Building institutional capacity for peer leadership: informing strategic decision-making to enhance student leadership capabilities

Final report, May 2017

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www.dassl.edu.au
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List of acronyms used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANZSSA</td>
<td>Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS</td>
<td>Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DaSSL</td>
<td>Developing and Supporting Student Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>higher education institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HERDSA</td>
<td>Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSOTL</td>
<td>International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OER</td>
<td>open education resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PASS</td>
<td>Peer Assisted Study Sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STARS</td>
<td>Students, Transitions, Achievement, Retention and Success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>science, technology, engineering and mathematics</td>
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Executive summary

Background and context

Universities have historically been seen to have an important role in developing the leaders of tomorrow, and leadership is increasingly regarded as a desirable graduate attribute in the competitive employability stakes (Lowden, et al., 2011; Osmani, et al., 2015). In recent years, the higher education sector has responded with a proliferation of student/peer leadership initiatives across university campuses.

While there is agreement that one of the core functions of universities is to prepare the leaders of tomorrow’s society (Astin & Astin, 2000), there is less consensus in the literature about how this is best accomplished. Student leadership development can be incorporated into the curriculum, ‘bolted on’, or exist outside of the curriculum entirely. Student leaders can receive course credit, remuneration, or simply be volunteers. Against this backdrop of diverse roles and experiences, student leadership development has been variously mandated, investigated and evaluated. This has occurred within a context of a paucity of resources to guide and support higher education institutions (HEIs) in this important endeavour. Moreover, this growth in programs has occurred as if there was a tacit, shared understanding of what the term ‘student leadership’ means. However, the sheer diversity of understandings of student leadership confirms that universities conceptualise and contribute towards developing leadership capabilities in students in a range of ways.

Rather than suggesting that a universal definition is called for, the Developing and Supporting Student Leadership (DaSSL) project proposes a new approach to developing and supporting student leadership development in a consistent manner. Through the development of an overarching and inclusive framework, the project sought to respond to an identified need in the sector. Without imposing a constraining definition, the DaSSL Framework accommodates the diversity of leadership conceptualisations, while at the same time providing principles and guidelines to support good practice and continuous improvement.

Aims and objectives of the project

The overarching aim of the project was to build the capacity of Australasian HEIs to develop leadership capability in students.

Specifically, the objectives were to:

- contribute to enabling universities to better engage in evidence-based decision-making about the design, delivery and continued improvement of student leadership development programs
- highlight the diversity of programs that have a role to play in developing student leadership
- develop a framework to enable more comprehensive and authentic inclusion of student leadership development across the higher education sector.
Project approach
The overall approach taken in the project may be described as participatory and iterative, involving several stages, each building on the previous one and incorporating ongoing consultation with practitioners in the sector.

Stage 1 involved an international collaboration to administer a survey of student/peer leaders in the Australasian region. The results of the survey helped shape the direction of the project.

Stage 2 entailed the broad conceptualisation of the framework, informed by a comprehensive international literature review.

In stage 3, the components of the framework were refined and modified based on feedback from practitioners in the sector.

Stage 4 involved the development of an interactive website and the generation of case studies exemplifying the potential applications of the framework.

Outputs and deliverables
The main outputs of the project are:

- literature review on student leadership development
- the DaSSL Framework and resultant website
- two papers in development, one of which is currently under review
- nine conference presentations.

Summary of literature review
The literature on student leadership development programs in the higher education sector paints a picture of a diverse and growing space in the tertiary education sector. While there have been relatively few attempts to classify programs into typologies (Owen, 2008), a consensus on the essential elements of effective programs is emerging. However, there are several notable gaps in the literature. First, there is an absence of published material from the Australasian region. Although activity is increasing in the student/peer leadership space across university campuses in Australia and New Zealand, documentation of this work is not apparent in the international peer-reviewed literature. Second, evidence of efforts to evaluate student leadership development initiatives in HEIs is limited. Third, while the literature emphasises the need for regular robust programmatic evaluation and ongoing monitoring for continuous quality improvement, there are few resources to assist program developers and coordinators in this important endeavour. The DaSSL project contributes to addressing these identified gaps.

Overview of the DaSSL Framework
The DaSSL Framework helps to address the current gap in resources to assist HEIs in the Australasian context to make strategic and informed decisions in the design, delivery and evaluation of student leadership development initiatives.
The basis of the framework is five key domains of sound program design. These were initially derived from the international literature on student leadership development. In the DaSSL project these domains are called the ‘5Ps’: Purpose, People, Positioning, Practice and Progress. The framework is underpinned by four core principles that explicitly emphasise attention to student leadership, alignment, equity and diversity, and continuous improvement. These principles have been translated into guidelines for good practice that can be used to benchmark programs. A rating scale is included in the framework to assist with this.

The key deliverable of the project is an interactive website (www.dassl.edu.au). The DaSSL website is an open educational resource that has been designed to ensure that student leadership is explicitly considered in the development and delivery of student programs in higher education. It houses the framework as well as a range of open-source resources to assist practitioners and program coordinators in planning and reviewing their programs. The site comprises:

- principles and guidelines for good practice in student leadership development
- a reflection tool and action plan for practitioners and program coordinators
- case studies that exemplify applications of the framework
- supporting resources that are exemplars of good practice.

Outcomes and projected future impact

In terms of outcomes, it is anticipated that use of the DaSSL Framework will effect an improvement in the quality of student/peer leadership programs, especially in the Australasian region and potentially beyond. The project team hopes that this will be evidenced, over time, by the development of funding models and an increasing number of student leadership development programs being embedded in strategic plans across the tertiary sector, as student leaders become more sought after, more celebrated and more critical to the delivery of high quality institutional and graduate outcomes.

Key findings

Key findings of the work include:

- Any peer leadership survey looking at student leadership development initiatives needs to be designed for a local context and should consider graduate attributes and employability outcomes as well as student leadership.
- The DaSSL Framework can be applied throughout the Australasian higher education sector to encourage quality assurance through peer review and benchmarking of student leadership development programs.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and context

Student leadership is increasingly becoming a stated priority of higher education institutions (HEIs). Programs that claim to develop leadership capabilities in students are proliferating across university campuses worldwide. This trend has been occurring steadily over the past two decades (Cress, et al., 2001). Recent debates (in Australasia and elsewhere) about the crisis in ‘graduate employability’ and the need for universities to develop their ‘competitive edge’ and promote ‘lifelong learning’ have prompted institutions to pay closer attention to the development of graduate attributes, including leadership (Curtis & McKenzie, 2001; Osmani, et al., 2015; Pitman & Broomhall, 2009). Increasingly, employers expect that graduates will have leadership-related capabilities (Bennett, 2002; Lowden et al., 2011; Velasco, 2012).

However, ‘leadership’ has long been a contested term and is, perhaps, ‘one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on Earth’ (Burns, 1978, p. 2). Not surprisingly, the literature on leadership is vast. As long ago as 1990, Bass & Stogdill (1990) noted more than 3000 empirical investigations of leadership, underpinned by various conceptualisations of the term. In the past two decades, understandings of leadership have evolved, with a discernible movement away from the traditional concept of developing ‘leaders’ to the contemporary notion of developing ‘leadership’ (McCauley-Smith, et al., 2015). While the former has been focused on individual, intrapersonal skills and abilities, the latter is more process-oriented, focusing on the interaction between the leader and the environment (Fiedler, 2006). Iles & Preece (2006) note that the result of this shift in focus is the development of more relational models of leadership that emphasise building social capital in contrast to the development of individual ‘heroes’. This trend is observable in the higher education literature on leadership, with most of the emerging theories in the general leadership literature being applied to the higher education context (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). Komives et al. (2005) emphasise the relational aspects of leadership with a focus on process, collaboration, ethical relationships and social responsibility. As opposed to older notions of leadership as ‘positional’ or as an inherent characteristic of students, it is now considered that all students who involve themselves in leadership education and/or activities have the potential to increase their skills and knowledge (Higher Education Research Institute, 1996; Komives, et al., 2006).

The interest in student leadership as a key component of a higher education experience is observable in the inclusion of student leadership development as a priority area from the highest level of institutional strategies down to individual courses and classes purporting to deliver leadership outcomes. As a result, student leadership development for higher education students comes in a variety of forms, including those that are specifically designed to develop leadership capabilities within or alongside curricular structures (e.g., student government representatives, Greek fraternities, institutional leadership award programs), and those that provide leadership experience incidentally through student-facing activities (e.g., tutoring peers, campus tour guides) or community volunteer activities. In some cases, institutions with a strong commitment to leadership development fund purposefully created centres that focus on the provision of leadership development opportunities and training for students. Depending on the structures around student
Developing and supporting student leadership in higher education institutions

leadership development within any given institution, leadership development opportunities may result in student recognition, an award, remuneration or credit for academic experience.

