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**Report on Survey of ACODE Institutional Representatives  
at Australasian Universities**

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for the project team

*Building distributed leadership in designing and implementing a quality  
management framework for Online Learning Environments*

May 2012



Support for the production of this report has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.



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## Introduction

The purpose of this project, supported by the Office for Learning and Teaching (formerly the Australian Learning and Teaching Council), is to design and implement a framework that uses a distributed leadership approach for the quality management of Online Learning Environments (OLE) in Australian higher education. The third phase of the research for this project included an online survey of ACODE (Australasian Council on Open, Distance and E-Learning) institutional representatives at Australasian universities conducted during March 2012. A copy of the survey instrument that was employed is included as Appendix 1. The survey included items addressing:

- background/demographic information;
- respondents' perceptions of importance of, and satisfaction with, elements of the proposed framework;
- respondents' perceptions of the importance of possible interactions between elements of the proposed framework;
- respondents' perceptions of the importance and effectiveness of distributed leadership at their universities;
- respondents' perceptions of the importance, and evidence of presence, of a range of characteristics of distributed leadership at their universities; and
- respondents' suggested strategies for building and sustaining effective institutional distributed leadership.

A total of 46 current ACODE institutional representatives were publicly identifiable, and were invited to participate in the online survey. Those institutions for which an ACODE representative could be identified are highlighted in Appendix 2. This report presents the results and findings of the survey. In all of the following quantitative analyses, a statistical significance level of  $p < 0.01$  has been adopted. This significance level indicates that the observed result is likely to occur by chance only once for every hundred similar respondent samples, and hence strongly suggests that any observed difference in mean ratings is a real difference.

## Background information

Fully completed survey responses were received from 27 of the 46 current ACODE institutional representatives that were publicly identifiable; a response rate of 58.7%. However, an additional four incomplete responses were also received. Because the online survey system used saved all data progressively, some of the data and analyses presented below contain responses from up to 31 (67.4%) respondents.

Appendix 2 provides a table listing the 48 principal universities in Australasia – the 46 institutions for which an ACODE representative was publicly identifiable for the purposes of the survey are indicated with shading. The universities listed in Appendix 2 are classified according to the generally understood institutional groupings of:

- South Pacific or New Zealand University (SPNZ);
- Group of Eight (Go8);
- Innovative Research Universities (IRU);
- Australian Technology Network (ATN);
- Regional Universities Network (RUN); and
- Non-aligned / No grouping.

In question 1, respondents were asked to indicate which of these groupings their institution belonged to. Using only the fully completed responses, the respondent institutional groupings were:

<b>Institutional grouping</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
South Pacific or New Zealand University (SPNZ)	5	18.5
Group of Eight (Go8)	4	14.8
Innovative Research Universities (IRU)	5	18.5
Australian Technology Network (ATN)	4	14.8
Regional Universities Network (RUN)	4	14.8
Non-aligned / No grouping	5	18.5

It was possible to compare the proportions of respondents in each grouping with both the target population of the 46 institutions highlighted in Appendix 2, as well as with the entire population of 48 Australasian universities listed in Appendix 2. In both cases, Fisher's Exact Two-sided Test for comparing proportions was possible and there was no significant difference in the proportions of institutional groupings between the respondent sample and the target population (Fisher's Exact Two-sided Test  $p > 0.979$ ), and between the respondent sample and the entire population (Fisher's Exact Two-sided Test  $p > 0.957$ ). These findings, combined with the relatively high response rate, gives good confidence that the respondent sample is representative of both the target population and the wider university sector in Australasia. A limitation that must be acknowledged is that a single representative may not be in a position to provide a complete and comprehensive response on behalf of their institution. However, in any one person was to be selected for this task, the ACODE institutional representative seems to be a sensible choice.

The invitation to complete the survey was sent to the 46 current ACODE institutional representatives that were publicly identifiable. Four recipients then referred the invitation to a colleague better placed to respond on behalf of their institution. In question 2, respondents

were asked to indicate their substantive organisational role. Using only the fully completed responses, the indicated substantive organisational roles of respondents were:

<b>Substantive organisational role</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Director (or equivalent) of a central Teaching & Learning Unit	6	22.2
Director (or equivalent) of Information Technology services	0	0.0
Director (or equivalent) of Educational Technology Services	8	29.6
Other	13	48.2

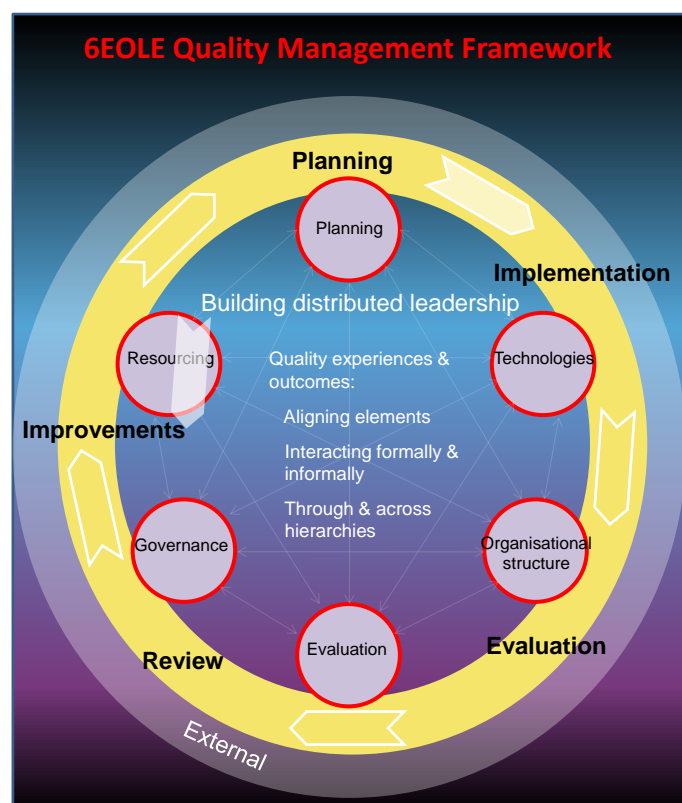
For those respondents who chose 'Other', they were invited to indicate their substantive organisational role. The responses received were:

