



*Beyond the bottled message:*

# UTAS Learning & Teaching Dissemination Framework

---

**Prepared by:**

Melody West, Associate Lecturer Learning and Teaching  
Tasmanian Institute of Learning and Teaching, UTAS (2012)

*The Tasmanian Institute of Learning and Teaching works to embed a culture of excellence in learning and teaching that is evidence-based, practice focussed and enhanced through technology.*

---

Dissemination is an important feature of sustaining a dynamic culture within the learning and teaching domain. To many of us, the term dissemination is a familiar part of the higher education vernacular – but do we really know what it means, and are we applying our knowledge about dissemination effectively to build awareness, share practice or initiate action where we desire it? In many cases dissemination is thought of as the ways in which we tell people *what we do*, possibly *how we did it* and even, *how you might do it too* – but the process of effective dissemination requires careful consideration and planning. The UTAS Learning and Teaching Dissemination Framework has been prepared to support the planning and implementation of a relevant dissemination strategy, appropriate to your learning and teaching activities, initiatives, grants and projects.

## What is dissemination?

Any search online or in-text will lead you to a plethora of frameworks, strategies, definitions and discussions about dissemination, each emphasising different elements, processes or phases. The D-Cubed Guide<sup>1</sup> suggests that dissemination is “the planned process of understanding potential adopters and engaging with them throughout the life of the project, to facilitate commitment to sustained change”. Other useful definitions<sup>2</sup> situate

---

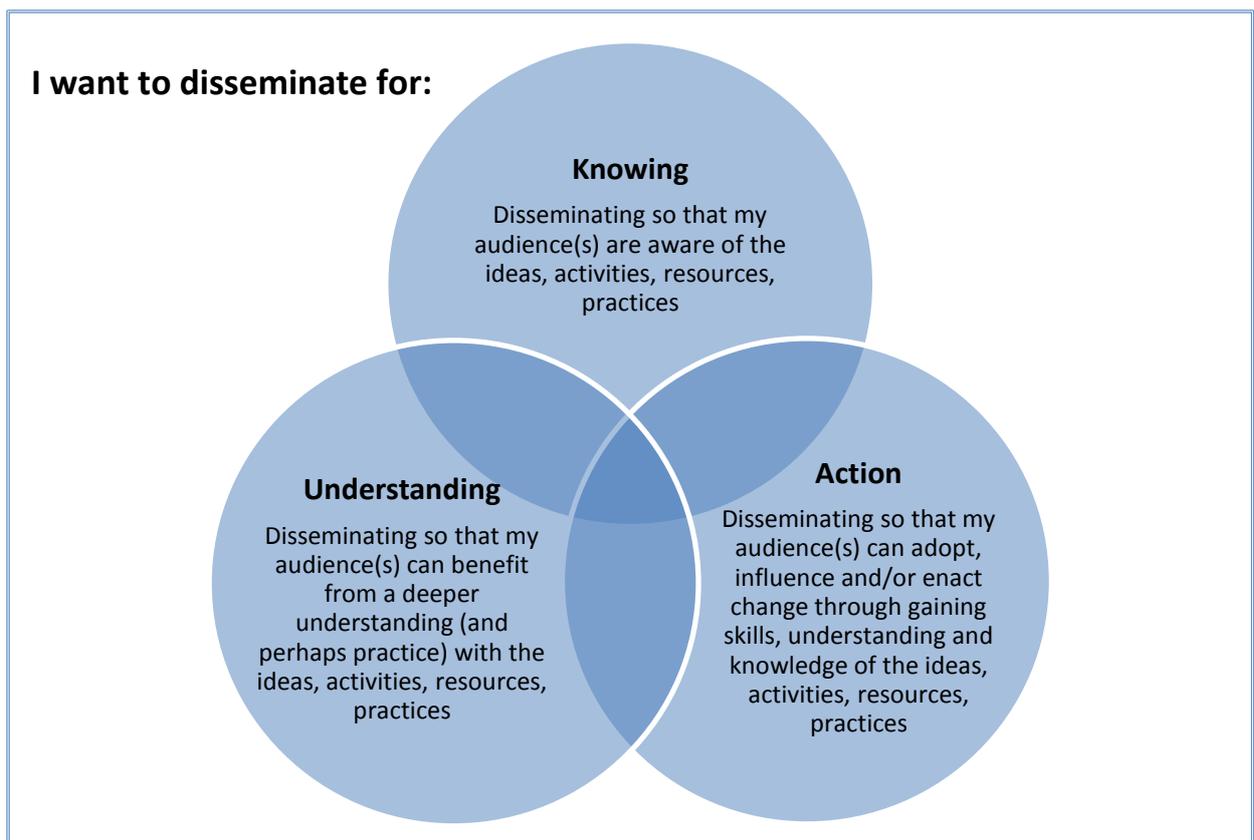
<sup>1</sup> The D-Cubed Guide: Planning for Effective Dissemination (2011) was a project funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Committee (ALTC – now Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT)) which reviewed common dissemination activities undertaken by projects funded through the ALTC. The final report can be viewed at <http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-d-cubed-dissemination-indesign-resources-ug-2011>.

<sup>2</sup> Harmsworth & Turpin (2000) Creating an Effective Dissemination Strategy, <http://www.innovations.ac.uk/btg/resources/publications/dissemination.pdf>, accessed 2/5/12

dissemination as the “delivering and receiving of a message, the engagement of an individual in a process and the transfer of a process or product”. Despite the definitional variances like those offered here, the effectiveness of your own dissemination strategy is about asking the right questions within the context of your grant, project and/or related objectives. By this, we mean asking yourself: why do I want to disseminate; who do I wish to disseminate to; and therefore, how and when will I disseminate? Let’s review those questions in turn.

