part of middle management to negotiate about these matters. Managers, they say, can no longer afford to take risks because they must maintain a defensible position. On the other hand, staff see the need for an educational vision and a commitment to it, backed up by strategic planning.

A global issue then, is what is a fair workload for a teacher using a particular style of delivery? No institute-wide answers have been reached as yet. Staff are examining research on relevant industrial relations developments in Australia. In the meantime, a decision has been made to adopt and document individual negotiation, to see whether patterns emerge. Some managers suggest that the quickest way to answer the question is to let matters take their course until staff start to complain or buckle under. But at the same time, they recognise that flexible delivery has already had an enormous impact on teachers, and their involvement has come at a cost, in some cases a high cost, to the individual.

The work of managers, especially at the team leader level, is difficult, as they are squeezed from both sides. Their staff protest about increasing workloads and deteriorating conditions, and managers are concerned to support them. Staff and managers alike see the need for a commitment to an educational vision. At the same time, budgetary constraints, ever more stringent, mean that it is hard for managers to take risks or support educational innovation because their decisions must be economically defensible. As one teacher observed, 'The effort of leading a change in organisational culture comes at a great personal cost to middle managers'.

It is not only teaching staff on whom flexible delivery impinges. For administrative staff, too, there is a greater load of recording. One example cited was the more complex back office processes associated with apprentices and trainees under user choice. In eLearning centres, libraries, and whichever individualised self-paced study is taking place, students will seek advice when it is needed

from whatever staff are present, and this will sometimes be administrative staff. There is a need then, to ensure that correct advice is given, and that staff are aware of what advice they are and are not in a position to give. Sometimes however, these will be problems and on those occasions when teachers are not available.

This is the case, too, in client service centres, which deal with enrolment, counselling and enquiries of all sorts. All staff who have dealings with clients need to understand flexible learning and the support needs of non-campus-based students. As one staff member put it, 'It's everyone's problem now'.

For finance staff, the workload has increased with the need to plan, implement and record transactions relating to the increased number of external clients and higher levels of travel and other non-salary items associated with institute staff.

For facilities staff, the main challenge lies in providing information technology resources, and managing room utilisation for flexible use. There are 66 computer rooms, which need to be managed for fair usage. Another challenge is the management of travel and vehicles: scheduling, maintenance, cost apportionment and so on.

Pay, conditions and employee relations

Industrial relations arrangements are insufficiently flexible for present-day needs. Professional flexibility is needed to deal with peaks and troughs in workloads. The current award does not recognise this need.

Discussion is taking place with the union about a 'sub-agency' agreement, an amendment to the award for the educational staff of TAFE Queensland. These discussions are reviewing annualisation to allow for future flexibility to meet the target of 30% online delivery with current staff. (Annualisation is a system of accounting for teachers' time. The contact load is a minimum of 21 and a maximum of 25 hours a week. Teachers who exceed the 25 hours may choose either to roll the excess over into the following week's tally, or to take payment for it at casual rates.)

The proposed sub-agency agreement will recognise team-based work, and it is considered that this will be a big step forward, as it will allow work arrangements to be negotiated with the team as well as with the individual. This is seen to be conducive to more equitable work allocation.

An immediate issue for unions and management, in the view of managers, is that some staff have unrealistic expectations about what they can negotiate in the way of preparation and other non-teaching time. The award currently states that teachers should be ready for teaching at all times except their leave periods, and that non-teaching time is not leave but should be used for preparation and other duties. There is a need to revisit how the current arrangements should be working in order to facilitate negotiation of the sub-agency agreement. This is likely either to cost money or to have an adverse impact on morale.

The classification of workplace trainer is different from that of teacher (in pay, teaching contact hours and preparation and correction loads), and causes some friction between staff. A union agreement means they are not allowed to teach on institute property. These staff therefore have less professional status than teachers. Teachers, on the other hand, see their role eroded.

Some staff are very aware of the wider political arena—the impetus to change the nature of TAFE so that it operates on a business footing—in which flexible delivery is only one component. Institutes are funded for delivery (i.e. 'contact' hours), so that the resourcing of activities such as the development of online materials and interaction with online students becomes an issue. These activities are invisible to current performance reporting systems, so that they tend not to be counted in loads, and are often done as unpaid extra work.

Another financial factor is the rule of competitive neutrality. This means that teaching centres must pay for corporate and other services, and this in turn raises the price for clients, since such costs are no longer quarantined within institute infrastructure figures.

Managers acknowledge that the reality of the business-focused environment and the push for efficiency mean that some teachers will inevitably suffer. On the other hand, some managers are confident that the opportunity created by the planning tool to evaluate delivery and support options realistically offers the prospect that teaching staff will be able to take ownership of these decisions in a more practical way.