- Academic manager in central group
- e-Learning Specialist Coordinator
- SL in central T&L unit
- Senior Academic with eLearning responsibilities
- Director of eLearning
- Senior manager for educational technology in central teaching and learning unit
- Educational Designer/ policy developer
- Senior Manager advising the Exec Director T&L
- Associate Director, T& L unit
- Blended Learning Unit, Team Leader
- PVC L&T
- Leader Academic Development Unit
- eLearning administrator

It was observed that no particular organisational role dominates amongst the responses provided by ACODE institutional representatives – they are drawn from a wide range of levels and responsibilities.

## Framework elements

In question 3, respondents were exposed to the quality management framework and the six elements that comprise it. The graphic below was presented, a 6min:30sec audio commentary was provided, a further written background document was available as a link, and a brief descriptor of each element could be displayed by hovering the mouse pointer over the element label in the data response table.



For each of the six framework elements, respondents were asked to rate:

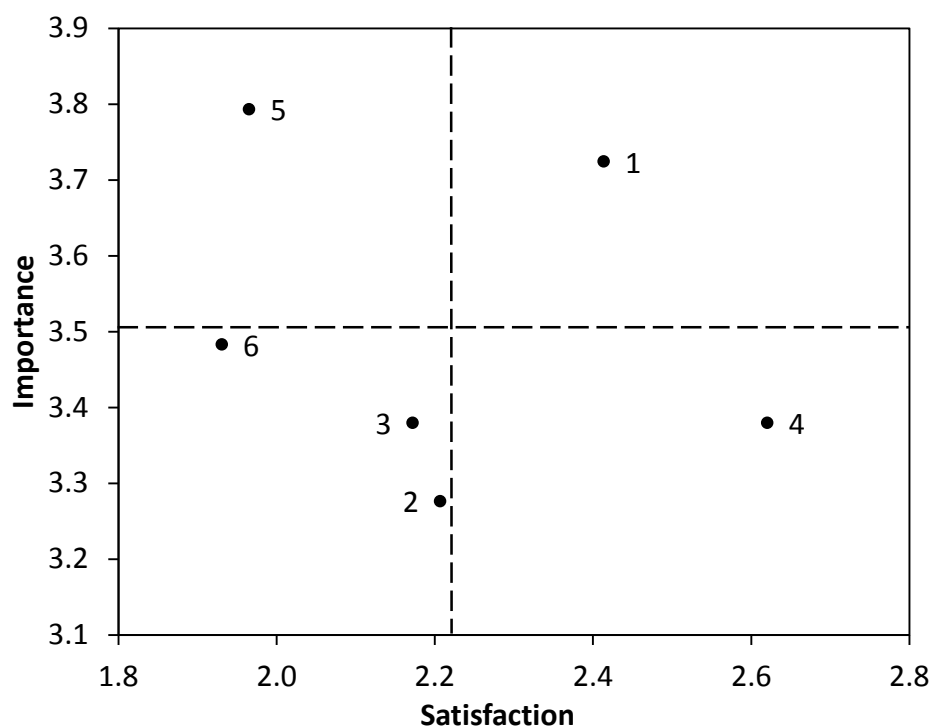
- **how important** they felt that element was for effective management of the online learning environment at their university (using a scale of not important, somewhat important, important and very important); and
- **how satisfied** they were with their university's performance on that element (using a scale of not satisfied, partially satisfied, satisfied and very satisfied).

Using the survey data from the 29 respondents who completed question 3, and assuming an ordinal rating scale of 1-4 for the ratings of importance and satisfaction, the mean ratings of importance and satisfaction (out of 4) for each of the six framework elements are given in the following table.

Framework element	Mean importance	Mean satisfaction
Planning	3.72	2.41
Organisational structure	3.28	2.21
Governance	3.38	2.17
Technologies	3.38	2.62
Resourcing	3.79	1.97
Evaluation	3.48	1.93



These results are also plotted in the figure below. The grand means (means of the six element means) for importance and satisfaction are also plotted as dashed lines to provide an indication of the relative ranking of the element mean ratings.



