

Review of the Research Skill Development (RSD) implementation and future direction

REPORT

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Independent external review at the University of the South Pacific (USP)

Emeritus Professor Denise Chalmers

Dr Lee Partridge

www.heedconsulting.com.au

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List of abbreviations

CLPD	Centre for Learning and Professional Development
CoP	Community of Practice
DVC (LTSS)	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching and Student Services)
DVC (RII)	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research Innovation and International)
I-MELT	Models of Engaged Learning and Teaching
L&T	Learning and Teaching
OLT	Australian Government Office of Learning and Teaching
PPRS	Pacific Peoples' Research Symposium
PQO	Planning and Quality Office
PVC	Pro Vice Chancellor
RSD	Research Skills Development
STAR	Strategic Total Academic Review
UNSW	University of New South Wales
USP	University of the South Pacific
WASC	Western Association of Schools and Colleges
WSCUC	WASC Senior College and University Commission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This review examines and reports on the implementation, activities and outputs of the Research Skills Development (RSD) project at the University of the South Pacific for the period 2012-2018. It considers the regional, national and institutional contexts and demands that have impacted on the project.

The Research Skills Development (RSD) project has been operational for six years (2012-2018). Its genesis was in the Strategic Total Academic Review (STAR) initiative and was proposed by Working Group 5 as an ambitious university-wide project to develop students' research literacy and skills across the curriculum. To date, it has been implemented in over 140 courses offered primarily in level one and two courses of the undergraduate programme and in some level 4 post-graduate research courses. The RSD project has been located under the portfolio of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (RII) and based in the Research Office, managed by the RSD project coordinator and supported by Research Office staff.

In the six years, there have been over 700 registrations in high quality training workshops and fora on the RSD implementation. The engagement of staff and university leaders has been systematic and focused, building an impressive community of practice across the different campuses and involving academic and professional staff in different roles and levels of appointment.

This report identifies many commendable aspects of the project and has made a number of recommendations to extend and embed the achievements that have been made to date. The specific commendations and recommendations are made throughout the report. The overall recommendations related to the Terms of Reference of this review are provided in the Conclusion.

The Consultants acknowledge the positive engagement of the RSD team and Research Office in the review process, its timely provision of documents, organisation and facilitation of the on-site visit and access to additional supporting evidence and documentation. The Consultants were particularly appreciative of the collegiality and hospitality extended to them by the University and the openness in which all stakeholders shared their experiences and future plans regarding the Research Skills Development project.

The HEED Consultants offer the following commendations and recommendation. The specific details and reasoning for each has been explained in the body of the report.

Commendations

Commendation 1

The USP leadership is commended for demonstrating the characteristics of effective leadership and management of the RSD project over an extended period. USP's implementation of the RSD project has demonstrated that it has established, extended and sustained leadership at different levels throughout the university.

Commendation 2

The RSD project has been implemented and supported in a context that has taken advantage of USP's readiness for change. In particular, USP has signalled its valuing of educational quality, utilised and engaged in scholarship of teaching and learning, and developed educational capability, skills and knowledge.

Commendation 3

The work undertaken by the Teaching Assistants in the UU204 Pacific Worlds' teaching team to apply a Pacific metaphor of weaving to the RSD Framework is commended. It has received international attention and provides an opportunity to contribute a Pacific adaptation to the international RSD community of practice. The support by USP for this team to attend the I-MELT conference in Adelaide in 2017 and present their work is commended. While the work of this team is in early stages and is reflective of Fijian language and metaphor, it provides an illustration of a Pacific contextualisation.

Commendation 4

USP is commended for the provision of resources (funding, expertise, human development and time) over an extended period to develop students' research skills through the RSD project.

Commendation 5

The RSD team is commended for its commitment to quality assurance and accountability. This has been achieved with thorough planning and purposeful identification of the courses for development, strategies for engaging the coordinators and provision of training and systems to systematically monitor, document and report on progress. The engagement of external reviewers is further evidence of the team's commitment to quality assurance and accountability.

Commendation 6

The RSD team is commended for the systematic strategy to embed and expand the range of courses across the disciplines and levels of study. Further, as the project progressed, the RSD team and university leadership have acknowledged the need for a programme approach to the RSD initiative and made some progress towards building RSD into programs.

Commendation 7

The RDS team is commended for the extent of its training, with over 700 registrations (not individuals) participating and attending in RSD workshops and activities (2012-2018).

Commendation 8

The RSD team is commended for ensuring that USP has a broader engagement beyond USP through the international RSD community of practice with its Pacific People's Research Skills Symposiums, attendance and participation in the I-MELT conference in Adelaide in 2017, and ongoing communication and engagement with USP and international colleagues to investigate and communicate their practice.

Commendation 9

The consultants commend the work of the USP post-graduate outcomes committee and endorse the integration of aspects of the RSD Framework into the post-graduate outcomes framework. The consultants do not believe it is necessary to retain a separate or named RSD Framework if the development and integration of research skills is explicit and developmental in the post-graduate outcomes framework but recognise that there may be good reasons to continue to maintain a separation to ensure a focus on research skill development.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to assist USP to build upon on the RSD project's achievements:

Recommendation 1

It is recommended that the future development of the RSD initiative involve dedicated professional development for teaching and learning academics to fully support the effective use of the RSD into the curriculum. This should include a focus on programmes with clear constructive alignment to ensure teaching practices and activities align with the intent of the RSD framework in the development of students' research skills.

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that the RSD team works closely with educational specialists with expertise in assessment design to develop sophisticated assessment tasks that better align to the RSD Framework. This will allow for accurate documentation of the levels of skills attained and support the University as it works to meet the ongoing registration requirements of the WCSUC accreditation (2018) to develop assessment practices.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that the RSD team develop indicators which consider impact, beyond the implementation stage, specifically evidence of student learning attainment. Indicators might include teacher/coordinator perceptions of student skills development, evidence of sophisticated assessment tasks and associated rubrics, as well as grade distribution and examples of student work that demonstrate levels of attainment of the targeted research skills.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that the RSD team work with Deans and Heads of Schools and the Curriculum consultant (in Office of DVC(LTSS)) to identify specific programmes and courses within the programme in which the RSD Framework will be utilised. The identified courses in each programme should include the USP Core UU courses, and a limited number of undergraduate courses at each level of the programme, from levels 1-3. The level 3 disciplinary courses provide an opportunity to utilise the full RSD Framework to inform the assessment and attainment of many of the programme level graduate outcomes. The attainment of research skills and graduate outcomes should be mapped across programs.

Recommendation 5

It is recommended that the reporting of RDS implementation is changed from courses to programmes and their targeted courses. This will highlight the programmes that have engaged in a programmatic approach and provide Case study examples for other programmes.

Recommendation 6

It is recommended that the extent to which the RSD Framework has contributed to curriculum reshaping in courses and programmes be investigated and documented to further promote the value of the RSD project and as an indicator of impact.

Recommendation 7

It is recommended that a faculty, school, programme, organisational unit or interested group be invited to lead the Community of Practice meetings on topics of their own choosing, to encourage wider engagement within the CoP and encourage new participants to attend.

Recommendation 8

It is recommended that the RSD team reports on the 2017 Symposium actions that have been progressed and /or implemented and the proposed outcomes and achievements identified in the 2018 Symposium. This will contribute to the RSD projects' communication and dissemination outcomes and promote the work of the coordinators and professional staff who have engaged developing students' research skills.

Recommendation 9

It is recommended that undergraduate students are explicitly informed how the RSD Framework relates to the development and level of achievement of a number of their graduate outcomes at each level of their programme and that they are encouraged to self-assess their skill development and seek opportunities to advance their skills throughout their enrolment at USP.

Recommendation 10

It is recommended that all postgraduate students are introduced to the RSD Framework/ postgraduate outcomes as part of their orientation and that they be encouraged to actively seek opportunities to develop the six Facets of Inquiry and high levels of Autonomy by seeking feedback from their teachers and supervisors as well as undertaking personal reflection and review. The RSD Framework offers an excellent tool for students to submit as part of their

development of self-awareness and assessment on major pieces of research in their post-graduate courses, as well as at the end of their programme of study to inform their ongoing personal development after graduation.

Recommendation 11

The consultants recommend the USP undergraduate outcomes framework be reviewed following the finalisation of the post-graduate outcomes to highlight the complementarity and developmental intent of the USP outcomes statements from undergraduate to postgraduate, and to similarly explicitly demonstrate how the RSD Framework allows for the development and demonstration of the specific research skills.

Recommendation 12

It is recommended that the RSD Framework be adapted and badged to reflect the USP terminology and context, while not losing the overall utility of a shared USP understanding of the RSD Framework. This will contribute to a greater sense of ownership by the USP community, as well as providing an opportunity to contribute a USP example to the wider international community of its whole of institution adaptation of the RSD Framework.