While such programs have been established primarily and explicitly to grow tomorrow’s leaders, some leadership programs and experiences across the higher education sector have been developed primarily to meet institutional needs (e.g., increasing retention rates), with students building their leadership skills implicitly, almost as a by-product of participation. In these instances, leadership development is often provided in an ad hoc and unfocused way. Many of these programs sit on the periphery of core university business, struggling for recognition. Without sufficient attention to the quality of leadership development as an outcome, and in the absence of clear conceptual underpinnings and pedagogic approaches, it is questionable whether these programs can deliver the graduate capabilities employers are increasingly expecting. Additionally, students are often not aware of the leadership development experience they are developing through participation in these programs and are then placed at a disadvantage when asked to identify and articulate their own skills and abilities. It is therefore important that student leadership development is given adequate attention by HEIs that purport to develop it.

Rationale, aims and objectives

The Developing and Supporting Student Leadership (DaSSL) project was initiated to address the paucity of resources that currently exist to support HEIs in the Australasian region to engage in evidence-based decision-making about student leadership development programs. The project thus responds to a need in the sector for resources to enhance the quality of programs that develop and support student leadership.

The overarching aim of the project was to build the capacity of Australasian HEIs to develop leadership capability in students.

Specifically, the objectives were to:

- contribute to enabling universities to better engage in evidence-based decision-making about the design, delivery and continued improvement of student leadership development programs
- highlight the diversity of programs that have a role to play in developing student leadership
- develop a framework to enable more comprehensive and authentic inclusion of student leadership development across the higher education sector.

The project team

Five universities partnered to deliver the project. University of Tasmania was the lead institution. University of Wollongong, University of Otago, Curtin University and Monash University were partner institutions.

Collectively and individually, the project team members’ experience and expertise in the area of student/peer leadership is well regarded within the sector. The members of the project team were:
• University of Tasmania (lead institution
  o Dr Jane Skalicky (project leader)
  o Ms Kristin Warr Pedersen
  o Ms Sally Fuglsang

• University of Wollongong
  o Ms Sally Rogan

• University of Otago
  o Associate Professor Jacques van der Meer

• Curtin University
  o Mr Raphael Pereira

• Monash University
  o Associate Professor Phillip Dawson (now at Deakin University)
  o Associate Professor Robert Nelson.
Chapter 2: Project approach

Methodology and project stages

An adaptive project management framework (Wysocki, 2010) was employed to accommodate changing project scope, and ensure that the optimal outcome was achieved within the fixed time and budget constraints. The methodological approach taken to develop the DaSSL Framework involved a participatory, collaborative and iterative process over a period of two years (2014–2016). In addition to the five partner institutions, over thirty additional institutions, across Australia and New Zealand, participated in the project via representation in conference workshops, consultations, contribution of case studies and website testing.

The project unfolded over a series of four overlapping stages, as follows.

Stage 1: Clarifying the project focus: peer leadership survey (Aug–Dec 2014)

Compared to the breadth of data collection that occurs in the US in relation to peer leadership, data collection in the Australasian context is currently inadequate to inform the development of quality peer leadership programs. For this reason, the project team welcomed the opportunity, in the first stage of the project, to collaborate with the US National Resource Center for the First-year Experience and Students in Transition to gather local data that might inform the direction of the project.

Together with universities from the UK, Canada and South Africa, the project team led the Australasian component of the US National Survey of Peer Leadership. This involved adapting the survey for the Australasian higher education sector, contextualising it to reflect local terminology and demographic characteristics. Following ethics approvals, the survey was administered electronically in October and November 2014, in the five Australasian universities that are represented on the project group (University of Tasmania, University of Wollongong, University of Otago, Curtin University of Technology, Monash University). As this was a pilot survey and because of time pressure to administer the survey prior to the end of the academic year, a convenience sample was recruited via email invitations to students who had participated in a number of selected leadership programs in each of the participating institutions.

The web-based survey generated data about the perceived benefits of participating in peer leadership programs. Despite some problems related to accessing the intended target group, more than 200 students, across the five universities, completed the online survey. The survey asked students to respond to statements related to the degree to which a range of skills, abilities and other experiences changed as a direct result of their participation in peer leadership programs. Factor analysis revealed that the top perceived outcomes included communication skills, sense of belonging and meaningful interaction with other students. Overall, the results suggested that respondents did perceive that they had benefited from participation in leadership programs or roles, in particular with regards to skills that are prominent in the literature on desirable graduate attributes. This confirmed the findings of previous empirical studies in this field. However, the results also suggested that motivation for students to participate in peer leadership programs is predominantly altruistic rather than instrumental.
Following analysis and discussion of the survey results, the project team came to a decision that the conceptualisation of student leadership that the project would adopt was broader than the notion of peer leadership, as defined within the US survey. Consequently, it was decided to broaden the scope of the inquiry to be inclusive of the wide range of student leadership initiatives existent in the Australasian higher education sector. Further to this, in revisiting the overarching aim of the project and sharpening its focus, the project team decided that the data that could be collected using a survey instrument would be less useful than a more qualitative participatory methodology in contributing towards the building of a valuable open educational resource to make explicit the benefits and outcomes of student leadership development programs. However, participation in the international survey helped to shape the direction of the project and enabled the team to embark on the development of a framework to support the goal of building the capacity of HEIs in the Australasian region to enhance student leadership capabilities.

**Stage 2: Conceptualisation of the framework (Jan–Sept 2015)**

Stage 2 involved the broad conceptualisation of a framework for developing and supporting student leadership development. As a first step, the project team met for a face-to-face workshop held over two days to decide on the parameters for such a framework. The method used was derived from a method developed by Dawson (2014) who articulated a framework for designing and specifying mentoring models. This incorporated a mini-Delphi approach (Mumenthaler & van den Brekel, 2015) in which there were several rounds of brainstorming and discussion of topics, each building on the previous round, to arrive eventually at a consensus. This method was considered appropriate for the task as the project team members were all experts in the field of peer and student leadership and it enabled opinions to change and consolidate during the discussions.

To confirm that the project team’s consensus was reflected in the literature, the next step entailed undertaking a comprehensive literature review of student leadership development programs (see Chapter 3). The review found substantial agreement on the key dimensions of high quality student leadership development programs. These formed the basis of the framework and were developed into five key domains for consideration in program design, implementation and evaluation (see Chapter 3).

The third step in the conceptualisation of the framework involved cross-checking the findings from the project team’s initial workshop and the literature review with practitioners and program coordinators across Australasia. This was achieved through a series of workshops in which a prototype of what was to become a core component of the framework (the practitioner reflection tool) was pilot-tested. Between April and September 2015, six workshops were held, four at project partner institutions (University of Tasmania, Curtin University, University of Wollongong, University of Otago) and two at national conferences (Students, Transitions, Achievement, Retention and Success (STARS) 2015 and Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) 2015).

**Stage 3: Framework development and refinement (Sept–Dec 2015)**

Stage 3 of the project entailed further development, modification and refinement of the framework. Beginning with a two-day workshop during which the project team discussed the feedback from the pilot workshops, this was the phase in which the framework was modified and refined.
Further consultation on the framework was sought from across the higher education sectors in Australia and New Zealand. Again, this was principally through workshops and roundtable discussions at national and international conferences. During this period, members of the project team presented and facilitated workshops at three conferences (Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) 2015; International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) 2015; Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association (ANZSSA) 2015). Consultation with members of the project reference group also occurred during this stage.

**Stage 4: Finalisation of framework and website and resources (Jan–Dec 2016)**

The final stage of the project involved finalising the framework, and developing resources to support its use within the sector. Consultation with the sector continued throughout this final stage, enabling refinements to be made and the process of dissemination to occur. Project team members presented at three conferences in 2016 (STARS 2016; PASS 2016; ANZSSA 2016).

Case studies that exemplify the utility and various applications of the framework were generated using a common template. These were then peer-reviewed by members of the project team and by the external evaluator. In addition, a range of supporting resources was collated. These comprise an annotated bibliography of references sourced from the literature review and a set of practical resources in the form of good-practice artefacts selected as exemplars of the DaSSL principles and guidelines for good practice.

An interactive website ([www.dassl.edu.au](http://www.dassl.edu.au)) was developed to house the resources. This went live in November 2016.
**Chapter 3: Project outputs**

The first part of this chapter reviews the international literature in relation to student leadership in higher education. The findings of the review are an output of the project, as well as a foundation for the DaSSL Framework, which is the primary output. The second part of this chapter focuses on the framework and its online instantiation, the DaSSL website, which is the key deliverable.

**Literature review: student leadership in higher education**

Universities have historically been seen as having a significant role in shaping and nurturing the leaders of tomorrow, but only in the past several decades have student leadership development efforts become more explicit and targeted. Student leadership studies programs have proliferated in the higher education sector since the mid-1980s (Cress et al., 2001), most notably in the USA. In the southern hemisphere, initiatives to develop the leadership skills/capabilities of tertiary students have tended to evolve via the vehicle of peer learning/academic mentoring programs (Skalicky & Caney, 2010).

The International Leadership Association estimates that more than 1500 leadership studies programs exist worldwide (Jenkins, 2013). A scan of the published literature on student leadership initiatives in HEIs reveals their diversity.