1. Planning
2. Organisational structure
3. Governance
4. Technologies
5. Resourcing
6. Evaluation

Differences in mean ratings between institutional groupings were considered. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) provides a test for the significance of observed differences in means between groups. A requirement for the ANOVA test is that the variation of the mean rating be similar in all groups. Where Levene's test of homogeneity of variance fails, it may be possible to perform a robust ANOVA test using the Welch test statistic instead. In this case, there were three importance ratings for which Levene's test failed, and for all three ratings, all respondents from a particular institutional group gave the same rating response, meaning that it was not possible to estimate the variance of the mean for that group in the wider population. In this situation, it may not be reliable to use the ANOVA test result and it is not possible to perform the robust ANOVA calculation. However, for the nine mean ratings where it was possible to perform an ANOVA test, no significant difference in mean ratings of importance and satisfaction were observed between institutional groupings ( $0.237 < p < 0.910$ ). This result suggests a high degree of commonality in the ratings across the sector.

Without trying to make overly literal inferences from the importance-satisfaction grid above, it can be seen, relatively speaking, that:

- Planning and Resourcing are considered most important;

- Organisational structure was given the lowest mean importance rating;
- Technologies received the highest mean rating of satisfaction, in conjunction with the second lowest mean rating of importance, suggesting a view that this element is perceived as being relatively under control;
- respondents were least satisfied with Resourcing and Evaluation; and
- the element with the highest mean importance rating and almost equal lowest mean satisfaction rating was Resourcing – everyone would like more money and people!

In question 4, respondents were asked to list any other elements that they considered important for the effective leadership of the online learning environment at their university. Twenty responses were received, grouped into common themes and ranked by frequency. The results are given in the following table.

<b>Element / theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Shared vision	6
Leadership	4
Rewards/Grant/scholarships	3
Communication	3
Relationships	2
Student uptake/satisfaction	2
Stakeholder engagement	2
Strategy	2
Clear organisation structure	2
Professional development for teaching staff	2
Collaboration across institution	2
Resourcing	2
Distributed leadership	2
ACODE benchmarks	1
Communities of practice	1
Capacity building	1
Succession planning	1
Institutional culture	1
Grass roots support	1
Appropriate staffing	1
Managing technology portfolio	1
Proper evaluation data for planning	1
Impact on operations of new technology	1
Politics	1

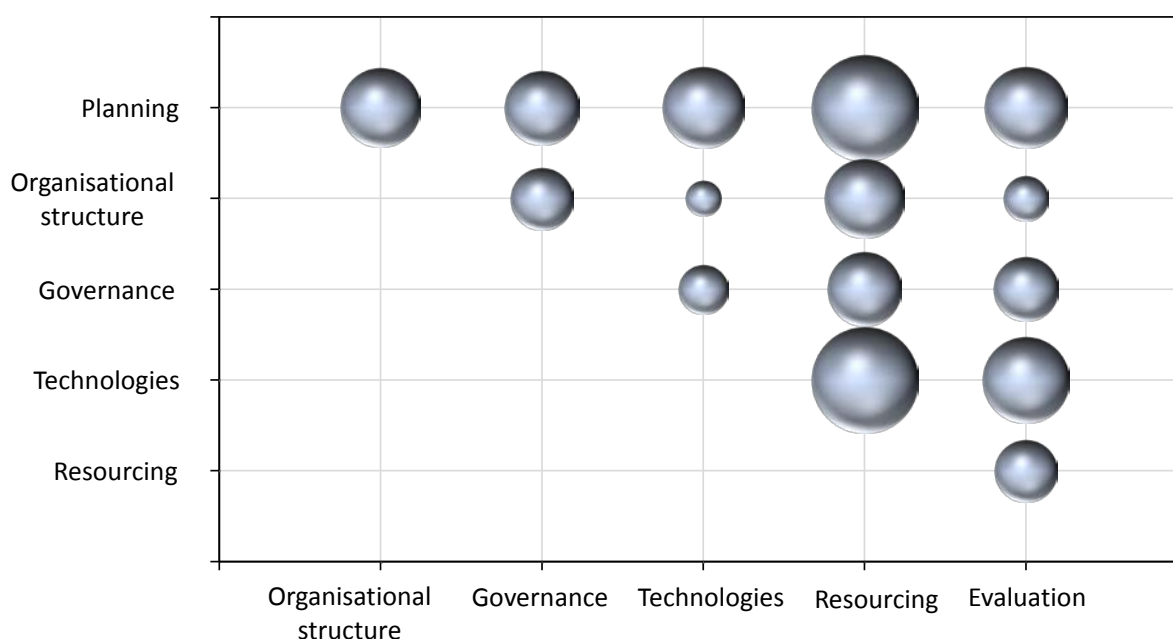
Some of the suggested additional elements are re-statements of the elements already included in the current framework, i.e., resourcing, organisational structure and evaluation-related items. Some of the suggested additional elements are already acknowledged in the supporting explanatory statements provided within the current framework, i.e., vision, recognition, benchmarking and staff development. Some of the suggested additional elements are contained within the characteristics of distributed leadership that are already identified within the framework as supporting the operation of the elements of the framework. This feedback provides a measure of support for the existing framework. The additional suggestions not already clearly captured in the existing framework can be considered for potential inclusion in the framework in an appropriate manner.

## Interactions between framework elements

The Framework includes the possibility of important interactions between the elements. In question 5, for each of the 15 possible pair-wise interactions between the six framework elements, respondents were asked to rate how important they felt that interaction was for the effective management of the online learning environment at their university. The rating scale available was N/A, Not important, Somewhat important, Important and Very important. Using the data from the 27 respondents who completed question 5, and assuming an ordinal rating scale of 1-4 for ratings of importance (excluding N/A ratings), the mean importance ratings (out of 4) for pair-wise interactions between the framework elements are given in the following table.