Recommendation 13

It is recommended that the RSD team and the Curriculum/Assessment consultant collaborate to identify where they can share involvement and contributions to the Curriculum Review and Development Plan, and the integration of the RSD/Graduate outcomes

Recommendation 14

It is recommended that the RSD coordinator, RSD faculty-based leaders and the Curriculum/Assessment consultant work together in programme development of Curriculum outcomes, designing effective and varied assessment and rubrics. A planned integration of their work and the personnel to support all aspect of teaching and learning, that includes explicitly research skill development, should take place over a 6-12-month period to ensure momentum is not lost for both projects, and that resources and capability are developed.

BACKGROUND

HEED Consulting was contracted by the University of the South Pacific to carry out an independent review of the Research Skills Development (RSD) project which was first initiated in 2012 to achieve the systematic development of research skills and literacy of USP students.

Overview of the RSD project

During the University of the South Pacific's celebration of its 40th anniversary in 2008, it was challenged by their national leaders to develop the research skills and capacity of the Pacific nations. In response to this challenge, USP committed to undertake a major curriculum renewal designed to lift the research capacity of the region and ensure that the University was purposefully enhancing the research skills of students as well as engaging in problem solving research. In 2010 the Strategic Total Academic Review (STAR) initiative was established to transform USP's learning and teaching. Under the STAR initiative, ten Working Groups were established to consider international trends and best practice and advise on directions for USP to enable it to achieve a transformation of its learning and teaching practice and curriculum.

The Research Skills Development (RSD) project was an outcome of the STAR Working Group 5 recommendation to implement the Research Skills Development Framework, developed at the Centre for Learning and Professional Development (CLPD) at University of Adelaide. This institutional-wide initiative was recommended to systemically develop and engage USP students to develop their capacity and skills to understand and engage in research throughout their study at USP. The RSD project proposal was approved by the Senior Executive team with implementation commencing in 2012. Regular reports on the RSD project and its implementation have been made to the senior leadership and Senate.

A review of the STAR initiative (including the RSD project) was carried out by Emeritus Professor Geoff Scott (Report dated 2014) for the period of mid-2010 to mid-2013 against its initial conception, plan and timelines in the context of international trends in learning and teaching. The next key steps were also identified to ensure its successful and sustainable implementation. The Scott review was intended to support the University to take stock of and appraise its learning and teaching (L&T) approach and to assess its progress towards achieving its key strategic objective: 'Excellence in Learning and Knowledge Creation'.

This current RSD evaluation considers the RSD project in the context of the original STAR initiative and the recommendations by Professor Scott in his STAR initiative review. The extent to which the initiative and subsequent recommendations have been successfully fulfilled through to mid-2018 and its future sustainability are explored. (See Appendix 2 for an extract from the 2014 Scott review report related to Achievements and Recommendations for Working Group 5).

RSD project management 2012-2018

The RSD project has been based in the Research Office and managed by a RSD project coordinator from 2012-2018. The RSD project coordinator to 2016 was Ms Heenai Lal, now in the

Planning and Quality Office (PQO). In mid-2017, Ms Shaiza Janif was appointed as the RSD project coordinator.

The decision to locate the RSD project in the Research Office was based in part on the leadership of the Working Group 5 by Dr Jito Vanualailai and his position as Director of Research. The support by the former Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research International Innovation), Prof John Bythell and the current Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research International Innovation), Prof Derrick Armstrong and the overarching endorsement from the Vice Chancellor, Prof Rajesh Chandra demonstrates the commitment of the University to establish a visible and high-profile initiative to develop USP students' research skills.

At various times throughout the project's implementation, the relocation of the project under the portfolio of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Learning, Teaching, Student Services) has been considered and discussed with the relevant parties. The decision to continue the management of RSD project in the Research Office was made to ensure its continuity and status as an ongoing University priority.

METHODS

The objective of the review was to evaluate the planned implementation of the RSD Framework activities and outputs to date, and as far as possible establish the initial project impact, and future sustainability.

The agreed Terms of Reference for the Review were to:

1. Provide recommendations and way forward for informing future RSD implementation strategy
2. Analyse and report on the aspects of RSD implementation that:
 - a. work well and should continue;
 - b. did not work well but should be strengthened;
 - c. did not work well and should be discontinued.
3. Identify lessons learnt in project implementation
4. Identify the specific challenges that need to be addressed in the near future.

Supplementary questions include:

1. Are the institutional coordination mechanisms and arrangements adequate, effective and timely to coordinate project activities?
2. Has the establishment of baseline information been appropriate and sufficient?
3. Is the project approach to RSD implementation effective?
4. Are the stakeholders adequately involved in the development and implementation of the

project activities?

5. Will the project facilitate long-term sustainability after the completion of project activities?

The review formally commenced on the 6 July and concluded on 24th September.

The methods employed for the review were proposed by the Consultants and agreed following feedback and discussion with the USP commissioning team. The eleven activities initially proposed and those undertaken are detailed in Appendix 1.

The Consultants received access to the extensive documentation collected throughout the RSD project dating from 2012-2018, including STAR and RSD reports, evaluation reports, assessment tasks and documents. Electronic access to documents was provided by the Ms Shaiza Janif, Research Skills Development Coordinator, Research Office prior to the visit.

The Consultants visited the University of the South Pacific's Laucala Campus in Suva from Monday, 16th – Friday 20 July, 2018. Interviews were conducted during this time with senior university leaders, students, teachers, coordinators, teaching assistants, staff from service units including the library, and members of the RSD team (See Appendix 3 for the schedule of interviews).

An Interim Report was submitted on the 14 August for comment and feedback. A number of questions were posed in the report for consideration by the RSD team.

One Consultant returned to USP to attend the RSD Workshop and Pacific People's Research Symposium (17-19 August), talk to participants, seek feedback on the interim report and present observations and preliminary conclusions to the DVC(LTSS) and DVC(RII) and members of the RSD team.

REVIEW OUTCOMES

RSD Project Implementation

Conditions for successful implementation

This section of the report reviews the implementation of the RSD project against empirically identified (Southwell et al, 2005) key conditions for success of national and institutional educational projects in higher education.

According to Southwell et al, (2005) the five key conditions identified for successful implementation, embedding and up-scaling of a project across an institution are:

1. Effective multi-level leadership and management
2. Climate of readiness for change
3. Availability of resources

4. Comprehensive systems in institutions
5. Funding design that demands, encourages and supports risk-taking, change and dissemination.

The extent to which these five conditions are evident in the RSD project and its implementation over the six years are examined in this section of the review.

Effective multi-level leadership and management

Essential leadership and management roles have been identified as necessary for the successful implementation and dissemination of innovative practices and processes (Southwell et al, 2005, p 52). These include Sponsors, Enthusiasts, Second generation innovators and Enablers. This review found evidence of such leadership and management roles in the implementation of the RSD project.

Sponsors are leaders who act as patrons of the project. Sponsors in the RSD project include the Vice Chancellor, Prof Rajesh Chandra, with the senior leadership team that have provided high level support to establish a visible and high-profile initiative to develop USP students' research skills. The sponsorship by the former Deputy Vice Chancellor (RII), Prof John Bythell and the current Deputy Vice Chancellor (RII), Prof Derrick Armstrong demonstrates the high-level commitment to the success of the project to establish a visible and high-profile initiative to develop USP students' research skills by leaders at different levels.

Enthusiasts are leaders who have a passion for the innovation. These roles are identified within the Research Office. Dr Jito Vanualailai, Director of Research, has provided oversight of the RSD project management and implementation from its inception which has contributed to the consistent and sustained development, evolution and documentation of the project. Similarly, Dr John Willison, University of Adelaide, as the external consultant of the project who originally developed the RSD Framework has served a critical role as enthusiast in the project.

Second generation innovators are leaders who take the first wave of innovation and develop it into new and different contexts. The second-generation innovation occurred when Working Party 5 took the RSD Framework which had previously only been implemented in courses and some faculties to an ambitious whole of institution implementation. Subsequently, the RSD project develop in several planned stages, first involving the Core UU courses, then expanding wider into 1st year courses, 2nd year courses and postgraduate courses. The targeted audience of engagement has also widened from the initial focus on coordinators, to teaching assistants, librarians, student learning advisors and Centre for Flexible Learning staff. As the project has expanded its reach, the project has had to adapt and change to meet the needs of the various disciplines, locations and modes of delivery.

A further example of second-generation innovation is evident in the work undertaken by the Teaching Assistants in the UU204 Pacific Worlds' teaching team to apply a Pacific metaphor of weaving to the RSD Framework thereby contextualising and enhancing meaning for students.