**Types of programs and initiatives**

While it is beyond the scope of this review to attempt a typology of student leadership development programs, a range of different initiatives is briefly described, by way of illustrating the diversity noted.

The literature is replete with descriptions of academic programs that focus on leadership, policy and change, at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. These programs are often located in specific discipline areas, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) (see for example Cox, Berry, & Smith, 2009). At the postgraduate level, there is a strong focus on the area of educational leadership, preparing practising teachers for school principal and administrator positions (see for example Buskey & Karvonen, 2012; Mayes, et al., 2004; Nixon, et al., 2011). Pastoral care focused initiatives include collegiate recovery programs which provide support for students recovering from substance use disorders (see for example Thompson, 2014).

An abundance of programs look towards preparing leaders for the workplace in particular professions, such as engineering (see for example Athreya & Kalkoff, 2010; Ellis & Petersen, 2011; Simpson, Evans, & Reeve, 2012), cost accounting (see for example Bloch, Brewer, & Stout, 2012), sport and recreation (see for example Tingle, Cooney, Asbury, & Tate, 2013), entrepreneurship (see for example Bagheri & Lope Pihie, 2013), and nursing and clinical leadership (see for example Leigh, et al., 2012; Middleton, 2013; O’Driscoll, Allan, & Smith, 2010). Initiatives that have a community-facing, social service focus include anti-drug youth leadership programs (see for example Mortensen, et al., 2014).

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1 In this review, the term ‘program’ is used as a generic umbrella term to denote a wide range of initiatives, services, activities and opportunities within HEIs that are intended to develop student leadership capabilities.
‘Hybrid’ leadership development programs that integrate curricular/in-classroom activities with extra-curricular, out-of-classroom activities usually involve collaborations between external stakeholder groups and universities to address issues of common concern, such as sustainable development (see for example Stough, Lambrechts, Ceulemans, & Rothe, 2013). While some programs are internally/university-facing and have an academic and/or pastoral care focus, others are more externally/community-facing, with a workplace and/or social service focus. Increasingly, ‘hybrid’ programs, that ‘look both ways’, are emerging (Wooten, Hunt, LeDuc, & Poskus, 2012).

**Essential elements and attributes of effective programs**

In the past two decades there has emerged ‘a plethora of documents proscribing essential elements of leadership programs’ (Owen, 2008, p. 16). Cress, et al. (2001), for example, identify four ‘hallmarks’ of effective leadership development programs: context, philosophy, common practices and sustainability.

In her doctoral dissertation, Owen (2008) draws on the work of a number of leadership development scholars to distil the literature on essential elements into clusters of variables that together constitute ‘frameworks for effective collegiate leadership development programs’. She terms these clusters as follows: program philosophy/theoretical orientation, common program elements, strategic planning and evaluation, access to resources, collaboration and partnership, and program audience.

Using a grounded theory process, Eich (2008) identifies 16 attributes of ‘high-quality’ programs, which he organises into three clusters as follows: participants engaged in building and sustaining a learning community, student-centred experiential learning experiences, and research grounded continuous improvement program development.

This review synthesized existing ideas about what makes for effective student leadership development programs, grouping key program attributes together under these five headings:

1. clear purpose and philosophy
2. collaboration, participation and inclusiveness
3. connection to context and consideration of sustainability
4. intentional planning and implementation activities
5. embedded assessment and evaluation processes.

These five groupings subsequently became the basis of the stabilising core of the DaSSL Framework: the 5Ps.
1. Clear purpose and philosophy

Student leadership development programs are developed for a variety of reasons. This is reflected in the range of program objectives, which are shaped by the different foci of programs. Some objectives focus more at the level of individual development, some articulate clear institutional goals and others focus more on the societal level, with broad aims related to social change. Regardless of the particular emphasis, there is general agreement that programs need to have a clearly articulated mission statement (Eich, 2008) which should be connected to institutional mission (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2006; Haber, 2011; Roberts & Ulom, 1990).

In terms of objectives for individual level development, Allen et al (2012) assert that there are four primary objectives. These are fostering conceptual understandings, skillbuilding, receiving feedback and encouraging personal growth. Cress et al. (2001) note that the development of generic leadership skills, such as conflict resolution and values clarification, is just as important as developing cognitive understandings of leadership theories. The shaping of specific behaviours and actions into five ‘exemplary leadership practices’ is advocated by Posner (2004). These are ‘modelling the way’, ‘inspiring a shared vision’, ‘challenging the process’, ‘enabling others to act’ and ‘encouraging the heart’. Ballard et al.’s (2000) comparative review of ten different programs at Kansas University found some common themes at the level of individual development objectives: teamwork skills, goal-setting, delegation, community-building, acquiring awareness of diversity, networking, role-modelling and developing a personal vision of leadership. Encouraging intellectual risk-taking is added to the list by Bowers and Murakami-Ramalho (2010).

In relation to institutional level goals, Esplin, Seabold and Pinnegar (2012) note that increasing retention of at-risk students, and transitioning and integrating students from secondary school, is an explicit raison d’etre of many programs. This view is supported by Osteen and Coburn (2012) who suggest that from the perspective of the HEI, a core purpose of student leadership development initiatives is to elevate the status of universities. Increasing representation and graduation rates of key target groups are stated objectives of some programs (e.g. women in STEM disciplines – see Dugan, et al., 2013). An equally important institutional aim, Shook and Keup (2012) argue, is assisting in the adjustment, satisfaction and persistence of students, so that they develop a stronger sense of community, greater social and academic integration and a rich network of resource and referral agents.

At the level of broader societal aims, many program developers articulate that the purpose of their program is to prepare students to be productive and engaged citizens (Haber, 2011; Simpson, Evans, & Reeve, 2012; Wooten, et al., 2012), who are able to enter the workforce ready to lead (Athreya & Kalkoff, 2010; Middleton, 2013; O’Driscoll, Allan, & Smith, 2010; Seemiller & Murray, 2013). Busk & Karvonen (2012) emphasise the importance of developing ‘leaders as change agents regardless of hierarchical positioning’ (p. 206). This idea is echoed by Greenlee, Bruner and Hill (2009) who highlight the aim of preparing ethical leaders who will ‘promote democratic principles, social justice, equity and diversity’ (p. 45). This idea is taken a step further by Osteen & Coburn (2012) who argue that the purpose of student leadership development programs is to produce future generations of transformational leaders who will ‘solve society’s most pressing problems’ (p. 6).
Closely related to a program’s underlying philosophy is its theoretical foundation, which also needs to be made explicit (Eich, 2008; Haber, 2011). Cress et al. (2001) argue that one of the ‘hallmark elements’ of effective programs is an underpinning philosophy that includes ‘a) a clear definition of leadership articulated by key stakeholders; b) a focus on ethically and socially responsible behaviour; c) a recognition that leadership is a relational process; and d) an emphasis on the potential of all people to lead’ (p. 24).

While there is no universally accepted definition of ‘leadership’, Haber (2011) notes that the concept of leadership has evolved substantially over the past thirty years to become more relational and process-oriented, service-directed and systems-focused. She contends that this emergent perspective on leadership is characterised by several key principles. These are that leadership is a process and not a position, it involves collaboration and is focused on working towards the ‘greater good’ beyond the individual. She also suggests that this perspective on leadership is buttressed by an emphasis on morals and ethics, self-awareness and continual self-development, and involves interconnections between the individual, group and system levels. Three models exemplifying these principles are the relational leadership model (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2007), the social change model (Komives & Wagner, 2009) and the emotional intelligence model (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002).

Dugan & Komives (2010) categorise theories into ‘traditional’ and ‘contemporary’. Among the former, they list trait theory, power–influence theory, behavioural theory and leader-member exchange theory. Rosch & Anthony (2012) add to this list the ‘style’ approach and the ‘situational/contingency’ approach, noting that what characterises all these conventional theories is that they place leaders at the centre of attention. According to this school of thought, ‘leaders were special people who did special things’ and ‘the rest were followers’ (Owen, 2008, p. 53).

Contemporary or post-industrial theories, such as transformational leadership (Bass, 1998; Burns, 1978), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977), authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) and chaos/complexity theories (Allen & Cherry, 2000) stand in contrast to conventional theories. Haber (2011) adds to these the adaptive leadership model (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009), the five exemplary practices/leadership challenge model (Kouzes & Posner, 2008) and the followership model (Kelley, 1995). Significantly, Haber (2011) notes that many of these emergent models may be ‘more welcoming’ for groups who have been historically excluded from traditional notions of leadership (p. 70).