	Organisational structure	Governance	Technologies	Resourcing	Evaluation
Planning	2.30	2.22	2.33	2.67	2.33
Organisational structure	--	2.04	1.54	2.30	1.73
Governance	--	--	1.81	2.22	2.07
Technologies	--	--	--	2.67	2.41
Resourcing	--	--	--	--	2.04

These results are visualised in the chart below where the size of the 'bubble' is proportional to the mean importance rating for each pair-wise interaction.



Differences in mean ratings between institutional groupings were considered. Using the same procedure as described above, an appropriate ANOVA test was able to be performed for 13 of the 15 mean ratings, and for all 13 no significant difference in mean ratings of importance were observed between institutional groupings ( $0.060 < p < 0.985$ ). This result suggests a high degree of commonality in the ratings across the sector.

Based on the mean ratings received, it can be seen, relatively speaking, that:

- the highest rated pair-wise element interactions were for Resourcing and Planning, and for Resourcing and Technologies;
- the lowest rated pair-wise element interactions were for Organisational structure and Technologies, and for Organisational structure and Evaluation;
- if all of the pair-wise mean importance ratings associated with a particular framework function in the table above are summed, then the highest composite importance value is obtained for Resourcing and the lowest composite importance value is obtained for Organisational structure; and
- the elements with the highest and lowest composite importance values are the same elements that received the respective highest and lowest mean ratings of individual importance in question 3 above.

Generally speaking, Resourcing was seen to be the element with the most influence on other elements of the framework, while Organisational structure was viewed as having less of an influence on other framework elements.

In question 6, respondents were asked to list any other forms/combinations of interaction(s) between the elements of the Framework that they considered important for the effective leadership of the online learning environment at their university. Ten responses were received, grouped into common themes and ranked by frequency. The results are given in the following table.

<b>Element / theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Evaluation of genuine impact/practice changes	2
Articulate goals clearly, so progress can be measured	1
Overall strategic alignment	1
Understand that all activities are related	1
Resourcing underpins everything	1
Institutional culture pervades all elements	1
Link between implementation and resourcing	1

These responses don't provide any specific additional guidance on important interactions between the framework elements.

## Distributed leadership for online learning environments

In question 7, respondents were provided with the following concise definition of distributed leadership:

*action by many people working collectively across the institution to build leadership capacity in learning and teaching.*

Respondents were asked to consider the performance of distributed leadership in their organisation from the perspective of the alignments between:

1. the vertical (formal line reporting relationships) and horizontal (peers in different work groups) actors/actions; and
2. the formal (organisationally appointed/sanctioned) and informal (emergent and relationship-based) actors/actions.

For each of these two distributed leadership actors/actions, respondents were asked to rate:

- **how important** they felt the alignment between them was at their university (using a scale of not important, somewhat important, important and very important); and
- **how effective** (generally) they felt the alignment between them was at their university (using a scale of not effective, partially effective, effective and very effective).

Using the survey data from the 28 respondents who completed question 7, and assuming an ordinal rating scale of 1-4 for the ratings of importance and effectiveness, the mean ratings of importance and effectiveness (out of 4) for the two distributed leadership perspectives are given in the following table.

Distributed leadership actors/actions	Mean importance	Mean effectiveness
Alignment of vertical and horizontal leadership	3.71	3.68
Alignment of formal and informal leadership	2.21	2.18

Differences in mean ratings between institutional groupings were considered. Using the same procedure as described above, an appropriate ANOVA test was able to be performed for the second row of the table, and no significant difference in mean ratings of importance and effectiveness were observed between institutional groupings ( $0.829 < p < 0.940$ ). This result suggests a high degree of commonality in the ratings across the sector.

The mean ratings for both importance and effectiveness were lower for ‘Alignment of formal and informal leadership’ compared to the mean ratings for ‘Alignment of vertical and horizontal leadership’. The variance of both the importance ratings and the effectiveness ratings were not significantly different between the two distributed leadership actor/action groupings, so it was possible to perform an ANOVA test on the significance of the observed difference in the mean ratings. The observed difference in mean ratings were significantly different for both importance ( $F_{55} = 64.36$ ;  $p < 9.1 \times 10^{-11}$ ) and effectiveness ( $F_{55} = 76.57$ ;  $p < 6.2 \times 10^{-12}$ ). The alignment of distributed leadership relationships that might be inferred from an organisational chart, including those that might be observed running both vertically and

horizontally), was rated as significantly more important and effective than the alignment of distributed leadership relationships that might be seen as cutting obliquely across the 'natural' linear linkages in the formal organisational structure, and arising between formal and informal organisational leaders. Under such an environment, it would seem to be largely the responsibility of those in formal leadership roles to recognise and nurture distributed leadership capacity within universities.