Enablers are those who provide the practical support and action to provide the day-to-day continuity of the project. The enabler roles have been undertaken by the RSD co-ordinators, Ms Heena Lal (2012-2016) and Ms Shaiza Janif (2017-2018) who have provided consistent leadership

over the project management, implementation and reporting. The administrative staff from the Research Office, have provided ongoing support for the administration and management of the RSD project, and developed resources and training for the USP staff.

Further, Southwell et al (2005) identify the characteristics of effective leadership for project implementation which include:

- Setting clear goals
- Development of a shared vision
- Stability and consistency of the leadership at different levels
- A high level of commitment to the success of the project by leaders at different levels

Each of the four characteristics are evident in the RSD project's implementation with multi-level leadership at the University of the South Pacific.

The RSD Framework had not previously been implemented as an institution-wide initiative, making the undertaking by USP a ground-breaking initiative. STAR Working Group 5 proposed an approach to implementation which was approved by the USP senior management team. The purpose and goals of the project have been constant over the duration of the project and have been consistently communicated within the RSD team and embedded in the RSD materials and workshop and training program. The USP staff, academic and professional, who were interviewed for this review communicated a shared understanding of the purpose and intent of the RSD project.

A consistent approach was maintained through the ongoing engagement of Dr John Willison, University of Adelaide, in the initial preparation and presentation of the workshops and development of the extensive resources. Dr Willison and the RSD team have systematically built USP's leadership capacity through the devolution of the facilitation of the training workshops to USP colleagues. This has provided continuity of the goals of the initial project through maintaining the principles of the RSD Framework, and the evolution and ownership of the project to USP.

High level commitment has been demonstrated through the significant ongoing funding to introduce, embed and project manage the development of research skills for all students across the undergraduate and postgraduate programs of study. Consistent and overarching support has been provided by the Vice Chancellor. Direct support has been provided by the Office of the DVC(RII). From 2010, the Director of Research, A/P Jito Vanualailai, who chaired Working Group 5, has provided direct oversight of the RSD project in the Research Office. The RSD co-ordinators have provided consistent leadership over the project management, implementation and reporting. The administrative staff from the Research Office, have provided ongoing support for the administration and management of the RSD project.

Ongoing leadership from the Faculty level has been provided by original members of the Working Group 5 (e.g. Yoko Kanemasu) and endorsement of the Deans and Associate Deans (Learning & Teaching) in promoting the use of the RSD Framework in courses in their faculties over the six-year period of the project implementation.

Course coordinators have provided stable and consistent leadership at the course level through their engagement with the RSD project, particularly the coordinators of the core courses ((UU104, UU100, UU204, UU200), the Foundation courses, PACE-SD and more recently, the postgraduate research courses. In addition, a number of discipline course coordinators have engaged in the RSD project activities for a sustained period of time.

Staff in the library have engaged in the RSD through the provision of a subset of the RSD research skills of information and inquiry skills training provided to undergraduate and postgraduate students across all faculties. The opportunity for USP librarians to undertake a visit to the Monash University library to observe first-hand the Monash programme of research skills development has contributed to their deeper understanding of the potential to implement changes into the USP library program. Further, Teaching Assistants, Student Learning Advisors and staff from the Centre for Flexible Learning have been encouraged and increasingly involved in the RSD training and Community of Practice, deepening the leadership capacity throughout different levels of the University.

Commendation 1

The USP leadership is commended for exhibiting the characteristics of effective leadership and management of the RSD project over an extended period. USP's implementation of the RSD project has demonstrated that it has established, extended and sustained leadership at different levels throughout the university.

Commendation 2

The work undertaken by the Teaching Assistants in the UU204 Pacific Worlds' teaching team to apply a Pacific metaphor of weaving to the RSD Framework is commended. It has received international attention and provides an opportunity to contribute a Pacific adaptation to the international RSD community of practice. The support by USP for this team to attend the I-MELT conference in Adelaide in 2017 and present their work is commended. While the work of this team is in early stages and is reflective of Fijian language and metaphor, it provides an illustration of a Pacific contextualisation.

Climate of readiness for change

Southwell et al (2005) note the importance of a climate of readiness for change as being a crucial condition in the success of implementing a learning and teaching innovation. Three aspects of this condition that were especially evident in the RSD project were:

- Public valuing of educational quality
- Active engagement in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)
- Capability in terms of necessary skills, disposition and knowledge

Public valuing of educational quality is demonstrated in the RSD project which reflects USP's commitment to quality education. It joins other initiatives of the university including an annual Teaching and Learning Forum, Teaching Awards, funded educational innovation grants such as

the RSD project, the Pacific People's Research Symposium and engaging in the WSCUC accreditation process. Supporting staff to attend educational conferences and forums and participate in professional development programs to enhance teaching contributes further evidence of valuing educational quality.

Engagement in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is fundamental to the creation of a climate of readiness for change. The implementation of the RSD project displayed three essential areas of engagement in SoTL. The first is the extent that the innovation being introduced was based on sound evidence and research. The second is that the implementation was carried out utilising effective evidence-based project management and development practices. The third was a contribution back into the SoTL community and extending the evidence-base through presentations and publications.

The first two aspects are evident in the initial work carried out by STAR Working Party 5 related to the RSD Framework and its implementation in Monash and Adelaide Universities. This informed the selection and implementation strategy of the RSD project. The third aspect has been facilitated by the project's extended implementation. USP's academic and professional staff have had opportunities to evaluate and report on their experiences of implementing the RSD Framework into their courses in various local and international fora.

The ongoing involvement of Dr John Willison and the extended support of the University for the RSD project has enabled the project team to establish the Pacific People's Research Symposium (2017, 2018) and Community of Practice to further facilitate the evaluation and dissemination of the RSD implementation across the wider USP and academic community. For example, the 2018 Symposium was attended by participants from USP, other Fijian institutions, and internationally from New Zealand and Australia. The RSD implementation has been reported internationally through participation at the 2017 I-MELT conference in Adelaide. Additionally, the abstracts and presentations have been made available from the RSD website. The website was accessed by a US university which identified USP as an innovator in the university-wide implementation of the RSD Framework and has used the USP implementation process to inform its own strategy.

Necessary skills, disposition and knowledge were the focus of the workshops delivered by Dr John Willison during the implementation phase. The training aimed to provide key stakeholders with the disposition (climate for change), the educational knowledge including a sound theoretical and practice-based understanding of learning, teaching, curriculum and assessment (Scholarship of Teaching and Learning) and its contextualisation in disciplines and the university's physical and cultural context, and the skills to implement research-focused learning through the introduction of related assessment and rubrics.

While the project management of the project has been very thorough, the RSD project team based in the Research Office has largely relied on the external consultant, Dr John Willison, and to a lesser extent, the faculty leaders for educational knowledge. This has resulted in a lack of overall depth in educational knowledge and practice related to the RSD initiative. It is likely that this may have contributed to an absence in progression from the initial development of assessment items and marking rubrics into the teaching and learning practices and activities to develop the research skills.

Commendation 3

The RSD project has been implemented and supported in a context that has taken advantage of USP's readiness for change, evidenced by the STAR initiative and the Working party 5's recommendation to introduce the RSD Framework. In particular, USP has signalled its valuing of educational quality, utilised and engaged in scholarship of teaching and learning, and developed educational capability, skills and knowledge.

Recommendation 1

It is recommended that the future development of the RSD initiative involve dedicated professional development for teaching and learning academics to fully support the effective use of the RSD into the curriculum. This should include a focus on programmes with clear constructive alignment to ensure teaching practices and activities align with the intent of the RSD framework in the development of students' research skills.

Availability of resources

Successful innovations require ongoing access to adequate human, financial and time resources and infrastructure within their institution and from external sources (Southwell et al, 2005, p55). The RSD project had ongoing access to funding provided over a six-year period. While funding alone does not guarantee success, it can play a significant role in facilitating change and focusing institutional attention on what is important to that institution. When funding is provided over time, it allows for different phases of a project to be implemented and extended. Time is particularly important where cultural and attitudinal change is required. The funding enabled the establishment of ongoing project management, the engagement of external educational expertise through the involvement of Dr John Willison, who in turn brought additional funding and external expertise to the table through the Australian Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT) grant. The funding was used to provide significant opportunities for staff development and training for the USP academic and professional staff.

Commendation 4

USP is commended the provision of resources (funding, expertise, human development and time) over an extended period of time to support the RSD project.