Noting that contemporary theories tend towards a shared leadership approach, Komives and Dugan (2010) suggest that the most popular models in higher education conceive of leadership as ‘a relational and ethical process of people together attempting to accomplish positive change’ (Komives, et al 2006, p. 11, cited in Eich, 2008, p. 179). The most widely adopted among these post-industrial theories are the:

- social change model (Higher Education Research Institute, 1996), which is used by over 80% of HEIs in America, Canada and Mexico (Caza & Rosch, 2014)
- relational leadership model (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2007),
- leadership identity development model (Komives, et al., 2005).
While there is a multitude of theories from which leadership educators can choose, many programs are grounded in a narrow range of popular student development theories (Owen, 2008). Within this category are psychosocial development theories (e.g. Chickering, 1969; Erickson, 1959), cognitive-structural development theories (e.g. Perry, 1968; Piaget, 1952), learning theories (e.g. Baxter-Magolda, 1992), critical theories (e.g. Freire, 1970; Hooks, 1994) and identity development theories (e.g. Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009; Komives et al., 2006). Owen (2012) notes four key limitations of most of these theories for leadership development. These are that most have grown out of the positivist tradition, which assumes a static objective ‘reality’; most are based on Euro-American middle-class values; most are based in the field of psychology and pay little heed to sociological/environmental context; and most tend to fragment development, rather than view it holistically. Despite there being a range of frameworks that can be adapted to suit different programs needs and purposes (Esplin, Sebold, & Pinnegar, 2012), some student leadership development programs appear to have no discernible theoretical basis (Ballard, et al., 2000).

2. Collaboration, participation and inclusiveness

Noting the collaborative nature of building leadership capacity of students, Osteen and Coburn (2012) assert that the endeavour requires ‘all members of a campus community … to engage in the critical examination of leadership on a daily basis’ (p. 11). A partnership approach is endorsed by a number of scholars who advocate bringing together a broad range of students, staff and community stakeholders to be involved in collaborative planning (Haber, 2006; Roberts & Ullom, 1990).

Bringing together different stakeholders from within and beyond the university (lecturers, students, government executives, business managers) helps to achieve a collective force for change (see Simpson et al., 2012; Stough et al., 2013). In educational leadership programs, for example, in which students are often working practitioners (Bowers & Murakami-Ramalho, 2010), school districts often participate in planning, candidate selection, practitioner sessions and supervision of interns, with school personnel frequently serving as faculty (Greenlee, Bruner, & Hill, 2009).

In terms of participant roles, students may be involved as leaders or mentors (e.g. in a PASS program – see Skalicky & Caney, 2010). Peer leaders may be paid or unpaid (Esplin, Sebold, & Pinnegar, 2012) and may work relatively independently or alongside professional staff, with staff serving as advisors or co-facilitators/co-leaders (Haber, 2011). In some student leadership initiatives, the role of the professor/teacher is to facilitate ‘emergent leadership’, assuming the role of coach and facilitator, sharing leadership with students. In some programs, for example, students work in project teams guided by a university staff project sponsor, getting input from both faculty and peers (see Shriberg & Harris, 2012). In other models, the role of team leader rotates each week (see Ellis & Petersen, 2011). Thompson (2014) notes that staff often support students in carrying out their own vision, with staff members ‘set[ting] the course and guid[ing] the direction, but the student leaders ultimately carry[ing] out the mission’ (p. 247). In some programs, students also play a leading role in program design and implementation (see Athreya & Kalkoff, 2010).

All programs should be reflective of the developmental and demographic profiles of the student population served (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2006). Highlighting inclusivity and diversity, Haber (2006) argues that there is a need for
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programs that are open to all students. However, there is also a need for programs for specific target groups. These must be considered in advance and interventions designed to meet these specific needs (Roberts & Ullom, 1990). Examples of specific groups for whom leadership programs may need to be developed are freshmen in residence halls (see the KLIP in Ballard et al., 2000); under-represented groups, such as women in STEM (see Dugan, et al., 2013); students in specific disciplines, such as chemical engineering (see Simpson, Evans, & Reeve, 2012); students in designated leadership roles, such as on boards, in student government (see Allen, Shankman, & Miguel, 2012); and students with particular support needs, such as recovery from alcohol and other drugs (see Thompson, 2014).

3. Connection to context and consideration of sustainability

Cress et al. (2001) suggest that a ‘hallmark element’ of effective programs relates to context and includes ‘a) a strong connection between the mission of the institution and the mission of the leadership development program; b) an academic home ... ideally under the auspices of both academic affairs and student affairs; and c) inputs from many sources such as civic service groups, resource agencies, and community leaders’ (p. 24). Program context is the starting point for program development and may be ‘framed in terms of various categories of identity, sector, academics, place, discipline, organisation, field of practice and field of leadership’ (Kaufman, et al., 2012, p. 123)

In terms of positioning in relation to the curriculum, Osteen and Coburn (2012) contend that ‘programs will more likely have success if they are linked closely with credit courses and activities that have an academic component’ (p. 7). They argue that this leads senior administrators to value leadership education and devote resources because ‘buy-in will be encouraged and expected’ (p. 8). However, Rosch and Anthony (2012) provide a counter-argument, arguing that co/extra-curricular student leadership development programs have three advantages over those that are embedded in curriculum. First, they allow student leaders to interact with several different ‘teachers’ (advisors, role models, alumni, community allies). Second, there is the possibility for extended learning opportunities beyond one semester. Third, there is opportunity for involvement with a large and diverse peer group. Stough et al. (2013) concur on the value of out-of-class activities, concluding that ‘the learning potential of volunteerism ... needs to be further explored and exploited by HEIs’ (p. 19), as this enables a new more holistic approach to HEI–student interactions, which is a requisite for sustainability. Further support for leadership programs that connect students to community is provided by Wooten, et al. (2012), who suggest that students who participate in such programs report ‘greater understanding of community problems, greater knowledge and acceptance of diverse races and cultures and a greater ability to get along with people of different backgrounds’ (p. 54). Bridging the gap between curricular and co/extra-curricular student leadership development programs, Seemiller and Murray (2013) urge for strong collaborative effort between the two.

The literature points to various sustainability-building strategies. Greenlee, Bruner, and Hill (2009) suggest that fostering healthy community/university alliances is a valuable way to exchange ideas for curricular design, content and delivery. Athreya and Kalkoff (2006) emphasise the importance of working across departments on campus, seeking out and supporting courses and programs that align with the student leadership development program’s goals in the interests of increasing the reach of the program and ensuring strategic growth. Credibility and commitment may be increased by offering ‘tangible
takeaways, benefits or credentials, such as certificates or graduation honours, academic credit, compensation or awards’ (Haber, 2011, p. 73). Incentives to encourage faculty participation include course release time (Cress, et al., 2001).

Clearly, the position of student leadership development programs within the institutional/organisational structure has implications – for funding/financial stability, influence of curriculum, access to faculty and proximity to target populations. Esplin, Seabold and Pinnegar (2012) emphasise that placement of a program needs to make it visible: ‘it cannot be isolated or marginalised on the periphery’, noting that ‘marginalised programs are easily identified by the inadequacy of their funding’ (p. 87). They conclude that successful programs typically ‘span a wide range of organisational reporting lines’ and have ‘a sustained stream of resources for staff, facilities, technical support, supplies and professional development’ (p. 87). Programs need to be adequately staffed and funded (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2006) and make use of both institutional and community resources (Roberts & Ullom, 1990). Staff need to be appropriately qualified (Eich, 2008) and have access to adequate facilities (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2006). ‘One basic tenet of program architects is that for a leadership development process to have benefit it should be viewed as a long-term endeavour’ requiring ‘enormous time and resources’ (Facca & Allen, 2011, p. 73).

4. Intentional planning and implementation activities

Esplin, Seabold and Pinnegar (2012) stress the importance of ‘thoughtful and intentional planning, management and training processes to successful and sustainable programs’ (p. 85). Designing quality programs involves program developers effectively addressing questions in five key areas outlined by the International Leadership Association (ILA, 2009). These are context, conceptual framework, content, teaching and learning strategies, desired learning outcomes and methods of assessing the program.

In relation to recruitment, selection and training of student leaders, Esplin, Seabold and Pinnegar (2012) recommend informative advertising, an effective application form, a well-structured interview process and a method for final selection, followed by effective training. This is supported by Shook and Keup (2012) and by Haber (2011), who also suggests that training should include administrative aspects, as well as intrapersonal and interpersonal skill development.

Program developers should plan for a variety of learning experiences and strategies to engage with students with different learning styles (Haber, 2011), creating development experiences that meet diverse needs and recognise the limitations of ‘one size fits all’ interventions (Facca & Allen, 2011). Common program elements should include integrated courses, retreats, workshops, seminars and conferences (Janosik & Sina, 1988), both curricular and co-curricular (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2006). Favoured activities include project-based learning using real-world work assignments on time-limited projects to facilitate individual and collective learning (Ellis & Petersen, 2011), hands-on activities, service-learning projects with intentional reflection (Haber, 2011) and cohort learning (McPhail, Robinson, & Scott, 2008). Harris and Hopson (2008) emphasise that learning activities should include a focus on critical enquiry and dialogue, noting that field-based activities and action research projects encourage problem-based
learning. Three common elements of student leadership development programs that have particular impact are opportunities for service, such as volunteering; experiential activities, such as internships; and active learning through collaboration, such as group work in the classroom (Cress et al., 2001).