### Why do I want to disseminate?

Answering this question is about more than, ‘because my grant application requires me to’! Every phase of your grant or project may need a very different level of sharing and/or participation and engagement in order to reach the next phase – or perhaps you have just one output or practice that you would like to share with a single targeted audience. Asking yourself the ‘why’ question will help you to make decisions about appropriate methods, and to determine the key groups of people that you wish to reach through dissemination activities. In reviewing the following schema, ask yourself the ‘why’ question in the context of your grant, project or learning and teaching activities:



### Who do I want to disseminate to?

Once you have determined the reasons for dissemination, you need to decide who you wish to disseminate to. Is your audience, or stakeholder groups, the people who are inside the

university, school or faculty – or are they external? Do you wish for students to be involved, or are you aiming to engage staff only? Who will influence the objectives of your grant or project most effectively and what will their roles/levels of participation be? The following list of potential stakeholders or audiences may help you to decide who might be targeted in your dissemination planning:

- Students;
- Colleagues within your own department – colleagues outside of your department;
- Professional staff groups – academic staff groups;
- Heads of Schools;
- Senior Management teams;
- Educational Developers and other Professional Learning staff;
- Other project groups working in similar or related areas;
- Communities of practice;
- Discipline scholars;
- Associate Deans Learning and Teaching and/or Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees;
- Colleagues from other universities; and
- Funding bodies and/or professional associations.

### **How and when do I want to disseminate?**

Ok, so you've thought about the reasons for dissemination and your key stakeholder groups or dissemination audiences. Now you need to think about the mechanisms through which you can achieve dissemination, and when those dissemination activities might best take place. Again, deciding on the timing and methods for dissemination should be done in the context of your grant or project, however, it is noteworthy to point out that **effective dissemination is a continual process and an integral part of your grant or project plan: dissemination should occur from the outset – not just at the end.** In thinking about the reasons for dissemination – i.e. for knowledge, understanding and/or action – it is likely that your grant or project will move through particular phases and that each phase will rely on a different dissemination activities.

For example, via a newsletter you wish for your colleagues in Student Support to 'know' that you are implementing the cultural competence policy (a key output from your project developed with staff in that department) within your school, through a series of workshops with your academic colleagues (for their 'understanding'). Following the workshop, a community of practice is formed with course coordinators from other schools and faculties, with the aim to help share practice and embed the policy ('action') across other parts of the university.

In thinking about your grant or project, you might wish to consider dissemination activities that involve:

- Branding and websites;
- Email distribution lists, discussion forums, blogs and social networking;
- Student and professional networks or communities of practice;
- Newsletters and promotional tools;
- Meetings, discussions, round-tables, forums, presentations, colloquiums and roadshows;
- Addressing a variety of audiences, from small groups of colleagues and internal conferences, through to large groups from a broad range of disciplines;
- Online repositories, YouTube videos, web conferences;
- Conferences, workshops, showcases and poster presentations;
- Engaging with (and influencing) policy development, briefing papers and reports;
- Journal articles, book chapters and other scholarly publications;
- Media releases; and
- Asking others to try aspects of the project and report the results and/or impact of their participation.

Remember to think about these dissemination activities within the context of your project; i.e. is it strategic to present ideas or discussion papers at a learning and teaching conference at UTAS, or do you need to engage stakeholders externally via national and international forums? Are you affecting the change in practice via your dissemination strategy, or do you need to change your tact? How are you evaluating whether or not your dissemination is working? A good way of maximising on quality and effective dissemination is by being well planned. The UTAS Learning and Teaching Dissemination Framework is documented on the following page and can be a useful starting point for planning and implementing a quality dissemination strategy. The following 'general hints for quality dissemination' may also help.

### General hints for quality dissemination

- Choose **quality over quantity**: think carefully about your objectives in terms of deciding whether yet another bulk email is really the most effective way of achieving impact.
- Adopt **multiple dissemination** approaches to suit the needs of your audiences.
- Be **informed by formative evaluation** data employed in your grant or project design; your dissemination strategy might take a change of action depending on evaluation outcomes.
- Most audiences and stakeholder groups need to know '**what's in it for them**'. Framing dissemination activities in a way that provides further context, evidence or

solutions (i.e. benefits) for people enhances their sense of ownership of the practices, ideas, resources and outputs that you are disseminating.

- **Engage stakeholders early** to establish their needs and wants so that you can design and deliver dissemination activities in a way that suits your target groups.
- **Think of a two sentence explanation** for your project or grant to optimise on spontaneous or unplanned meetings and opportunities to share knowledge with key people.
- **Set realistic targets.** These will depend on the objectives of your grant or project – for example, it might be realistic to achieve an 80% ‘understanding’ among your colleagues about the cultural competence policy and perhaps 50% ‘knowledge’ through workshops. Attaining adoption or ‘action’ of key outputs from the grant or project takes time and are often difficult to measure until project activities have finished.

### Further Reading

Lewis, E. (2003). Dissemination of Innovations in Higher Education: A Change Theory Approach, in *Tertiary Education and Management*, 9(3): 199-214

McKenzie, J., Alexander, S., Harper, C. & Anderson, S. (2005) *Dissemination, Adoption and Adaption of Project Innovations in Higher Education*, Available at:

<http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-dissemination-adoption-uts-2005>

Southwell, D., Gannaway, D., Orrell, J., Chalmers, D. and Abraham, C. (2005). *Strategies for effective dissemination of project outcomes*, Available at <http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-strategies-dissemination-ug-2005>

Willis, J., Baron, J., Lee, R-A., Gozza-Cohen, M. & Currie, A. (2010). Scholarly Knowledge Development and Dissemination in an International Context: Approaches and Tools for Higher Education, in *Computers in the Schools*, 27(3-4): 155-199