Comprehensive systems in institutions

Systems include communication and reporting, and quality assurance. Communication and reporting include consultation, networking and clear communication systems within the project team and across the institution to different communities and directed at different levels. Communication systems related to the RSD project have been developed as the project has been implemented. These include the website with resources developed by the RSD team for the coordinators, the lists of courses that have participated with examples of the assessment tasks and rubrics. Reports on the progress of the project and its range of activities were made to Senate. Regular meetings were held with Associate Deans Learning and Teaching, a Community

of Practice with regular monthly meetings was established, notices regarding the workshops and symposium were communicated through faculty and university distribution networks.

Quality assurance has been largely focused around reporting and documenting the implementation of the RSD project such as the number of courses implementing the RSD Framework into the assessment tasks. Quality assurance processes were implemented to review the rubrics and monitoring was carried out on the utilisation of the rubric in the course outline and its use during the semester. It was noted by Scott in his STAR review report (2004) that the next key step for the RSD project was the validation of the learning outcomes, the development of valid assessment tasks and further development work on designing specific rubrics (as distinct to generic rubrics) for the assessment tasks that provided for the allocation of different grades within them.

The issue on the quality and range of assessment tasks and their accompanying rubrics was noted as needing attention by the WSCUC registration process (2018). This review, together with the WSCUC report identify the priority of identifying and verifying the attainment of the learning and graduate outcomes. The current RSD approach has been to focus on implementation (inclusion of assessments and associated rubrics) but not on impact or evidence of learning.

The RSD team do not have educational expertise in assessment design and so it is perhaps unreasonable to expect them to have had a significant role in the design of assessments that contribute to the development of sophisticated learning outcomes. It is an area that the RSD Framework should be a valuable contributor, if guided and supported by specialist educators with assessment design expertise.

Commendation 5

The RSD team is commended for its commitment to quality assurance and accountability. This has been achieved with thorough planning and purposeful identification of the courses for development, strategies for engaging the coordinators and provision of training and systems to systematically monitor, document and report on progress. The engagement of external reviewers is further evidence of the team's commitment to quality assurance and accountability.

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that the RSD team works closely with educational specialists with expertise in assessment design to develop sophisticated assessment tasks that better align to the RSD Framework. This will allow for accurate documentation of the levels of skills attained and support the University as it works to meet the ongoing registration requirements of the WCSUC accreditation (2018) to develop assessment practices.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that the RSD team develop indicators which consider impact, beyond the implementation stage, specifically evidence of student learning attainment. Indicators might include teacher/coordinator perceptions of student skills development, evidence of sophisticated assessment tasks and associated rubrics, as well as grade distribution and examples of student work that demonstrate levels of attainment of the targeted research skills.

Funding design that demands, encourages and supports risk-taking, change and dissemination.

Supported by ongoing funding over a number of years, the RSD project has been able to plan for a multi-stage implementation across the faculties and different campuses. This has allowed for the targeted courses to be expanded beyond the core and first year courses into second year courses and postgraduate courses. This has provided the faculties and the coordinators with evidence of the University's stated priority to develop students' research skills. It has also provided the team the opportunity to trial new strategies of offering workshops, facilitated by USP facilitators, in a supported environment and where ideas such as offering a symposium and establishing a Community of Practice can be trialled.

NOTE: No auditing or review of the RSD funding and its programme of spending has been undertaken in this review as it not in the terms of reference. It is assumed that the university's financial systems have been applied and followed.

Implementation processes

Selection of Courses

The implementation strategy involved the clear identification of targeted courses in which to strategically embed the RDS framework. The implementation of the RSD Framework was initiated in Level 1 undergraduate core courses in 2012 and extended into level 2 core courses in 2013 (UU100, UU114, UU201, UU204). This was followed with targeting Level 1 and then Level 2 discipline-based courses from 2014-16. Throughout this period, the core post-graduate research methodology courses were specifically targeted (DG 100, DG101and SC400), with a number of other courses electing to be involved in the RSD implementation including some Foundation, and a limited number of Level 3 and Post graduate courses.

Commendation 6

The RSD team is commended for the systematic strategy to embed and expand the range of courses across the disciplines and levels of study. Further, as the project progressed, the RSD team and university leadership have acknowledged the need for a programme approach to the RSD initiative and made some progress towards building RSD into programs.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that the RSD team work with Deans and Heads of Schools and the Curriculum consultant (in Office of DVC(LTSS) to identify specific programmes and courses within the programme in which the RSD Framework will be utilised. The identified courses in each programme should include the USP Core UU courses, and a limited number of undergraduate courses at each level of the programme, from levels 1-3. The level 3 disciplinary courses provide an opportunity to utilise the full RSD Framework to inform the assessment and attainment of many of the programme level graduate outcomes. The attainment of research skills and graduate outcomes should be mapped across programs.

Recommendation 5

It is recommended that the reporting of RDS implementation is changed from courses to programmes and their targeted courses. This will highlight the programmes that have engaged in a programmatic approach and provide Case study examples for other programmes.

The training

The RSD team has applied a consistent approach to the training and skills development of the course coordinators which has primarily involved the development of assessment tasks and the use of assessment rubrics. Implementation has involved the course coordinators participating in workshops that introduced the RSD Framework and then focused on the selection of one (or more) assessment tasks designed to develop and then assess students' attainment of the targeted research skills through the use of a rubric or assessment marking criteria that indicates the level of achievement of the intended skills.

The number of course coordinators and teachers attending the workshops over the period of implementation is impressive. The RSD team is commended for engaging with the teachers and professional support staff and organising the comprehensive number and range of training sessions. The targeted workshop participants have been expanded over time, from predominantly course coordinators, to include library staff, teaching assistants, student learning staff (SLS) and students. The Course coordinators have been encouraged to include the teaching assistants in the training workshop and development of the assessment rubrics. This expansion of workshop participants is commended as it recognises the need for all of those engaged in supporting the students' learning and skills development to understand the Framework and how it is intended to be used in the courses to develop student's research skills.

The training has been carefully designed and facilitated by Dr John Willison and colleagues, supported by detailed handbooks that provide the rationale of the framework and a number of exemplars. Over time, the training facilitation has been taken increasingly by experienced faculty members and the RSD team, but with ongoing support provided by Dr Willison. In recognition that many teachers and professional staff are located regionally and in other nations, online RSD training modules and resources have been developed and provided on the RSD website.

The training programme has been adjusted over time in response to feedback from the participants and has been responsive to the needs of the disciplines. It has also adapted to support and encourage the ownership of the training programme by USP facilitators, thereby promoting its ongoing sustainability. From 2015, the workshops have largely been facilitated by USP staff, with support and resources provided by Dr John Willison, the RSD coordinator and the Research Office.

The Assessment Tasks and Rubrics

The decision was made to focus on the implementation of the RSD Framework through:

- Developing diagnostic assessment

-
- Developing RSD marking rubrics for assignment and/or project assessment, and
 - Curriculum reshaping

The majority of the RSD training and support activity has been on the first two of these. I.e. Developing diagnostic assessment and Developing RSD marking rubrics for assignment and/or project assessment, with the assumption that the third would follow.

The recording, evaluation and reporting for implementation has been on workshop attendance, identifying assessment tasks that are intended to promote and then assess the level of attainment of the identified/intended research skills and design a marking rubric that encapsulates the RSD. Over 140 courses have been identified as being engaged in the first two of these activities.

The extent that there has been curriculum reshaping appears to be largely anecdotal and unreported. The presentations at the PPRS Symposium and institutional CoP may provide some examples of where this has taken place. The RSD team may consider where they might collect examples of curriculum reshaping and how they might report this. For example, the Symposium presentations from 2013, 2017 and 2018 may provide a useful starting point to identify these. Further examples may be found in academics reporting their practice in disciplinary conference presentations. The examples sourced could be used in the workshops, or developed into online resources, case studies, or expanded into a publication within USP or submitted as journal articles to promote the reshaping of curriculum. Through the examination of examples such as these, evidence of curriculum reshaping may be collected and collated for reporting on the extent that this has been achieved.

Recommendation 6

It is recommended that the extent to which the RSD Framework has contributed to curriculum reshaping in courses and programmes be investigated and documented to further promote the value of the RSD project and as an indicator of impact.

Community of Practice

In addition to the training workshops, a Community of Practice (CoP) was established at the end of 2015 where academics who have implemented the RSD Framework in their courses, professional staff and other interested in supporting or utilising the framework are invited to meet monthly on an informal basis to discuss their practices and issues. These meetings are recorded, and a report prepared detailing issues and further actions to be taken. These meetings typically attract up to 30 participants and provide an informal conversation on RSD practices, contributing to the ongoing sustainability of the RSD by encouraging faculty and professional staff to continue with and extend their use of the framework in their own practice and the practice of their colleagues.