In terms of implementation, Shriberg and Harris (2012) recommend linking educational and operational activities, managing expectations of students and staff, paying close attention to group dynamics, and using systems-thinking as a ‘connective thread’ (p. 162). These ideas are echoed by Bright, et al (2012) who suggest that facilitating connectedness and nurturing a supportive emotional climate help to build confidence, foster authenticity and encourage reflection and perspective-taking. Integrating course work and field work encourages continuous exploration of the links between theory and practice (Nixon, et al., 2011).

5. Embedded assessment and evaluation processes

Strategy for sustainability includes having in place a robust evaluation process with clearly stated and measurable objectives (Cress et al., 2001). Outcomes assessment is a necessary process to provide ‘the communicative ammunition needed to build programs in tough economic times … and for connecting raw data to program improvement’ (Ostrom-Blonigen, et al., 2010, p. 247). In terms of student leader assessment, Seemiller and Murray (2013) advocate for a ‘common set of leadership competencies’ and a ‘common method to assess student leadership development’ (p. 44). While this push for ‘standardisation’ of student leadership development programs is not necessarily shared by all, the importance of conducting comprehensive programmatic evaluation to ensure high quality programs is generally undisputed (Tingle, et al., 2013). Quality assurance processes should be guided by relevant professional standards and guidelines to help ensure that ‘practice is consistent with foundational theory’ (Rosch & Anthony, 2012, p. 45). However, in fact very few programs are systematically evaluated (Ballard, et al. 2000). Paying attention to both formative and summative feedback and ensuring that evaluation strategies are connected to goals helps to create ‘a culture of accountability’ (Esplin, et al., 2012, p. 97).

Many of the early attempts to document the effects of student leadership development programs ‘suffered from applying corporate and executive leadership program evaluation to collegial student environments or narrowly examined the effects of a single seminar, workshop or retreat’ (Owen, 2008, p. 21). One of the first useful evaluation models developed for the student leadership development context was Anthony-Gonzalez and Fiutak’s (1981) Program Evaluation Cycle for Comprehensive Leadership Programs. Recognising that ‘the greatest weakness of most leadership programs is found in the procedures used to evaluate the impact’, Janosik and Sina (1988, p. 183) drew on Anthony-Gonzales and Fiutak’s model to publish a comprehensive planning and delivery system for leadership training programs. In 1996, the US Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education developed the CAS Professional Standards for Student Leadership Programs. These comprise thirteen components, each designed to examine an essential aspect of leadership programs and services². A set of self-assessment guides was developed

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² These are mission; program; leadership; organisation and management; human resources; financial resources; facilities, technology and equipment; legal responsibilities; equal opportunity, access and affirmative action; campus and community relations; diversity; ethics; assessment and evaluation.
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in 1997 to accompany the standards for use in program evaluation, and the standards were revised in 2002.

Despite the availability of various resources and many good intentions to evaluate student leadership development programs, in general, assessment and evaluation activities have not kept pace with the proliferation of programs on offer (Reinelt & Russon, 2003). Connecting and aligning the design and delivery of activities to the outcomes and impacts of student leadership development programs is therefore emerging as a priority for all those involved in student leadership development in higher education.

**Summary of literature review**

In summary, the literature on student leadership development programs in the HEIs paints a picture of a diverse and growing space in the tertiary education sector. While there have been relatively few attempts to classify programs into typologies (Owen, 2008, p. 16), a consensus on the essential elements of effective programs is emerging. These may be summarised as follows:

1. Programs need to have a clearly articulated purpose and philosophy (which align with the institutional mission) and they should address individual development, as well as institutional and community capacity building.
2. Whether programs are designed for specific target groups or are open to the general student body, they should have a focus on inclusivity and reflect the developmental and demographic profile of the student population served. Similarly, regardless of the roles played by students, staff and external stakeholders, building student leadership capacity should be seen as a collaborative project.
3. Successful programs are based on a sound understanding of their operating context and are clearly visible within the institutional structure, enjoying adequate resources to ensure long-term sustainability.
4. Planning, implementation and evaluation need to be intentional and ongoing processes. A variety of learning strategies, delivery modes and experiential activities should be available and training and development activities routinely offered. Program implementation ideally incorporates systems thinking, encouraging continuous exploration of the links between theory and practice.
5. Robust assessment and evaluation processes should be in place, with process, outcome and impact objectives being explicit and measurable.

In conclusion, there are several notable gaps in the literature on student leadership development in higher education. First, there is an absence of published material from the Australasian region. Whilst there is no doubt that activity is increasing in the student/peer leadership space across university campuses in Australia and New Zealand, documentation of this work is not apparent in the international peer-reviewed literature. Second, there is limited evidence of efforts to evaluate student leadership development initiatives in HEIs. Third, while the literature emphasises the need for regular robust programmatic evaluation and ongoing monitoring for continuous quality improvement, there are few resources to assist program developers and coordinators in this important endeavour. The DaSSL project contributes to addressing these identified gaps.
The DaSSL (5Ps) Framework

The DaSSL Framework has been designed to build the capacity of Australasian universities to engage in evidence-based decision-making about student leadership development programs. The aim of this framework is to support more comprehensive and authentic inclusion of student leadership across the higher education sector.

The framework comprises three elements:

- **five domains** of sound program design (also known as ‘the 5Ps’ in the DaSSL Framework): Purpose, People, Positioning, Practice and Progress
- **four core principles** for student leadership development: explicit leadership development, alignment equity and diversity, and continuous improvement
- **twenty guidelines** for good practice: these translate the principles into practice by mapping them against the five domains.

The five domains

The five domains of sound program design (the 5Ps) have been derived from the international literature on student leadership development.

- **Purpose** explores a program’s key drivers, intended outcomes and philosophical underpinnings.
- **People** examines the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of all stakeholders involved in a program.
- **Positioning** considers the location of a program within institutional structures.
- **Practice** delves into the concrete operational aspects of a program from planning through to implementation.
- **Progress** probes continuous improvement and moving the agenda for student leadership development forward.

The four principles

The core principles were developed through an iterative process, alongside the other components of the framework. Initially conceptualised from recurrent themes identified in the literature as to ‘what works’, the project team members, from five different institutions, examined the principles in relation to their own institution’s student leadership development programs. Feedback was then solicited from practitioners in workshops and the principles verified through the discussion and qualitative data gathered via this consultation process. The principles are broad enough to apply to the wide range of student leadership development initiatives across Australasian university campuses. While they are defined separately below, the four principles are intended to be operationalised together to form the basis of a strategic approach to good practice.
The four core principles for student leadership development are as follows:

- **Principle 1: Explicit leadership development**
  This means that developing and supporting student leadership is purposeful and explicit throughout the program, even if the primary purpose of the program is not specifically to develop leadership capabilities in students.

- **Principle 2: Alignment**
  This means that the design, implementation and evaluation of the program all align and that there is evidence that the five domains of the framework (the ‘5Ps’) work synergistically within the institutional context.

- **Principle 3: Equity and diversity**
  This means that supporting and valuing equity and diversity is a core value of the program and that a culture of inclusivity is reflected throughout the program.

- **Principle 4: Continuous improvement**
  This means that evaluation is ongoing and that opportunities and processes for continuous improvement are built into the program in a cyclical manner.

The guidelines

The guidelines translate the four principles into good practice against the five domains of the DaSSL Framework, and are outlined in Table 1. They are not intended to be prescriptive and are offered as recommendations for practice. They are accompanied by a self-rating scale that may be used to benchmark programs. The term ‘good practice’ is used in preference to ‘best practice’, to indicate that these principles and guidelines represent a contribution to an evolving field, leaving the way open for continuous improvement and ongoing learning.