Nevertheless, it appears that there are rewards of enriched teaching and higher job satisfaction. Teaching staff confirm that they are motivated when they feel that they can make a difference to their students. Flexible delivery gives them more ways in which to do this, and the consequent development of their own skills is exciting. As evidence of this positive attitude, the fact that the amount of sick leave taken has halved over the past year is cited. (Another point of view, however, would suggest that feelings of uncertainty and the perceived need to perform well on the part of non-permanent staff might make them reluctant to take sick leave.)

Celebrating success is seen as important. One way of doing this is at regular breakfast forums, where, as the chief executive officer says, 'Zealots and converts share their success with their peers', and their enthusiasm infects others. The demand from teams to take on flexible delivery initiatives now exceeds the institute's capacity to fund them, so that teams now have to present a case for funding.

The collective culture varies considerably between faculties, and even between teams within faculties. Staff tend to affiliate with their faculty rather than with the institute as a whole. This means that some staff are up to the minute in their understanding and preparedness to take on new ways of teaching and learning, while others are resistant.

An aspect of the organisational culture that human resources staff are keen to change is that the more highly paid staff are expected to work very long hours. This is seen as unhealthy, and discussions have been held with some managers about how this culture might be changed.

An account manager/case manager system of internal client relationships between teaching and non-teaching areas was adopted, but a partial return to a centralised administration has been made on the grounds that economies of scale work better in this way. Some activities, however, have been retained by teaching units.

Performance management

As noted above, currently workloads are individually negotiated, and performance, too, is reviewed on an individual basis.

When a performance problem is linked to a fear of change, managers consider that resistance is minimised when it is dealt with in a manner that enables staff to understand what the impact of change will be and how they can deal with it.

One way of tackling this at an institute level is support for a policy which requires an impact analysis as a part of all project plans, along with analysis such as training needs analysis and delivery plans. The planning tool will show the budget available for delivery of a program, and the options for delivery, and thus enable informed decisions to be made.

Some staff fear that the planning tool will be used largely as a way of identifying cost savings or of forcing staff to achieve higher productivity levels. Others fear that it may tend to move all teaching into the same mould. From the point of view of managers, however, it will create a transparency in the way that programs are planned, delivered and managed, and this will reveal efficiencies and inefficiencies. The long history of relationships with industry and community bodies makes it hard to drop some of the old programs. But making business decisions such as discontinuing obsolete

programs, is, they say, unavoidable and the deployment of staff must be considered in this light. If the institute is to move successfully into the future, the cost of delivery must always be less than the associated revenue.

Participants in one of the group interviews suggested that resistance to change comes from those who claim that their industry is happy with what they are doing now, and so don't see a need to change. Others who resist change are those who fear that their lack of knowledge of technologies will be exposed. Overcoming this resistance requires much support for the staff concerned. A vital part of this support is offered by the liaison librarians, who form the conduit from eLearn support back into the faculties.

Staff need to be supported if they are to perform well, and satisfactory physical conditions and infrastructure are essential parts of this support. The institute recognises that some of its staff are working in less-than-perfect conditions, with poor technological infrastructure. For example, not all staff have a computer. Efforts are being made to improve information technology infrastructure and support, so staff will have adequate access to computers and networks and that greater consistency will be achieved in access to programs and resources on the intranet.

Professional development

One of the chief ways in which staff have been encouraged to take up flexible delivery is by formal and informal professional development—through the information sessions, staff breakfasts and other activities already mentioned, as well as in-house skills development programs and peer support activities. eLearn is offering a good support network for teachers to assist them to change their teaching methods. Team strategies such as making Monday the day for meetings and planning, and ensuring that contract and casual staff can be present to gain from the exchange of experiences and ideas, are found to be beneficial as a way of knowledge sharing and team building.

At a more formal level, the requirement for certificate IV training rather than a teaching degree or diploma is negatively viewed. It is feared that the absence of coverage of teaching and learning skills in any depth in this credential will result in the loss of knowledge capital to TAFE institutes, and it is seen to erode the professional status of teachers.

It is recognised that the closer relationship of administrative and other staff to teachers and teaching means that they must be included in discussions about teaching and learning matters, and must undertake suitable professional development. One initiative along these lines is the running of information sessions for faculty administrative staff on how to assist teachers.

Some staff have picked up technology skills along the way over the last few years, and these people are now more ready to take up online learning than those who have not. At one group interview for this project, it was suggested that management should insist that all staff take the training necessary to keep up with the technology. This would be supported by the institute's software licensing arrangements which permit staff to take software home under certain conditions. In this way staff could learn about, and experiment with new applications. However, not all staff have computers at home.



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