There is the opportunity to extend the discussions and the ownership of the CoP from assessment to the teaching and learning strategies and practices utilised by the teachers and

professional staff to explicitly teach and develop the students' research skills in on-line, blended and face-to-face teaching.

Recommendation 7

It is recommended that a faculty, school, programme, organisational unit or interested group be invited to lead the Community of Practice meetings on topics of their own choosing, to encourage wider engagement within the CoP and encourage new participants to attend.

Monitoring of the RSD Project implementation

Full implementation of RSD has been determined to have taken place when:

- course coordinators (and may include teaching assistants) attended the training session
- a marking rubric was designed for one (or more) assessment in the course
- the marking rubric was included into the course for the targeted assessment(s)
- monitoring of the assessment task, including a review of the marking rubric following its introduction into the course was undertaken.

The extent that the implementation was determined by the RSD coordinator and a percentage assigned to each of the implementation steps above. For example, the attendance at the training workshop of the course-coordinators for the targeted courses to the end of 2015 was determined to be close to 100%. Diminishing percentages of implementation were determined for each of the subsequent steps, particularly when a number of disciplinary courses were assessed together.

As reported (May, 2018) 140 courses selected or course coordinator initiated for implementation of the RSD Framework, a total of 83 courses are identified as being fully implemented. For the remaining courses, the course coordinators from 45 courses have attended the RSD training workshop but have yet to design an assessment rubric. The remaining 12 courses are in the process of implementation. Some of these courses have been implementing the RSD Framework from 2013. They encompass all three levels of undergraduate courses and a number of 400 level post graduate courses.

From 2012-14, there had been limited engagement with programs with the focus of implementation on level 1 and level 2 courses. In 2015, with the focus on expanding into level 3 courses (Willison & Lal, September 2015), programs were identified as important to engage with the RSD Framework. This was further confirmed as an important direction for 2016 by the DVC(RII). However, despite the identification of this gap and stated intention, there appears to have been limited success in engaging level 3 courses and programs to date. While the ongoing reporting of implementation by courses and engagement with course coordinators may mask the engagement with programs, the need for greater engagement with the programs has continued to be raised in the interviews which suggests that limited progress has been made towards engaging in a programme approach.

Commendation 7

The RDS team is commended for the extent of its training, with over 700 registrations (not individuals) participating and attending in RSD workshops and activities (2012-2017).

Unanticipated outcomes of the RSD Project

Pacific Peoples' Research Skills Symposium

In the wake of the RSD implementation and the increased focus on research skill development the first Pacific Peoples' Research Skills Symposium was held in 2013 with approximately 40 participants.

The second Symposium was held in 2017 and was attended by 55 participants from USP and the Pacific region. The two-day symposium programme was comprised of presentations and three Talanoa sessions, facilitated by Dr John Willison. The responses were collated and reported with a number of actions identified. These were:

- 1. Address the visible gap of middle management [HoS, Associate Deans, Deans] in the RSD implementation initiative through the revision of KPIs of the above-mentioned positions for the next Strategic Plan period.*
- 2. Facilitate RSD workshops and mentoring meetings for academic staff at least twice a semester to enable greater communication and sharing of best practices.*
- 3. Re-vamp the RSD Moodle page and manage online forum for RSD users*
- 4. Commence work on an RSD orientation package for new academic staff*
- 5. Incorporate RSD training for academic staff in the Staff Development Plan*
- 6. Facilitate communication across different levels on the undergraduate programme to enable a more fluent and progressive implementation of RSD in the courses across the programme.*
- 7. Consolidate work on the curriculum mapping to be undertaken for WSUSC Accreditation with RSD implementation.*

(Source: Janif, S. 2017, PPRSD Symposium Report)

One presentation was selected to be included in the International conference on Models of Engaged Learning and Teaching (I-MELT) conference in Adelaide, December 2017. It was attended by the presenters and some RSD team members, providing a valuable opportunity to engage in the international discourse on RSD and engaged learning.

A third PPRS Symposium took place at USP, 28—29 August 2018, supported by funding from the USP 50th Anniversary committee. A Pre-symposium workshop was scheduled on the 27th August. The Symposium was well supported by the government of Fiji with an opening address by the Attorney-General and Minister of Education, Mr Aiyas Sayed-Khaiyum, welcomed by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (RII). Presentations by Professor Unaisi Walu Nabobo Baba from the National University of Fiji and Professor Geoff Crisp, PVC at the UNSW provided a regional and

international context to the Symposium. In addition to the presentations by USP and international participants, four Talanoa sessions were held to explore the future directions and applications for the RSD Framework.

Commendation 8

The RSD team is commended for ensuring that USP has a broader engagement beyond USP through the international RSD community of practice with its Pacific People's Research Skills Symposiums, attendance and participation in the I-MELT conference in Adelaide in 2017, and ongoing communication and engagement with USP and international colleagues to investigate and communicate their practice.

Recommendation 8

It is recommended that the RSD team reports on the 2017 Symposium actions that have been progressed and /or implemented and the proposed outcomes and achievements identified in the 2018 Symposium. This will contribute to the RSD projects' communication and dissemination outcomes and promote the work of the coordinators and professional staff who have engaged developing students' research skills.

Factors which impact the RSD project

Graduate Outcomes Framework and the RSD Framework

Under the STAR initiative the development of graduate outcomes and research skills were addressed by different working parties. As a consequence, the two have remained separate. This was identified as an issue in Scott's 2014 review of the STAR initiative and was raised a number of times throughout the on-site meetings, but it has remained unaddressed. While those familiar with both frameworks view them as complementary and consider there are no difficulties with the two-remaining separate, the overall consensus presented to the consultants was that the opportunity to bring these together into the one framework might be appropriate. This question was explored in some depth in a Talanoa session in the PPRS. While the majority of PPRS participants favoured the combining of the two frameworks, there were serious concerns about how it might be applied and interpreted in the future and particularly with the interpretation and application of levels of autonomy.

Therefore, while the mapping of the RSD Framework to the graduate outcomes demonstrate there is considerable overlap, offering the opportunity to enrich the graduate outcomes by making more explicit the research/inquiry skills being developed within them, it is considered that in the short-term, that the better course of action is to maintain the two frameworks as separate but that their complementarity be emphasised. However, consideration of how the two can be brought together should be investigated in the future.

Recommendation 9

It is recommended that undergraduate students are explicitly informed how the RSD Framework relates to the development and level of achievement of a number of their graduate outcomes at

each level of their programme and that they are encouraged to self-assess their skill development and seek opportunities to advance their skills throughout their enrolment at USP.

Recommendation 10

It is recommended that all postgraduate students are introduced to the RSD Framework/postgraduate outcomes as part of their orientation and that they be encouraged to actively seek opportunities to develop the six Facets of Inquiry and high levels of Autonomy by seeking feedback from their teachers and supervisors as well as undertaking personal reflection and review. The RSD Framework offers an excellent tool for students to submit as part of their development of self-awareness and assessment on major pieces of research in their post-graduate courses, as well as at the end of their programme of study to inform their ongoing personal development after graduation.

Recommendation 11

The consultants recommend the USP undergraduate outcomes framework be reviewed following the finalisation of the post-graduate outcomes to highlight the complementarity and developmental intent of the USP outcomes statements from undergraduate to postgraduate, and to similarly explicitly demonstrate how the RSD Framework allows for the development and demonstration of the specific research skills.

Recommendation 12

It is recommended that the RSD Framework be adapted and badged to reflect the USP terminology and context, while not losing the overall utility of a shared USP understanding of the RSD Framework. This will contribute to a greater sense of ownership by the USP community, as well as providing an opportunity to contribute a USP example to the wider international community of its whole of institution adaptation of the RSD Framework.

WSCUC Accreditation

The University, led by the DVC(LTSS) has been engaged in a process of accreditation through WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), commencing in 2014. University accreditation was granted by the WSCUC in July 2018 for a six-year period, with a mid-cycle review to assess progress towards seven recommendations to begin in mid-2021. One action and two recommendations are particularly relevant to this RSD review. These are:

Actions

- 5d. Development of postgraduate outcomes and demonstration of significant improvement in assessment practices across all programs.*

Recommendations

- 3. Significantly improve the assessment of student learning outcomes, including the use of direct evidence to assess student achievement of undergraduate programme learning outcomes and post-graduate outcomes. The results of the assessment of student learning outcomes along with pass rates and grades will measure student*

success. The university should demonstrate student achievement of the seven graduate outcomes across all undergraduate programs. (CFR 1.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6)

- 4. Demonstrate appropriate rigor in degree programs exemplified, for example, in the grading scale and complexity of assignments reflecting a progressively challenging curriculum. (CFR 2.1)*

The STAR initiative and the RSD project had contributed to the evidence of the university's systematic commitment to and engagement in developing the undergraduate curriculum and students' learning and research capacity. The RSD staff training, the development of assessment tasks and rubrics that were collected and reported over the course of the RSD project contributed to the University's evidence of achievement. However, as detailed in the WSCUC Visiting Team report (April 2018) and reflected in the formal WSUC notification of accreditation (July 2018), the need to improve assessment practices that identify direct evidence of students' achievement of the USP graduate outcomes requires action.

