

# **Teaching Advantage: Preparing the future leaders of the academy**

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Today's doctoral students are tomorrow's academics and the future leaders of Australia's higher education institutions. Most academic jobs require candidates to teach effectively, but doctoral students report that their PhD training is 'not particularly effective in preparing them for the task of university teaching and coordinating' (Edwards, Bexley & Richardson, 2011, p. 6). Although not all doctoral students seek academic careers, only 16% of Australian higher degree research students with academic career intentions report having participated in *any* teaching development during their candidature (Edwards et al., 2011). Consequently, doctoral students graduate from their PhD programs underprepared for the professional requirements of university teaching and coordinating (Edwards et al., 2011; Sutherland, Wilson & Williams, 2013). Our strategy was to reshape the doctoral experience by problematising the dominant discourse that publishing is all that matters, and sharing a vision of academia where teaching is valued, by designing and delivering *Teaching Advantage* (TA). TA is a nationally awarded, competency-based teaching development program that has significantly improved the teaching self-efficacy of over 200 doctoral students from 27 different countries. The program was conceived, designed and implemented using a theoretical framework of cognitive apprenticeship (Collins, Brown, & Holum, 1991), a theory of social learning that aims to make explicit the implicit logic and strategies that experienced teachers use in practice. Across six workshops, students engage in experiential learning activities and discussions to unpack practical and scholarly approaches to teaching, unit coordination, and academic career progression. TA participants experience significantly increased teaching self-efficacy, an enhanced capacity for reflexivity, improved employment outcomes, and external recognition of their commitment to learning and teaching through the Higher Education Academy's (United Kingdom) Associate Teaching Fellowship scheme. Data collected from 2013 to 2014, where we measured the pre-TA (Time 1) and post-TA (Time 2) teaching self-efficacy of 156 TA alumni using a measure adapted from Hemmings and Kay (2009), show that participants are significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) more confident performing 21 teaching activities explored during the program (Greer, Cathcart & Neale, 2016). By aligning the initiative with relevant professional standards frameworks, our participants have achieved international recognition for their commitment to learning and teaching. Finally, data from our alumni survey shows that TA graduates have secured jobs in eight countries outside Australia, including Scotland, Vietnam, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, and Sri Lanka. Our alumni are reflective and reflexive practitioners who are equipped for their future leadership roles in the rapidly changing Academy.

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