In question 8, respondents were asked to list any other factors that they considered were measures of distributed leadership for the management of online learning environments. Fifteen responses were received and separated into the following key ideas:

- Level of inter-faculty staff engagement in eLearning events, activities and interest groups
- Understanding of distributed leadership by executive
- How well leadership is valued
- Uptake of eLearning technologies
- Alignment of eLearning technologies with institutional strategic direction
- Desired outcomes are clearly understood across the organisation
- Identifiable partnership among organisational units
- Those making decisions are involved in system evaluations
- Level of organisational connectedness and freedom to operate
- Access to the information required to improve
- Having the 'right' people in management
- Culture of innovation
- On-going leadership development
- Resourcing of PD for staff using educational technology
- Sharing of experience and ideas
- Recognition of parity of work done in different areas/disciplines/modes
- Distributed leadership has authority over resourcing decisions
- Distributed leadership is representative of the community they represent
- Staff expertise is recognised, regardless of employment category or location
- Interest and affected staff are meaningfully acknowledged in OLE decisions

Many of these responses relate to elements and/or characteristics of distributed leadership already included in the framework.

## Characteristics of distributed leadership

In question 9, respondents were presented with 12 characteristics of distributed leadership identified in the framework. For each of the 12 characteristics of distributed leadership, respondents were asked to rate:

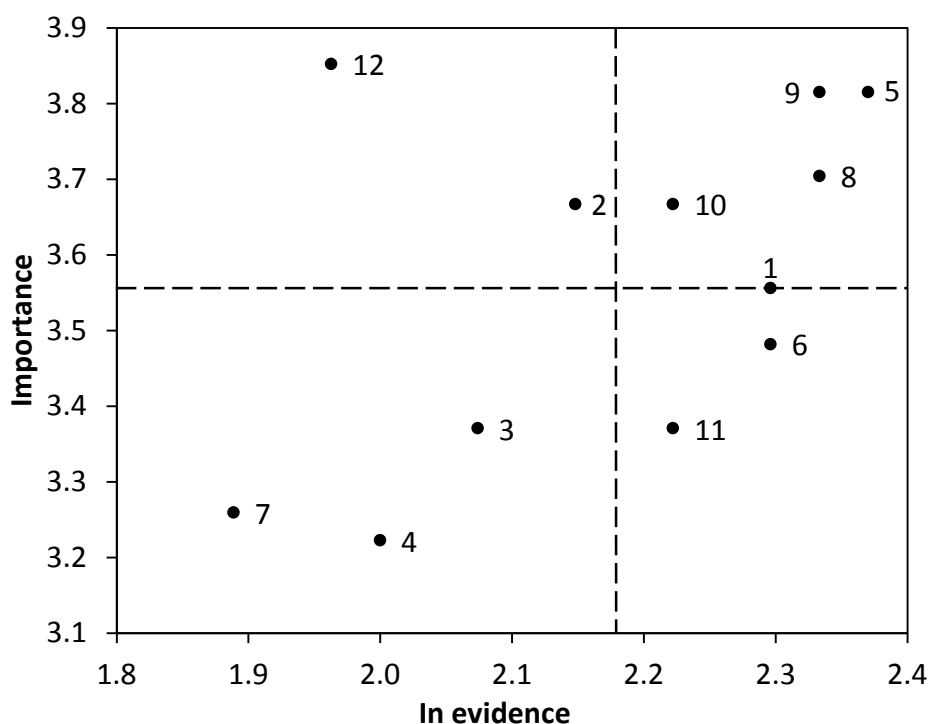
- **how important** that characteristic is for effective distributed leadership at their university (using a scale of not important, somewhat important, important and very important); and
- **how clearly in evidence** that characteristic of distributed leadership is at their university (using a scale of not in evidence, partially in evidence, in evidence and strongly in evidence).

Using the survey data from the 27 respondents who completed question 9, and assuming an ordinal rating scale of 1-4 for the ratings of importance and 'in evidence', the mean ratings of importance and 'in evidence' (out of 4) for each of the 12 characteristics of distributed leadership are given in the following table.

Distributed leadership characteristic	Mean importance	Mean 'in evidence'
Enabled individual and collective agency	3.56	2.30
Co-created and shared vision	3.67	2.15
Inclusive of all those who lead	3.37	2.07
Broadest recognition of leadership	3.22	2.00
Communicative and engaging	3.81	2.37
Appropriate responsibilities	3.48	2.30
Meaningful rewards	3.26	1.89
Trusting and respectful	3.70	2.33
Collaborative in development	3.81	2.33
Nurturing of valued professional expertise	3.67	2.22
Valuing professional forums and communities	3.37	2.22
Continuity and sustainability	3.85	1.96

These results are also plotted in the figure below. The grand means (means of the twelve characteristic means) for importance and 'in evidence' are also plotted as dashed lines to provide an indication of the relative ranking of the characteristic mean ratings.

Differences in mean ratings between institutional groupings were considered. Using the same procedure as described above, an appropriate ANOVA test was able to be performed for 17 of the 24 mean ratings, and for all 17 no significant difference in mean ratings of importance and 'in evidence' were observed between institutional groupings ( $0.074 < p < 0.846$ ). This result suggests a high degree of commonality in the ratings across the sector.