The DaSSL Framework may be utilised in a range of ways to benefit various stakeholders in the higher education sector and beyond. The core of the framework, the ‘5Ps’, represent key domains of good program design. While the 5Ps apply across a range of program types, and are not exclusive to student leadership development programs, the inclusion of the four core principles, mapped against each domain to articulate guidelines for good practice, enables a new approach to developing and supporting high quality student leadership initiatives.
### Table 1: Principles and guidelines for good practice in student leadership development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRINCIPLE 1: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>PRINCIPLE 2: ALIGNMENT</th>
<th>PRINCIPLE 3: EQUITY &amp; DIVERSITY</th>
<th>PRINCIPLE 4: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What this means for PURPOSE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student leadership development is one of the explicit aims of the program</td>
<td>The theoretical / philosophical underpinnings of the program align with its purpose</td>
<td>Equity and diversity are recognised in the objectives of the program</td>
<td>Evaluation measures allow for identifying whether the program purpose has been achieved</td>
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<td>P1a</td>
<td>P2a</td>
<td>P3a</td>
<td>P4a</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What this means for PEOPLE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student leaders are recruited, trained and supported in an equitable, transparent and consistent way</td>
<td>Key stakeholders have a shared understanding of, and work towards, the purpose of the program</td>
<td>Recruitment and training processes reflect inclusiveness and diversity</td>
<td>Feedback is collected from student leaders and other stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td>P1b</td>
<td>P2b</td>
<td>P3b</td>
<td>P4b</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What this means for POSITIONING</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The program is part of a whole-of-institution approach to student leadership development opportunities</td>
<td>The program is positioned to support broader institutional strategies</td>
<td>The program’s organisational structure allows for input from, and authentic engagement with, equity groups</td>
<td>Evaluation activities enable ongoing consideration of the positioning and sustainability of the program</td>
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<td>P1c</td>
<td>P2c</td>
<td>P3c</td>
<td>P4c</td>
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<td><strong>What this means for PRACTICE</strong></td>
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<td>Student leadership development practices are made explicit in the design and activities of the program</td>
<td>The overall design of the program and its activities reflects the other domains</td>
<td>The program design and implementation reflect a culture of inclusiveness</td>
<td>Data is collected iteratively to inform continual improvement of design and implementation of the program</td>
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<td>P1d</td>
<td>P2d</td>
<td>P3d</td>
<td>P4d</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What this means for PROGRESS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student leaders record and reflect upon their leadership development in terms of both personal and professional benefits</td>
<td>Data collection tools and approaches allow for assessment of the stated aims of the program</td>
<td>The equity and diversity outcomes are monitored</td>
<td>All evaluation activities are integrated to enable comprehensive reporting, in order to ensure continual improvement of all aspects of the program</td>
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<td>P1e</td>
<td>P2e</td>
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</table>
**Uses of the framework**

Examples of the potential uses and applications of the framework are provided via the case studies on the DaSSL website, which is discussed below. Practitioners and program coordinators may use the framework to identify ways that the leadership development potential of their programs may be strengthened. Policy makers and senior executives in institutions may find the framework useful as a way of specifying in greater detail the type of leadership development programs that they might like to encourage or mandate. By not identifying and naming programs that contribute to the development of leadership in students, many institutions may be missing opportunities to recognise successful programs that not only benefit individual students, but also may contribute to institutional goals or strategic objectives, and furthermore enhance the reputation of the institution. Researchers may be better able to conduct replication studies if interventions are described and specified in a way that utilises the shared language of the five domains. Evaluation studies may also be more rigorous if evaluation processes are clearly articulated in line with the continuous improvement model outlined in the framework.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, mapping programs against the DaSSL Framework might enable students themselves to make more-informed decisions about what sorts of leadership development opportunities they want to pursue. By explicitly including leadership development in programs and helping students to gain an understanding of evidence and transferability, institutions may contribute towards helping students to recognise that leadership comes in many forms and can materialise in a variety of contexts and roles within the academy and beyond.

The DaSSL Framework has the potential to contribute to the growth of a community of practice within the field of student leadership development. By recognising the full spectrum of student leadership development opportunities available within the higher education sector and developing these into robust and effective programs, institutions can collectively build their capacity to grow learners who are also lifelong leaders.

**The DaSSL website**

The components of the framework are accessible on the interactive DaSSL website (www.dassl.edu.au), along with the following additional components:

- a reflection tool and action plan template for practitioners and program coordinators
- a series of case studies that exemplify how the framework can be used to enhance practice in the sphere of student leadership development
- a range of supporting resources to assist program coordinators to improve the quality of their programs.

**Reflection tool and action plan**

The reflection tool and action plan are based on the 5Ps and are intended primarily for practitioners and coordinators of programs that provide opportunities for students in higher education to engage in leadership development activities. They can be used interactively online or downloaded as printable templates.
The reflection tool is structured around the five inter-related domains: Purpose, People, Positioning, Practice and Progress (the 5Ps). Each domain is broken down into three sub-domains for which there is an overarching question for consideration. This is followed by some auxiliary questions. The reflection questions are intended to serve as prompts for practitioners’ thinking.

There are two pathways to enter the tool: the planning pathway and the review pathway. In either case, there are a number of options for engaging with the tool, as it has been designed to be used flexibly.

Program coordinators might choose to work through the reflection questions on their own, or with a team as a professional development activity in a workshop setting. Each ‘P’ includes an evaluation question for consideration. If, in the process of reflecting on the questions in the tool, users identify areas for improvement, they are encouraged to develop an action plan and are provided with the opportunity to consider and record any planned actions.

The tool has been designed to be used flexibly for a range of purposes. It may be used to:

- benchmark programs against other similar programs
- develop a business case for or assess the feasibility of a new program
- validate or review a program internally for continuous improvement
- peer review or externally validate a program
- assess the inclusiveness of a program
- inform data collection for evaluation of a program
- demonstrate how a program contributes to graduate employability.

Case studies
The DaSSL case studies provide examples of a range of applications for the DaSSL Framework. Eight case studies are included on the website, most of which have been contributed by the partner institutions and relate specifically to programs within HEIs. One case study was contributed by CanTeen (an Australian organisation for young people living with cancer), demonstrating the utility of the framework in the context of youth leadership development beyond the tertiary education sector.

The case studies exemplify how the framework can be used to enhance practice in the sphere of student leadership development. Each case study describes how and why the framework was used in relation to a particular program or initiative. The focus is on what was learned from the process of using the reflection tool and action plan, in conjunction with the principles and guidelines for good practice, and what future action was planned as result. In this sense, the case studies demonstrate how the framework may be used as part of a quality improvement process. Each case study concludes with a brief description of practical resources used in the program that exemplify good practice. These resources can also be found in the resources section of the website.
Supporting resources

Two types of supporting resources have been included on the website to assist program coordinators to improve the quality of their programs: a range of practical resources and an annotated bibliography of useful literature.

The practical resources were selected as exemplars of the principles and guidelines for good practice and were supplied by the institutions that participated in the project. Each resource is categorised according to the key domain and key principle that it exemplifies. Many of these resources are also linked to the case studies as artefacts of good practice. The contributors of these resources are happy for them to be used by others, as long as the original creators and copyright holders are appropriately acknowledged.

The reference resources were identified in the process of conducting the comprehensive international literature review and represent only a small sample of the literature that is available.

Chapter 4: Dissemination, impact and evaluation

Dissemination and impact

Dissemination activities to maximise the impact of the project were undertaken throughout the life of the project, enabling a wide range of potential users of the DaSSL Framework to be reached. Importantly, the dissemination strategy allowed for ongoing and iterative feedback on the framework, which enabled the project team to incorporate feedback from participants using the tool in varying institutional contexts.

Project members presented papers, workshops and posters at nine national and international conferences in 2015 and 2016:

- European First-Year Experience, 15–17 June 2015, Bergen, Norway – Paper: ‘Realising the potential of student leaders in facilitating the transition into higher education for first-year students’
- Students, Transitions, Achievement, Retention and Success (STARS), 1–4 July 2015, Melbourne, Australia – Workshop: ‘Building capacity for student leadership’
- Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA), 6–9 July 2015, Melbourne, Australia – Workshop: ‘Enhancing graduate employability: Towards a student leadership framework’
- Australasian Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) and Peer Learning, 29–30 September 2015, Melbourne, Australia – Workshop: ‘Peer learning programs and student leadership development’
- International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL), 27–30 October 2015, Melbourne, Australia – Roundtable: ‘Conceptualising student leadership across international contexts’
• Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association (ANZSSA), 6–9 December 2015, Hobart, Australia – Pre-conference workshop: ‘Student leadership development: making it visible, viable and valuable!’

• STARS, 28 June – 2 July 2016, Perth, Australia – Poster presentation: ‘Developing and supporting student leadership’

• Australasian PASS and Peer Learning, 27–28 September 2016, Sydney, Australia – Poster presentation: ‘Developing and supporting student leadership through peer learning programs’

• ANZSSA, 5–7 December 2016, Auckland, New Zealand – Workshop: ‘Enhancing employability through developing and supporting student leadership’.

The project dissemination strategy and impact plan are included at Appendices B and C.

Evaluation

An independent external evaluator, Professor Gail Dennett, was engaged with the project from the outset, participating in project team meetings and workshops. This ongoing and close contact with the project enabled a process of formative evaluation to be embedded into the project plan.

An interim evaluation report/review of the DaSSL Framework was provided at the end of the first year in October 2015 (Appendix D). In this report, the DaSSL Framework was reviewed against criteria developed by the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (2010) in a working paper describing the features of a range of quality improvement frameworks. The review suggested that the DaSSL Framework performed well against the criteria, which were modified slightly to apply to the higher education sector.

The external evaluator’s final report is included at Appendix E.
References


Developing and supporting student leadership in higher education institutions


Developing and supporting student leadership in higher education institutions


Appendices

Appendix A: Certification by Deputy Vice-Chancellor

Certification by Deputy Vice-Chancellor (or equivalent)

I certify that all parts of the final report for this grant provide an accurate representation of the implementation, impact and findings of the project, and that the report is of publishable quality.

