

## **Title: Challenging, developing and valuing general staff: The Action eXchange Learning Program**

Universities are complex if not at times contradictory organisations. On the one hand, they offer courses in a range of disciplines that provide cutting-edge pedagogy in the theory and practice of various disciplines. On the other hand, when it comes to actually applying the same cutting-edge theory to their own workplace professional development (PD) practices, there is sometimes a gap between the practice and the rhetoric. One example of this gap has been in the area of PD for general staff. Coaldrake and Stedman make the point that general staff “comprise nationally the majority of university employees”. The paper describes an inevitable blurring of roles between academic and general staff as being a consequence of this change to the traditional roles that have previously delineated them. It makes sense then that investing in quality, better targeted PD for more than half of a university’s staff is not only sensible, it is essential. In this paper we introduce the Action eXchange Learning PD Program (AXL) – an interactive, collaborative PD program that is based on the concept of Practitioner-Based Enquiry and uses an action-learning model. We describe the development of the model and its action-learning component. With the first implementation of the model currently underway, we describe the initial responses to the pilot study and explain how the model fits ECU’s Quality Review cycle. We describe the evaluation model that will be used to further improve and refine the AXL program. Finally, we place the issue of PD of general staff in the context of universities as Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and how it is therefore incumbent upon universities to model best practice PD for its own staff.

**Authors: Claire Brown (Community Services, Education and Social Sciences), Ann Backhaus (Professional Development @ Learning & Development Services), Cassandra Colvin (ECU International), Edith Cowan University**

Contact details for Claire Brown:  
Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences  
Edith Cowan University  
2 Bradford St  
Mount Lawley WA 6050  
Ph: 9370 6801, fax: 9370 6664  
Email: c.brown@ecu.edu.au