1. Enabled individual and collective agency
2. Co-created and shared vision
3. Inclusive of all those who lead
4. Broadest recognition of leadership
5. Communicative and engaging
6. Appropriate responsibilities
7. Meaningful rewards
8. Trusting and respectful
9. Collaborative in development
10. Nurturing of valued professional expertise
11. Valuing professional forums and communities
12. Continuity and sustainability

Without trying to make overly literal inferences from the importance-‘in evidence’ grid above, it can be seen, relatively speaking, that:

- characteristics rated as important and most in evidence included ‘Communicative and engaging’, ‘Collaborative in development’ and ‘Trusting and respectful’;
- characteristics rated as least important and least in evidence included ‘Meaningful rewards’ and ‘Broadest recognition of leadership’; and
- while most characteristics appeared on a generally diagonal line in the grid (those rating relatively highly on importance were also rated as relatively highly in evidence), one characteristic was decidedly ‘off-diagonal’ – ‘Continuity and sustainability’ received the highest mean rating for importance combined with almost the lowest mean rating for ‘in evidence, suggesting a concern for the long-term sustainability of distributed leadership in the sector.



## Building and sustaining distributed leadership

In question 10, respondents were asked:

*In the context of management of the online learning environment at your University, please describe strategies for building and sustaining effective institutional distributed leadership that you feel are important.*

Fifteen responses were received, and they are listed here essentially verbatim, with only minor corrections of spelling made.

*Leaders/senior managers who understand and support distributed leadership.*

*The responses I have given refer to the institutional context not the context of an academic development unit. The environment in our AD Centre is one of distributed leadership and that ethos gets carried through in the work being done in partnership with staff and students across the institution. Sustainable development requires building or providing easy to use tools for staff not highly skilled in developing an online learning environment. Providing meaningful development opportunities for staff is critical. The 'experts' cannot be handmaidens to the communities with who they work. A partnership model of development has built leadership capacity and capability and this is key to sustainability. As previously highlighted, the institutional commitment not just to new toys ie technologies, but to the concept of online learning and the pedagogical principles underpinning online learning. Give people the skills and the tools and an ethos of collaboration and you have the mix for sustainability.*

*Effective governance, including appropriate representation and consultation on governance bodies. Listening to student voice. Effective collaboration and communication across support and administrative areas Alignment of strategic direction at faculty and university level.*

*We have a system where the Faculties employ their own development and support staff, and we centrally support those people thorough collaborative partnerships in a variety of ways. These include shared fora for staff, funding rewards, special training etc, general decision making about procedures around the LMS, shared templates. The downside is QA is variable.*

*Set up partnerships and frequent interactions among partners.*

*The business owner of the system needs to be seen to be promoting the use of these systems and/or empowering those who are responsible to it this on their behalf.*

*Recognition and appreciation of existing expertise. This needs opportunities and fora for this to be expressed. A flattened power structure to reduce high hurdles to progress.*

*1. Retreats 2. Interdepartmental forums/meetings 3. Collaborative research projects.*

*The institution needs to encourage a culture of innovation.*

*Continued recognition within the academic planning process, regular cross-functional discussion to align direction and to reinforce the sharing of common goals and outcomes.*

*That committees and reference groups are appropriately used so that the members see carriage of their input into the overall governance, but balanced with the understanding that it is the line managers that are responsible and not the committees and sometimes advice or recommendations are not going to be adopted. as long as the reasons for this are communicated, the connections are maintained. There needs to be a shift in authority away from the individual courses, to how the course contribute to warranting learning outcomes at the program/degree level. This doesn't need to be prescriptive or heavy handed, but it does need to impress the accountability of the course in the broader structures on the academics, and for the sake of the overall experience, considerations need to be appropriately weighed as to the use of emergent technologies or differentiated technologies and is the benefit of using these of a high enough value to disrupt the common experience. (it often is, this is more a case of trying to ensure that a reason is appropriate rather than vacuous).*

*Embedding the online learning environment in the general T&L environment is important - and we're making good progress on this. Getting senior managers to take ongoing ownership of e-learning initiatives has been problematic. The environment seems to be slowly changing.*

*I just feel we don't have any kind of acceptance of institutional distributed leadership - if you haven't got a formal role with powers to decide on matters, you don't get much of a look in.*

*Variety of timely communication channels for feedback, issue reporting eg opt-in Yammer, email list complementing regular but infrequent all-staff email. invitational process to contribute to development of the environment and platforms. agile change cycle (monthly) for incremental improvements. Business ownership sits unambiguously with DVCE. Nurturing of a culture of service and support excellence. What if?/why not? approach to development that balances innovation with acceptance of reasonable risk. Mix of internal and external service provision to share risk and to cost-effectively complement internal capability. Mutual respect for diverse skills of small central team and service providers.*

*Encouraging all staff to recognise the elements of their position that enable them to exercise leadership. Too many staff, regardless of role or formal position do not feel that they are leaders. This is probably partially because of experience - e.g. they have not been able to exercise their leadership capabilities and not have been encouraged or supported to contribute to the decision making process. This requires training and development - both formally and informally.*

## Other data / analysis

Many of the survey items resulted in ordinal data that can be treated as pseudo-interval data for the examination of the existence of correlations between item pairs. All of these items were tested for pair-wise correlation against each other. For a number of reasons...

- the relatively small absolute number of respondents;
  - the constrained four point response scale;
  - that response scales produce ordinal rather than true interval data;
- ...it would be unwise to infer too literally causal relationships between the item pairs.

However, for completeness, the observed statistically significant pair-wise correlations are reported here. For true interval data, one measure of correlation is the Pearson linear correlation coefficient ( $r$ ). For ordinal data, one measure of correlation is Spearman's rank correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ). The key observed correlations related to the ratings of satisfaction with particular elements of the framework and ratings of 'in evidence' for particular characteristics of distributed leadership. For these observed correlations, both  $r$  and  $\rho$  were large, positive and significant.