Name: ……Professor David Sadler...........................................Date: …16/01/17....................
Appendix B: DaSSL project dissemination strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Stage</th>
<th>Dissemination element</th>
<th>Project activities</th>
<th>Dissemination activities</th>
<th>Dissemination outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 (Jan–Sept 2015)</td>
<td>Sector engagement</td>
<td>Literature review Framework conceptualisation and early development Piloting of practitioner reflection tool</td>
<td>Development of paper 1 (on survey results) Project branding Conference and practitioner workshops Email lists</td>
<td>Project logo developed Promotional postcard developed (400 copies printed to be distributed at conferences STARS conference workshop (July 2015) – 13 participants HERDSA conference workshop (July 2015) – 13 participants PASS and Peer Learning conference (Sept 2015) – 11 participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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| Stage 4 (Jan–Dec 2016) | Refinement | Conference presentations/workshops development of paper 2 (on DaSSL Framework) | Poster developed  
Good practice principles and guidelines developed as 1-page handout  
Promotional postcard updated and second print run of 600 for conference distribution  
STARS conference poster presentation (June/July 2016)  
PASS and Peer Learning conference poster presentation (Sept 2016)  
ANZSSA conference workshop (Dec 2016) |
|------------------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Project conclusion (Dec 2016) | Enabling transfer of outcomes | Email notification of website going live  
Website goes live (Nov 2016)  
Final report (Dec 2016) | DaSSL website launch at University of Tasmania (Dec 2016)  
DaSSL website launch at University of Otago (Jan 2017)  
Final report posted on the Department of Education and Training website |
| Post-project (2017) | Enabling transfer of outcomes | Maintenance and monitoring of website  
Embedding framework into existing institutional structures  
Special Issue of *Journal of Peer Learning* | DaSSL website maintained by University of Tasmania  
User contributions to website via case studies  
Framework embedded into existing structures of all partner institutions |

## Appendix C: Project impact plan

### Developing and Supporting Student Leadership Framework project impact plan (updated November 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated changes at:</th>
<th>Project completion</th>
<th>Six months post-completion</th>
<th>Twelve months post-completion</th>
<th>Twenty-four months post-completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Team members</strong></td>
<td>Have an enhanced appreciation of the variables involved in SL initiatives</td>
<td>Have additional publications in relation to SL</td>
<td>Have their contributions to SL recognised at the institutional level and via awards</td>
<td>Are participating in further national and international research projects related to SL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have developed broadened professional and scholarly networks in relation to SL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Immediate students</strong></td>
<td>Profile raised of student leadership opportunities at partner institutions</td>
<td>Report participation in higher quality SL programs in participating institutions</td>
<td>Are better able to articulate the dimensions of high quality SL programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Are contributing to the ongoing development of the OER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Spreading the word</strong></td>
<td>OER is launched and readily accessible online</td>
<td>OER website is accessed by increasing numbers of users</td>
<td>Special issue of <em>Journal of Peer Learning</em> has been published showcasing selected case studies</td>
<td>Website has grown and is well used and maintained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A wide range of practitioners have participated in conference workshops and presentations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Narrow opportunistic adoption</strong></td>
<td>Some of those involved in SL initiatives in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. **Narrow systemic adoption**

All of those involved in SL initiatives in participating institutions are aware of and use the OER

6. **Broad opportunistic adoption**

Funding models for SL are developed and adopted by a range of universities across the HE sector

7. **Broad systemic adoption**

Funding models for SL programs are adopted and SL initiatives are embedded in strategic plans across the HE sector

**HE, higher education. OER, open education resource. SL, student leadership.**

1. **What indicates a climate of readiness for change in relation to your intended project?**

   - Higher education institutions have a recognised role in developing the leaders of tomorrow. In response to this, there has been a proliferation of diverse student/peer leadership initiatives and programs in higher education in Australasia. However, there is currently a lack of guidance in relation to assuring the quality of these programs, ensuring they are ‘fit for purpose’ and that they develop on a continuous improvement basis.

   - Members of the project team (and the reference group) are in positions to act as change enablers in their own institutions and more broadly within their respective spheres of influence.

Developing and supporting student leadership in higher education institutions 41
2. In brief and indicatively, what impacts (changes and benefits) do you expect your project to bring about, at the following levels and stages of the impact management planning and evaluation ladder (IMPEL)?

See matrix above.

3. What are your strategies for engaging with stakeholders throughout the project?
   - **Branding of project via website and distribution of hardcopy promotional materials**
   - **Dissemination of project newsletter**
   - **Presentations and workshops at conferences**
   - **Generating of email lists through established networks and communities of practice**
   - **Collection of case studies from practitioners in the sector and offering opportunities for publication.**

4. How will you enable transfer that is ensuring that your project remains impactful after the funding period?

   The open education resource [OER] that will be developed as the primary project deliverable will be housed on a dedicated website which will be maintained and updated regularly (by University of Tasmania). It is intended to be an organically growing resource that reflects and responds to the needs of the sector in the student leadership space. Project team members will continue to promote the OER beyond the life of the project; and continue to collaborate with the international peer leadership community in relation to both practice and scholarship.

5. What barriers may exist to achieving change in your project?

   Inadequate buy-in from strategic decision-makers may result in lack of support (including funding) for sustained adoption of changes/improvements to student leadership initiatives and programs.

6. How will you keep track of the project’s impact? What analytics may be useful?

   We intend monitoring the traffic to the website to ascertain who is accessing the OER, how they are using it, what is most and least useful to users (and why), and what improvements may be made.

7. How will you maintain relevant project materials for others to access after the project is completed?

   These will be housed on the website.

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4 The full version of the IMPEL model was developed by Tilly Hinton while on secondment to the Office for Learning and Teaching.

5 Transfer in this context means ‘the processes undertaken to maintain momentum and impact beyond the funded life of the project and beyond the project team’, Hinton, T., Gannaway, D., Berry, B., & Moore, K. (2011). The D-cubed guide: planning for effective dissemination. Sydney: Australian Teaching and Learning Council.
Appendix D: Interim external evaluation report

Developing Student Leadership in Higher Education

This evaluation uses the framework developed in the first year of the project as a reflection, planning and review tool. In this instance it will be used to test the efficacy of the top level components of the framework as an evaluative tool. The evaluation will focus on the two-day workshop but also make reference to the three earlier teleconferences.

Purpose
The two-day workshop was an opportunity for all members of the project team (including the external evaluator) to meet and discuss project progress, refine the reflection tool, consider the brief for the project website, distribute and discuss draft publications and map out a plan to meet the project goals over the next twelve months. The purpose of the workshop was clarified in the first two hours of the workshop in an informal manner that allowed contributions, questions and aspirations from all participants. This discussion was very valuable in setting the tone for the rest of the workshop and providing a focus for the small group work addressing the reflective questions. Each pair was clear that the questions under each top level component of the framework needed to be clearer and more concise.

People
All members of the project team were able to attend and participate in the first full day of the workshop. Although we had never met as a full group face to face prior to the workshop, the ‘GoToMeeting’ video teleconferences had provided an opportunity for the project team to meet virtually. This virtual encounter facilitated a comfortable and easy start to the workshop.

The project team brought a diverse set of skills and experience to the group. This might have contributed to conflict but it did not. The team leader’s informal and friendly style was positive in this respect. A critical perspective was applied to all issues, there was full participation and robust discussion. It allowed time for all participants to ‘catch up’ with the detailed thought and consideration that the project officer had already given to the project. The project manager played a key role in keeping the participants on task and mindful of project timelines.

Some members of the project team had stronger skills and experience in the development and use of websites. It was agreed that this expertise should be used in a focused and thoughtful way to ensure the best outcome from discussions with the web developers.

Positioning
The workshop was held in Melbourne and marked the end of the first year of the project. It was scheduled after two conference presentations but before a final leadership conference later in the year. Two publications were available in draft form for critical review by all members of the team. Further publications were planned and team members were invited to consider participation as co-authors.
Practice
The participants were able to bring their own experience with the framework to the group for discussion. In addition, those members who had presented the framework at one of several conferences were able to share broad feedback from both professional and academic staff. This feedback clarified the focus of the workshop. Specifically, there was an intention to reduce the number of reflective questions posed to practitioners, highlight the impact on students and tease out the philosophical underpinnings. It was appreciated that there were potentially many different uses for the tool and it was decided to develop a brief summary of its application for feasibility, planning and business case development; validation and self-review; peer review and benchmarking. The tool could also be usefully applied to highlight the inclusion of minority groups and opportunities to develop and document skills related to employability. To this end different members of the project team volunteered to prepare a 500-word summary to illustrate each of these potential applications.

There was agreement that the framework itself could be further validated by illustrating how well it addressed the criteria for quality frameworks developed for use by the Australian Centre of Excellence in Local Government.

Progress
The project had a delayed start and has been granted an extension to the end of 2016. Given this, the outcomes to date, and the plans for the next year, the project is on track for successful completion within the funding timeframe. The workshop was critical in gaining consensus about the future steps to complete the project.