The University has established a committee to develop post-graduate outcomes in response to the first part of Action 5d. The membership of this committee has been drawn from across the Faculties and organisational units including the Research Office, Planning and Quality Office and Office of the DVC(LTSS). With several members of this committee having a deep engagement in the RSD project, there is the opportunity to integrate the principles and skills of the RSD Framework into the USP postgraduate outcomes. This would be a very positive outcome.

Commendation 9

The consultants commend the work of the USP post-graduate outcomes committee and endorse the integration of aspects of the RSD Framework into the post-graduate outcomes framework. The consultants do not believe it is necessary to retain a separate or named RSD Framework if the development and integration of research skills is explicit and developmental in the post-graduate outcomes framework but recognise that there may be good reasons to continue to maintain a separation to ensure a focus on research skill development.

Assessment, Curriculum mapping and the RSD project

There is the potential to bring the future of the RSD project and USP's commitment to implementing the WSCUC actions and recommendations together in assessment development work leading to an enhanced curriculum development plan. There is a clear imperative to improve assessment practices across all programs. To date, the RSD project has been based in the Office of Research, under the DVC(RII) while the WSCUC engagement, graduate outcomes, curriculum design and mapping have taken place within the Office of the DVC(LTSS), remaining quite independent from each other. The experience and expertise of the RSD team in conducting workshops, developing resources and reporting and documenting the assessment tasks and rubrics for the past six years, provides the opportunity for both Offices to pool resources and expertise to achieve the necessary outcomes of improved assessment practices and clear scaffolding of learning and skills for the students.

Recommendation 13

It is recommended that the RSD team and the Curriculum/Assessment consultant collaborate to identify where they can share involvement and contributions to the Curriculum Review and Development Plan, and the integration of the RSD/Graduate outcomes

This recommendation has significant implications that relate to the project management of the RSD project into the future.

Management of the RSD project: Past and future

USP was the first university to commit to introducing the RSD across a whole institution with ongoing and continuous support provided for six years. The project has been located within the office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (RII), managed by a dedicated RSD coordinator and supported by Research Office staff. This has been a significant contributor to the success of the project as it has provided the environment for sustained and high-quality project management and consistent leadership endorsement and support.

From the outset, the project was well-researched, and a project plan established. The focus on embedding the RSD Framework into the assessment of core courses and rolling it out to disciplinary courses across the level 1 and 2 courses was well considered and systematic. The extent of the project, impacting on the assessment of over 140 courses, with more than 700 participants attending the training and activities, has been impressive.

The training workshops were designed to be engaging and lead to changed assessment practice. The ongoing follow-up by the RSD team to review the assessment tasks and rubric design made it clear that changes in assessment practices were expected and being monitored. The regular reporting to Senate of the implementation undertaken ensured that the USP community and external stakeholders were reminded that the university was committed to developing its students, and through them, the region's research capacity.

The RSD project has actively engaged the various stakeholders with the university leadership demonstrating active support and engagement in the project. Examples include:

- The VC has continued to promote and support the project and providing funding
- The DVC(RII) has attended and introduced the workshops and forums and supported the ongoing project management in the Research Office.
- The Deans, Associate Deans (L&T) and School leaders have been supporters and contributors facilitating training, identifying courses for inclusion in the RSD project, in many cases into their own courses, and through encouraging and supporting colleagues to engage in the project.
- The academics and teachers have been engaged in the different workshops provided which have evolved over time to meet the needs of changing audiences.
- The Symposiums, ad hoc forums and Community of Practice meetings have provided further opportunities to engage a range of stakeholders from across and outside the

university in an ongoing and developmental basis.

However, until recently, the professional staff (e.g. librarian, Centre for Flexible learning staff, Office of DVC(LTSS) staff, student support staff and learning advisors), teaching assistants and students have had minimal or limited engagement with the RSD project. This gap in engaging the important stakeholders has been recognised and is being addressed through offering targeted workshops and information sessions.

The project team has consistently recorded and reported its activities and the extent of RSD implementation into courses. The data gathered includes

- attendance at workshops, fora, CoP etc.
- design of assessment tasks and their rubrics,
- implementation into courses
- student survey data
- Reports and summaries

Resources have been developed and made available on the RSD website including

- the workshop handbooks,
- RSD reports,
- online training materials
- presentation PowerPoints
- Symposium presentations and materials

It has been recognised that the RDS project largely sat outside of the mainstream learning and teaching activities in terms of the staff development programme for university teachers, the development and implementation of the graduate outcomes, the Curriculum Review and Development Plan and the WCSUS accreditation process.

Recommendation 14

It is recommended that the RSD coordinator, RSD faculty-based leaders and the Curriculum/Assessment consultant work together in programme development of Curriculum outcomes, designing effective and varied assessment and rubrics. A planned integration of their work and the personnel to support all aspect of teaching and learning, that includes explicitly research skill development, should take place over a 6-12-month period to ensure momentum is not lost for both projects, and that resources and capability are developed.

CONCLUSION

The Consultants' responses to the specific Terms of Reference are as follows:

Analysis of the aspects of RSD implementation

Throughout this review aspects of the implementation including management, training and recording of progress towards completion have been examined.

Aspects that worked well and should continue include successful engagement with a variety of stakeholders to promote and support the implementation of the RSD initiative. The transition to USP based trainers to facilitate the workshops is encouraged. The training provided resulted in the intended outcomes of establishing RSD aligned assessments and rubrics in a wide selection of courses largely being achieved. The development of the CoP and PRRS are encouraging and should be continued to broaden participation and engagement of the USP academic and professional community.

Aspects that did not work well but should be strengthened included the consistent adoption of meaningful RSD practice across all courses involved in the project. The consultants noted that some courses had been implementing RSD for several years but were yet to complete the process. Others appeared to have superficially applied the sample rubrics to their courses in a way that were unlikely to be promoting the development of their students' research skills. Despite this, there were cases where the RSD was being effectively included in courses. In such instances, it was possible to meaningfully monitor students' learning and progression toward the development of research skills. It is suggested that a rigorous check of assessments and rubrics be carried out with assistance being provided to those that are not well aligned to the RSD process with support from colleagues with expertise in assessment design and constructive alignments in order to raise the overall quality of the innovation.

Further, the consultants noted that some but not all students were aware of the process of developing their research skills. It is suggested that this be made explicit to all students and that they be encouraged to reflect of their personal skill development throughout their study at USP.

Lessons learnt in project implementation

It is clear that a project such as this is reliant on institutional champions to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability. This project has highlighted many champions. The existence of the CoP helps keep some of these engaged but finding ways to involve them and others more actively in the promotion of quality RSD practices across the institution is essential.

While it was an appropriate decision to begin the RSD journey by focussing on assessments and rubrics, it is clear that it did not progress from the focus on assessments to the intended rigorous alignment of the research skills outcomes, learning and teaching practices and activities and assessment tasks in the majority of courses. After six years it appears that the RSD project is ready to move beyond implementation as it has been defined to date and progressed to encompass teacher and programme development to further support the initiative.

The monitoring of implementation has involved the recording of course coordinators' attendance at training, the development of a marking rubric and its inclusion in the course and monitoring of the assessment task and marking rubric but not how it was managed with students or the quality of their learning of these research skills. This together with the slow and patchy uptake of the initiative by some courses implies that the monitoring activities could be better utilised to identify those course that need additional support in the implementation process.

Specific challenges that need to be addressed in the near future.

A number of specific challenges have been identified in this report, in particular those mentioned in *Factors which impact the RSD project* section. Those and others are summarised here.

One of the more obvious challenges is the reconciliation of the RSD Framework and the graduate outcomes framework and their different purposes and intent . There are substantial differences of opinion across the institution related to their overlap vs separation. There are arguments for maintaining their separation and equally, if not stronger ones for bringing them together into a cohesive framework for learning and skill development at USP. Whichever way USP decides, it is imperative the rationale be made clear to all stakeholders, staff and students and the wider community.

The geographic, cultural and linguistic diversity that USP encompasses presents another set of challenges. The delivery of quality training for staff across all campuses is complex. The contextualisation of the concepts and understanding their regional significance is difficult given the diversity of linguistic and cultural contexts across the Pacific.