For the framework element 'Planning', high ratings of satisfaction were associated with high ratings of 'in evidence' for the distributed leadership characteristics of 'Communicative and engaging' ( $\rho = 0.731$ ;  $p < 1.6 \times 10^{-5}$  and  $r = 0.696$ ;  $p < 5.5 \times 10^{-5}$ ) and with high ratings of 'in evidence' for the distributed leadership characteristics of 'Appropriate responsibilities' ( $\rho = 0.720$ ;  $p < 2.3 \times 10^{-5}$  and  $r = 0.703$ ;  $p < 4.4 \times 10^{-5}$ ). An interpretation of these results is that planning is considered to be most effective when responsibilities are allotted rationally, and when institutional plans are effectively communicated.

For the framework element 'Organisational structure', high ratings of satisfaction were associated with high ratings of 'in evidence' for the distributed leadership characteristics of 'Enabled individual and collective agency' ( $\rho = 0.733$ ;  $p < 1.4 \times 10^{-5}$  and  $r = 0.720$ ;  $p < 2.3 \times 10^{-5}$ ), with high ratings of 'in evidence' for the distributed leadership characteristics of 'Appropriate responsibilities' ( $\rho = 0.771$ ;  $p < 2.6 \times 10^{-6}$  and  $r = 0.777$ ;  $p < 2.0 \times 10^{-6}$ ), with high ratings of 'in evidence' for the distributed leadership characteristics of 'Trusting and respectful' ( $\rho = 0.776$ ;  $p < 2.1 \times 10^{-6}$  and  $r = 0.706$ ;  $p < 3.9 \times 10^{-5}$ ), with high ratings of 'in evidence' for the distributed leadership characteristics of 'Collaborative in development' ( $\rho = 0.723$ ;  $p < 2.1 \times 10^{-5}$  and  $r = 0.700$ ;  $p < 4.9 \times 10^{-5}$ ) and with high ratings of 'in evidence' for the distributed leadership characteristics of 'Nurturing of valued professional expertise' ( $\rho = 0.762$ ;  $p < 4.0 \times 10^{-6}$  and  $r = 0.703$ ;  $p < 4.3 \times 10^{-5}$ ). These results provide a collective perspective on the distributed leadership environment that might support the development of an effective organisational structure.

## Conclusions

The survey reported on here sought the perspectives of ACODE institutional representatives on the quality management framework for online learning environments being developed as part of the project. A total of 46 current ACODE institutional representatives were publicly identifiable, and were invited to participate in the online survey. The survey respondent group was a representative sample of the generally understood institutional groupings given in Appendix 2. The survey responses revealed a largely common view across the Australasian sector, with no significant differences observed in the mean ratings received for ordinal response survey items, where comparisons could be made between institutional groups.

When asked to rate the importance of, and their satisfaction with, the six framework elements, respondents indicated that:

- Planning and Resourcing are considered most important;
- Organisational structure was given the lowest mean importance rating;
- Technologies received the highest mean rating of satisfaction, and the second lowest mean rating of importance, suggesting that this element is perceived as being under control;
- respondents were least satisfied with Resourcing and Evaluation; and
- the element with the highest mean importance rating and almost equal lowest mean satisfaction rating was Resourcing – everyone would like more money and people!

Respondents were asked to indicate the importance of pair-wise interactions between the six framework elements. If all of the pair-wise mean importance ratings associated with a particular framework function are summed, then the highest composite importance value is obtained for Resourcing and the lowest composite importance value is obtained for Organisational structure.

The alignment of distributed leadership relationships that might be inferred from an organisational chart, including those that might be observed running both vertically and horizontally), was rated as significantly more important and effective than the alignment of distributed leadership relationships that might be seen as cutting obliquely across the ‘natural’ linear linkages in the formal organisational structure, and arising between formal and informal organisational leaders. Under such an environment, it would seem to be largely the responsibility of those in formal leadership roles to recognise and nurture distributed leadership capacity within universities.

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of 12 characteristics of distributed leadership, and how clearly in evidence those characteristics were at their university. It was found that:

- characteristics rated as important and most in evidence included ‘Communicative and engaging’, ‘Collaborative in development’ and ‘Trusting and respectful’;
- characteristics rated as least important and least in evidence included ‘Meaningful rewards’ and ‘Broadest recognition of leadership’; and
- while most characteristics appeared on a generally diagonal line in the grid (those rating relatively highly on importance were also rated as relatively highly in evidence), one characteristic was decidedly ‘off-diagonal’ – ‘Continuity and sustainability’ received the highest mean rating for importance combined with almost the lowest mean rating for ‘in evidence, suggesting a concern for the long-term sustainability of distributed leadership in the sector.

Other survey results are also included in the report.