Professor Gail Dennett
Independent external evaluator
October 2015
Appendix E: Final external evaluation report

Independent external evaluator’s report – November 2016

The role of the evaluator
I was engaged to assist with the evaluation of the project from the inception. The intention was to offer progressive evaluative input throughout the project as well as summative evaluation. I was to act as a ‘critical friend’ and a ‘sounding board’ for development and implementation strategies. The model of critical friend described by Hardiman and Dewing (2014) was instructive although developed for a different context (learning about health care practice within the workplace). Many of the strategies they outline – active learning, inspiring a shared vision, reflection on practice, high challenge/high support and modeling – were relevant to the role of evaluator. Given the innovative nature of the project it was acknowledged that I would be a ‘fellow traveller’ on the journey of discovery. To this end I participated in a two-day workshop with all team members, early in the project. I undertook a preliminary review of the draft 5P framework against the nine criteria for quality frameworks developed by the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG, 2010). I later used the draft framework to review a leadership program outside the higher education sector to test its relevance in a broader context. I participated in six teleconferences with project team members. I reviewed and provided detailed feedback on eight case studies for publication on the website. I provided regular reviews of the website with feedback at three key development stages. I reviewed and provided feedback on the proposed dissemination strategy. I brought to this role my experience as a member of previous national teaching and learning funding bodies – Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development (1996–1999) and Australian Universities Teaching Committee (2004) and my employment in the higher education sector as a Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) at the University of Tasmania (2005–2009).

Progressive evaluation
The proposal
The project tackled an important educational issue and had clear and achievable goals (outcomes and deliverables). The team members contributed a diverse set of experience and skills to the project including teaching leadership, scholarly research, staff development and organisational leadership. In addition, all shared a deep commitment to the development of peer leadership. The team agreed to communicate through sharing documents on Dropbox, regular teleconferences and occasional face-to-face meetings. The reference group brought the perspective of international scholars (Young and Keup, USA) a senior university executive (Kift, Qld) and research in peer leadership (Green, ACT). The project manager, Sarah Stewart, commenced her role in December 2014.

The practice
The first stage of the project involved the implementation of an international survey of peer leadership developed in the USA. The survey questions were narrowly focused on the development of graduate attributes. In contrast, this project was concerned more broadly with student engagement and social responsibility/altruism. It is this broader focus that created the opportunity to contribute to and expand on the current concept of peer
leadership. This inspired the development of a broad based framework to capture the range of ways peer leadership was conceptualised and implemented. The framework was designed to capture differing peer leadership practices through the documentation of case studies. The opportunity to contribute case studies of peer leadership would: (1) test the relevance and usability of the framework; (2) promote a shared sense of ownership for the framework; and (3) offer a cost effective means of documenting the wide variety of current peer leadership initiatives. The framework was ‘road tested’ with key stakeholders/relevant communities of practice at three national and two international conferences in 2015.

The workshop
In October 2015 a two-day workshop was held in Melbourne to mark the end of the first year of the project. It provided the opportunity for all members of the project team (including the external evaluator) to meet and discuss project progress, refine the reflection tool and the overarching framework, in light of stakeholder feedback, consider the brief for the project website, distribute and discuss draft publications and map out a plan to meet the project goals over the next year. It allowed time for all participants to ‘catch up’ with the detailed thought and consideration given to the implementation of the project by the project leader and project manager.

A critical perspective was applied to all issues, there was full participation and robust discussion. The project leader’s informal and friendly style minimised any potential conflict. The project manager played a key role in keeping the participants on task and mindful of project timelines.

Some members of the project team had stronger skills and experience in the development and use of websites. It was agreed that this expertise should be used in a focused and thoughtful way to ensure the best outcome from discussions with the web developers.

One publication was available in draft form for critical review by all members of the team. Other publications were planned and team members were invited to consider participation as co-authors.

Each of the participants was encouraged to contribute their own experience with the framework to the group for discussion. In addition, those members who had presented the framework at one of the three national conferences were able to share broad feedback from both professional and academic staff. It was agreed to reduce the number of reflection question posed to practitioners, highlight the impact on students and tease out the philosophical underpinnings. A number of different uses for the framework were apparent and it was decided to develop a brief summary of its application for feasibility, planning and business case development; validation and self-review; peer review and benchmarking. There was agreement that the framework itself could be further validated by illustrating how well it addressed the criteria for quality frameworks developed for use by the ACELG (2010).

The project had a delayed start and was granted an extension to the end of 2016. Given this, the outcomes to date and the plans for the next year, it was agreed that the project was on track for successful completion within the funding timeframe. The workshop was critical in gaining consensus about the future steps to complete the project.
Review and application of quality framework

The evaluator assessed the framework using the ACELG (2010) criteria which were modified only slightly to highlight the higher education, rather than local government, sector. The review is attached as Appendix E. All 9 criteria were comprehensively addressed by the framework.

The evaluator also undertook to develop a case study outside the higher education sector as a means of testing the versatility and strength of the framework beyond the higher education sector. The case study addressed the leadership program developed by CanTeen, a not-for-profit organisation helping young people living with cancer. The case study focused on validation and self-review and is available on the website (www.dassl.edu.au). It contributed to the refinement of the framework by highlighting issues of equity and inclusion. Even though the tool had been designed for higher education it was relevant and helpful as a guide to review the CanTeen leadership program. For example, it highlighted the need to clarify documentation about leadership and leadership development and accurately describe the current opportunities and practice. Member transitions – to leadership roles, away from support staff and services, and as members ‘age out’ of the organisation – were identified as areas for improvement. On the other hand, the embedded nature of youth leadership within the organisation was exceptional and a role model for other programs. In addition, the scaffolding of leadership roles from membership with voting rights, to participation on locally-based committees, to executive roles at local and national level was exemplary.

On the basis of this review the CanTeen National Leadership Coordinator (NLC) is preparing a brief for the organisational executive to improve the current documentation and practice around leadership development. Recruitment and selection for leadership roles (rather than elections) is proposed to ensure an appropriate balance between leadership development and child protection, safety and well-being. The CanTeen NLC with a young CanTeen leader presented a ‘think tank’ session at a recent international peer leadership conference to explore recognition of leadership experience within the higher education sector. In other words, the processes and outcomes have been successfully translated and embedded in a different context (Southwell, et al., 2010, Treleaven, Sykes, & Ormiston, 2012).

Teleconferences and team communication

Regular project meetings were scheduled using the GoTo Meeting online conferencing facility. Videoconferencing gave the team the opportunity to meet virtually from the commencement of the project. This virtual encounter facilitated a comfortable and easy start to the two-day workshop. Unfortunately, the technology did not always work effectively and this provided some frustration for team members. The project manager was readily available to team members via email and telephone.

Development of case studies

The case studies presented on the website convey the application of the framework in the many diverse ways initially conceived at the project workshop. Each of the case studies was reviewed by the evaluator to ensure clarity and consistency in form. Collectively, they illustrate a wide variety of innovative strategies to foster student leadership. Importantly the case studies represent institutional initiatives beyond the scope of the project team.
This indicates the value of the framework for recognising, validating and disseminating good practice around student leadership.

**Development of website**

The website is attractive and easy to navigate. It allows users to ‘log in’ and retain data or visit as a guest. It encourages users to explore their plans for, and/or review existing student leadership programs, in a structured manner using a quality framework. The case studies provide readily accessible resources including artifacts.

**Dissemination strategy**

The project marketing and dissemination plan was presented in a readily accessible and concise format. It followed good practice guidelines for dissemination (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2012; Harmsworth & Turpin, 2000; University of Regina, 2011; West, 2012) by involving stakeholders from the inception of the project. Relevant communities of practice were engaged in the development of the reflection tool to encourage distributed leadership committed to improved practice and the framework was embedded into existing structures of all project partners (Treleaven, Sykes, & Ormiston, 2012). The project resources have been disseminated via the website, conference presentations and workshops, and publications. Southwell et al. (2010, p. 62) defined successful dissemination as action taken ‘to embed and upscale innovation within its own context (discipline or institution) and/or replicate, translate or transform an innovation in a new context and embed that innovation in that new context’. The outcomes of the project have been embedded in the partner universities, accepted more broadly with the inclusion of case studies from other universities and translated and extended to an organisation outside the higher education sector to inform good practice in youth leadership development.

**Summative evaluation**

**Delivery of aims of the project**

The framework, readily available on the website, provides an evidence base for understanding and developing student peer leadership roles undertaken within and beyond the Australasian higher education sector.

The website is an open source resource that allows individual institutions to explore and improve their own peer leadership programs.

The case studies, readily available on the website, identify best-practice models for the design and delivery of peer/student leadership programs.

The website and case studies offer a focus and mechanism to strengthen and link existing national networks of leadership program practitioners (communities of practice).

The website, case studies and publications contribute to the development of international scholarship in peer leadership and will inform the further development of an international peer leadership survey tool.
Summary
I consider the project to be successful. It was ambitious and innovative but it has achieved, and in some cases surpassed, the aims outlined in the initial proposal. While all members of the team deserve recognition I think the project leader, Jane Skalicky and project manager, Sarah Stewart, deserve special commendation for their contribution to the success of the project.

Professor Gail Dennett
Independent external evaluator
November 2016

References