The training of new staff must not be overlooked as the project matures. Maintaining the core understandings is crucial to the ongoing sustainability of the RSD project and so continuing to offer the workshops that were characteristic of the intent at the beginning of the project is important.

The rigour of the initiative and, in particular, evidence of the student learning outcomes, must guide the future focus of this project. This has been reinforced by the WSCUC accreditation process and is the obvious next step for both this project and USP as a whole.

Recommendations and way forward for informing future RSD implementation strategy

Overall, the RSD project is considered to be working well and providing the appropriate expertise, services and support to the University within its current resource base. There was an overwhelmingly positive response from staff and students in relation to the level of support, service and responsiveness from the RSD coordinator and Research Office. There is an opportunity to work towards embedding the achievements of the RSD project from the implementation of the use rubrics in assessment tasks from the current courses into the disciplinary programme of target courses from level one through to level 3 courses to systematically build students' research skills relevant to their disciplinary focus. Students in postgraduate courses should similarly be provided with courses that explicitly develop their research skills and that encourages reflective self-assessment and development.

The RSD Project has come of age and after six years the implementation phase, as it was imaged, has been substantially achieved. The management of the project has been commendably and appropriately undertaken by the Research Office at USP. **It is recommended** that future management of the project by a collaborative undertaking between the Research Office (to preserve the goodwill and expertise that has been built up over the six years) and the organisational units established under the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (LTSS) signals the clear need to bring together the expertise of curriculum and assessment design and the development of teaching skills with the expertise developed through the RSD project and located in the faculties, professional units and the research office to fully capitalise on the achievements made to date.

A consistent and strengthened approach towards curriculum design needs to be established and to this end **it is recommended** that the two co-existing frameworks, RSD and graduate outcomes, be consolidated into a USP overarching framework for learning and research skill development.

The training for staff needs to now involve a more sophisticated adoption of the RSD process that moves beyond the assessment and rubric focus. This will involve the expertise of curriculum development specialists. **It is recommended** therefore that training and curriculum mapping of whole of programme implementation of the RSD initiative be undertaken.

Finally, it is imperative that rigorous indicators to measure student achievements in learning and research skill development be identified. **It is recommended** that effective evaluation of the programs engaging with the RSD project be carried out on a regular basis to monitor, confirm and where needed adapt learning in the promotion of research skills development.

The Consultants were particularly appreciative of the collegiality and hospitality extended to them by the University and the openness in which stakeholders shared their experiences and future plans with the Consultants.

SIGNATURE

Lead HEED Consultant

Name: Denise Chalmers

Date 28 September 2018



denise.chalmers@heedconsulting.com.au

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APPENDIX 1: RSD Project Review proposed and undertaken activities

	Proposed	Undertaken
1	Briefing from and discussion with the USP Research Office and staff via videoconferencing on confirmation of contract.	<p>A Skype meeting took place on Friday 4th May between the HEED consultants and the RSD team to confirm the details of the Contract and the Review processes.</p> <p>Recommendation for USP Research Office to obtain Ethics Clearance for the RSD Evaluation project if publishing of the project is anticipated in the future.</p>
2	Document analysis of resources prepared to support the RSD project and implementation. Utilisation of existing documents, including relevant documents prepared for the review by external expert.	The Consultants received electronic access via Google Drive to STAR and RSD reports, assessment tasks and documents dating from 2012-2018 and access to the USP website, provided by Ms Shaiza Janif, Research Skills Development Coordinator prior to 6 July. The Consultants reviewed the documents and prepared interview questions for the on-site visit in July.
3	<p>Review of available evaluation information, data and application. E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline information and ongoing data collected to date. • Student satisfaction by course and aggregate, over time • Student engagement in assessment • Quality of student learning, Assurance of learning • Staff feedback and satisfaction - with training, support, project objectives etc. 	<p>Available data, student evaluation and reports were provided electronically via Google Drive prior to 6 July.</p> <p>The Consultants reviewed these documents and prepared interview questions in preparation for the on-site visit.</p>
4	<p>Review and content analysis of a representative sample of undergraduate and graduate course materials and documentation, in particular</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment tasks and rubrics for 	The Consultants reviewed these materials over the period 6 July – 23 th July, prior to the visit in July, and following the on-site visit.

	alignment with RSD goals	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment of objectives and assessment tasks with RSD goals 	
5	<p>Review of RSD Processes and implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project management • Engagement of and consultation with stakeholders • Training provision • Strategy (past and future plans) 	Available documents were reviewed prior to the visit and questions on processes were followed-up during the on-site visit.
6	<p>On Site visit. Face-to-face interviews and focus groups with the following individuals and groups of stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USP Leadership • RSD team and Office of Research members • Academic staff who participated in training and development of courses (under- and post-graduate courses), with different levels of experience and seniority, from different locations. • Professional staff involved in administration and operation of RSD • Students (Undergraduate and Postgraduate, current and past) • Other staff from supporting units e.g. Library, TFF, Student services, Planning 	<p>The interviews and focus groups were determined in advance through discussion with the Consultants to include participants in various roles, drawn from across the different campuses and disciplines. The students were identified in consultation with their teachers and through access to enrolment details. Students were invited to attend the meetings and voluntarily chose to do so.</p> <p>The Consultants interviewed students, teachers, coordinators, senior university leaders and members of the RSD team at the University of the South Pacific's Laucala Campus in Suva between Monday 16th – Friday 20th July (See Appendix 3 for the full schedule of interviews)</p>
7	Transcription and thematic analysis of interview data.	All interviews were audio recorded by the Consultants with the permission of the participants. All recordings remain the property of the Consultants and are confidential to them for the purpose of the review.
8	Potential to carry out surveys of staff and students following the on-site visit and interviews to interrogate emerging themes	There are no plans to survey staff and students. Student surveying is routinely carried out as part of the University quality processes e.g. TES reports by Faculty, School and Programme and Student Evaluation of Courses. Staff surveys

		<p>have been carried out at different times and aspects of the RSD workshop and project over the past 6 years and reported to the Senate. Electronic copies of student survey data and reports on staff surveys were provided as well as staff access to the USP intranet.</p>
9	<p>Attend the RSD symposium 28-30 August. With meetings prior to and following the Symposium. Observation, follow-up interviews seeking confirmatory or contrary testing of initial findings at the RSD symposium. Provide an oral report at the Symposium.</p>	<p>The 2nd on-site visit was scheduled for the week 27- 31 August to observe and participate in the RSD Pre-symposium workshop and Symposium, meet with participants and key staff, present preliminary findings and seek feedback on the Interim report. Questions were provided to the Symposium organisers for discussion in the Talanoa sessions.</p>
10	<p>Documentation and dissemination of findings through a draft and final report and presentation of findings in written and/or oral form, as required by USP</p>	<p>The Interim Report was submitted to the RSD Coordinator on the 14 August for comment and feedback by the RSD coordinator and staff from the Research Office, Director of Research, DVC(LTSS), DVC(RII), RSD consultant Dr John Willison, Dr Dorothy Spiller and others determined by the RSD office. An oral report was provided to the RSD team and key stakeholders on Friday 31st August</p>
11	<p>Finalise report and submit</p>	<p>The Final report was submitted to the Research Office for final review on the 24 September to identify any errors of fact.</p> <p>Subject to feedback, the Final Report was submitted on 2 October, 2018</p>

APPENDIX 2: Extract on Working Group 5, STAR Review Report (Scott, 2014)

The following was drawn from the broader review of the STAR initiative in the Achievements and Recommended next steps for Working Group 5 for the period 2010-13 (Scott, 2014, pp 21-23).

Working Group 5

Terms of reference

Review other universities' efforts to develop research literacy and skills across the curriculum. Rationale? Strategies, activities in all disciplines, assessment methods? How did they evaluate effectiveness? Report on implications for USP. Draft guidelines.

5.7.4.1 Outcomes and achievements to date

- a) The self-review report for this WG (SSR: pg 19) and the focus group meeting with its members confirmed that the Research Skills Development (RSD) Framework from the University of Adelaide has been productively adapted for use at USP. The RSD Framework is provided in Appendix WG5.1 of the WG's SSR and delineates the skills associated with research into six facets: embark on research and clarify the understandings needed; find information and generate data; evaluate information and data and reflect on processes used; organise information and manage processes; analyse trends and synthesize findings; communicate and apply findings and processes ethically.

These six facets are elaborated into five levels of student autonomy, with Level 1 being prescribed research where substantial guidance for students is provided on the tasks and Level 5 being open research where students have a high level of autonomy as they engage in the research activity.

- b) The implementation approach at USP involved training sessions from the University of Adelaide by Dr John Willison, the production of an RSD Training manual and the use of the RSD Framework to inform design of assessment tasks and marking rubrics for assessing research literacy and skills.
- c) The implementation process is reported as involving:
 - a. Use of appropriate learning and teaching activities to engage students in the development of research skills. Academics are encouraged to use class activities to unpack the RSD facets to students so that RSD is not seen as a 'frozen' conversation.
 - b. Revision of assignments and design of marking rubrics to assess research literacy and skills.
- d) The six RSD facets have been integrated in the course assignments and marking rubrics of UU100, UU114, UU200, UU204, a number of 100-level discipline-based courses and also a few 200-level courses.
- e) The group has given focus not only to developing inputs but, using a pre-post survey methodology, is seeking to measure the extent which the programme is having a positive impact on students. This is commended for wider use across all STAR initiatives.

5.7.1.2 Recommended next steps

- a) Review the rubrics produced to date to ensure that they are custom tailored to the area taught.
- b) Review the training manual and strategies that are being used to engage the full range of USP staff across all campuses in this work.
- c) Link what is being developed here as directly as possible to the work emerging from the transformation and mapping initiative (TOR 6), noting the way in which the capabilities being learnt in the RSD area align with a number of the USP graduate attributes. As the RSD Working Group concludes:

“ It has been noted that there is substantial overlap between the research literacy and skills of the RSD Framework and the seven USP Graduate Outcomes – Communication, Critical thinking, Creativity, Ethics, Pacific Consciousness, Professionalism and Teamwork. The integration of RSD in courses has been seen to enable assessment of more than one graduate outcome in a single assignment. The overlap between the RSD and the seven USP Graduate Outcomes is represented in the matrix compiled by the RSD Consultant, RSD Coordinator and Director of Research as shown in Appendix WG5.7. It is recommended that implementation of RSD be integrated with implementation of the seven Graduate Outcomes”. (SRR pg 23).

- d) Extend the reach of the project to courses like the following: ED152 (FALE), JN101 (FALE), LS101 (FALE), LW113 (FALE), PP101 (FALE), TE113 (FALE), AG111 (FBE), EC101 (FBE), LM111 (FBE), PD101 (FBE), PL100 (FBE), TS108 (FBE), CS111 (FSTE), ST131 (FSTE), MA111 (FSTE).
- e) The way in which this working group has operated provides a useful model of effective project management for other groups (Attachment One).
- f) Link the RSD coordinator’s work in with that of the STAR trainers and the suggested administrative framework for taking the overall STAR project forward in a linked, leveraged and integrated way (Attachments 2 and 3)
- g) Follow up on the findings from the pre and post student survey (SSR: pg 22)
- h) As the WG notes: ‘A critical challenge is training staff on assessments, so they can actually design appropriate activities and assessments to test this skill’ (pg 22) (my emphasis).

This applies more generally and identifies a key next step with STAR – the validation of learning outcomes, the development of valid assessment tasks for these and much more work on developing clear rubrics for allocating different grades within them.

Emeritus Professor Geoff Scott, April 2014. *Review of Strategic Total Academic Review (STAR) Report.* pp 21-23.

APPENDIX 3: On-site Meeting Schedule 16-20 July

RSD External Review Site Visit Schedule Date: 16th - 20th July, 2018 Venue: Research Office Conference Room, Laucala Campus							
Time	Monday 16th July	Tuesday 17th July		Wednesday 18th July	Thursday 19th July	Friday 20th July	
9.00am - 9.30am	Professor Vanualailai Director Research	FBE Trainers		Professor Richard Coll - DVC [LTSS]	RSD Coordinator - Shaiza Janif		
9.30am - 10.00am			Dr David Rohindra FSTE AD[L&T]				
10.00am - 10.30am	Professor Armstrong - DVC [RII]	FSTE Trainers David Rohindra & Romila Gopalan		Student Group: UU100 Communications and Information Literacy - Gavin Khan	Student Group: UU200 Ethics and Governance - Dr. Mishra	FALE School of Social Sciences SW100, SW101, SW200, SW201, SW300, SW301	RSD Graduates PACE-SD (Shalni, Moleen, Linda & Diana)
10.30am - 11.00am							
11.00am - 11.30pm	Vasiti Chambers & Jade More - USP Library	FALE Trainers Bruce Yeates, Shazna Buksh, Ryota Nishino, Rajni Chand		PACE-SD Helene Jacot Des Combes, Hilda Sakitti - Waqa, Awnesh Singh, Antoine Nyeurt, Tammy Tabe, Viliamu Iese, Elisabeth Holland	Dorothy Spiller University Assessment Consultant		
11.30am - 12.00pm							
12.00pm - 12.30pm	Dr John Willison - USP RSD Consultant	UU Course Coordinators Gavin Khan, Rajni Chand, Frank Thomas, Jara Hulkenberg, Erman Kaplama		Student Group: UU114 English for Academic Purposes	Student Group: UU204 Pacific Worlds	FALE School of Social Sciences PS103, PS203, PS206, PS312, HY101, HY102, HY206 HY302	
12.30pm - 1.00pm							
1.00pm - 1.30pm	Lunch	FALE Trainer & Former AD[Research] Frances Koya		Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1.30pm - 2.00pm		Lunch					
2.00pm - 2.30pm	Associate Deans - FALE Mathew Hayward, Ann-Cheryl Armstrong, & Yoko Kanemasu	UU204 Narsamma Lingam, Rosarine Rafai, Jiokapeci Qaloqiolevu, Lalita Sharma, Waisale Raicebe, Vilimaina Navila		FSTE School of Bio BI102 BI201, BI205, CH101 CH201, CH203, CH301	FALE School of Education ED152, ED153, ED250, ED255, ED300, ED350, TE251, TE256, TE351	FALE School of Language Arts LL102, LL203, LL311, LL305 LL311	
2.30pm - 3.00pm							
3.00pm - 3.30pm	Heenal Lal - Former RSD Coordinator	FBE Trainer Natasha Khan & Rosalia Fatiaki		Dr Jokhan - Dean FSTE Venue - Deans Office	Dr Keith Morrison Former USP Staff, RSD Trainer [Still using RSD for current work]	RSD CoP 5	
3.30pm - 4.00pm							
4.00pm - 4.30pm		FBE ADs Manoranja Mohanty & Dawn Gibson		FBE School of Govt., Development & I.A. DG100, DG101, DG200 PL100, PL201 PL203	Post-grad students mix DG400 (SGDIA), SC400 (FSTE), AL4000 (Sch SS), ED402, ED455, ED457		
4.30pm - 5.00pm							
5.00pm - 5.30pm							
5.30pm - 6.00pm							
6.30pm onwards					USP Dinner - Governors Restaurant 46-50 Knolly Street, Suva		

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We offer consultancy services in: evaluation and review; institutional planning and strategy for teaching quality; academic and educational development; course and programme view; curriculum planning and evaluation; assessment design and implementation; academic integrity; scholarly activity and scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL); national and international teaching awards and grants; and academic governance.

Denise Chalmers, Lee Partridge, Mark Israel and Janice Orrell are all Senior Consultants with HEED.

The team will be led by Denise Chalmers who will take responsibility for working with the University of the South Pacific. The consultants have many years of experience working for public and private higher education institutions.

Denise Chalmers (Project Leader)

Professor Emeritus in the field of higher education teaching and learning at The University of Western Australia. In 2014, she received an Australian Award for University Teaching: Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning and in 2017 she was honoured with life membership by HERDSA. Denise was awarded an OLT National Senior Teaching Fellowship on Recognising and Rewarding University Teaching in 2015. A significant component of this Fellowship involves exploring external peer review for the purposes of promotion and recognition.

Over 25 years, she has demonstrated leadership in higher education, leading two university Centres of Teaching and Learning as Director. She was a Foundation Director of the Carrick Institute (later ALTC) with responsibility for Awards, Fellowships and International Links. She has served as President and then as Vice President of the Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development (CADAD) 2008-2014. She has initiated and led several institutional, national and international initiatives and projects including developing and embedding teaching quality criteria and indicators and promoting the use of teaching and learning performance indicators to guide decision making and resource allocation.

denise.chalmers@heedconsulting.com.au

Lee Partridge

Dr Lee Partridge is an educator and academic developer with more than 15 years' experience. She has successfully developed and lead institutional-wide initiatives that have been recognised with national awards for excellence in Programs that Promote Learning (2006, 2011, 2013). She is a Fellow of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia and holds an adjunct position at The University of Western Australia (UWA).

Lee is an experienced social researcher and has provided evaluation expertise to HE institutions and organisations across Australia and internationally. She has worked collaboratively with colleagues to promote and support peer observation processes across UWA. Recently she has been assisting Emeritus Professor Denise Chalmers on the peer review aspects of her OLT Senior Teaching Fellowship.