## Appendix 1 - Survey of ACODE institutional representatives

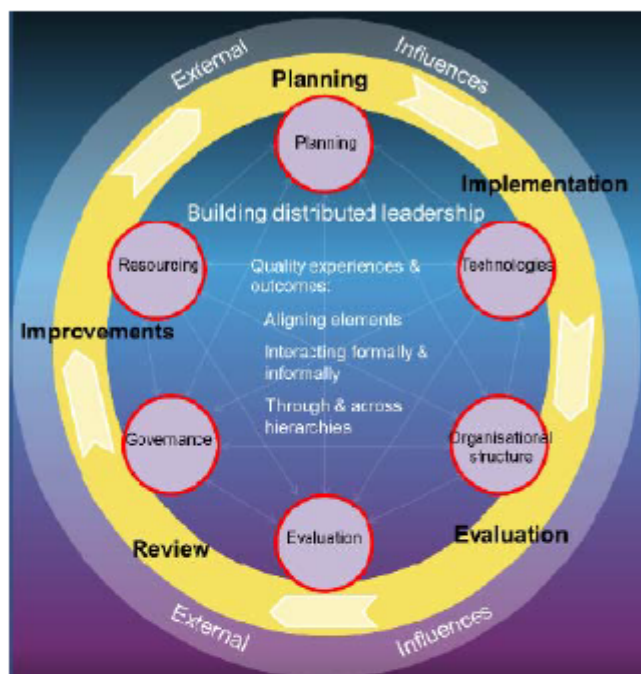
### Background information

1. **Please classify your University by selecting a grouping from the following list.** Hovering your mouse over the grouping will show the membership of that grouping.
  - ☐ University from the South Pacific or New Zealand
  - ☐ Member of the Australian Group of Eight
  - ☐ Member of the Australian Technology Network
  - ☐ Member of the Australian Innovative Research Universities
  - ☐ Member of the Australian Regional Universities Network
  - ☐ Australian university otherwise non-aligned
  
2. **In addition to your role as ACODE institutional representative/contact, please identify your substantive organisational role:**
  - ☐ Director (or equivalent) of a central Teaching and Learning Unit
  - ☐ Director (or equivalent) of Information Technology services
  - ☐ Director (or equivalent) of Educational Technology Services
  - ☐ Other – please specify

### Framework elements

3. The Framework in its current form consists of six interrelated elements (identified in the red circles in the following summary diagram).

You can access a short explanatory audio commentary about the Framework (mp3 file; ~6min:30sec; ~2MB) by clicking this [link](#). (Depending on your browser settings, you may need to right-click the link, save the file and play it separately)



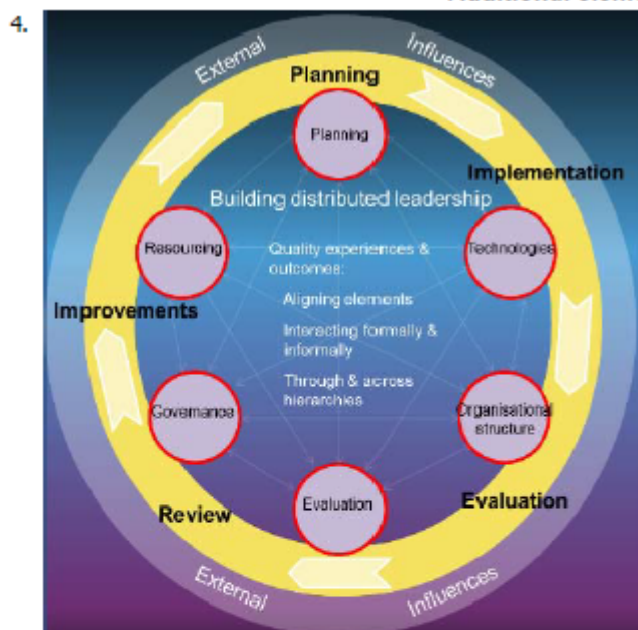
You can access a brief background document on the Framework (pdf file; ~120KB) by clicking this [link](#). Hovering your mouse over the element name in the table below will show a description of that element.

For each of the six Framework elements listed below please rate:

- **how important** you feel that element is for effective management of the online learning environment at your University; and
- **how satisfied** you are with your University's performance on that element.

Framework elements	Importance				Satisfaction			
	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Not satisfied	Partially satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organisational structure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Governance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technologies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Resourcing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Evaluation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Additional elements



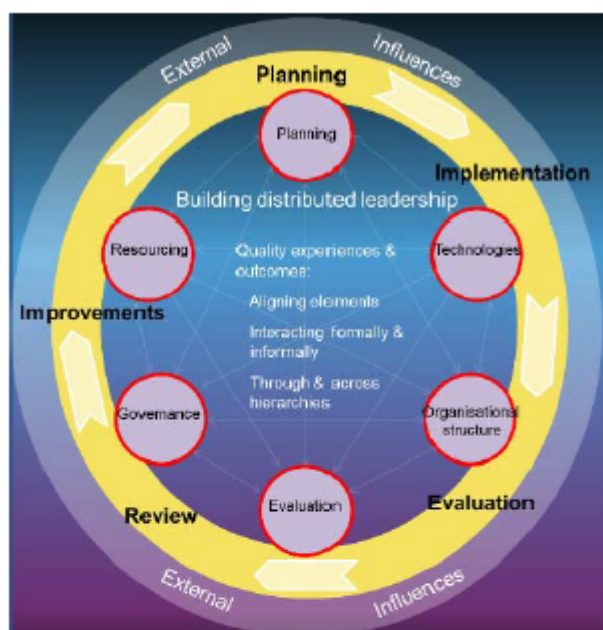
You can access a brief background document on the Framework by clicking this [link](#).

In addition to the six elements (identified in the red circles) please list any other elements that you consider important for the effective leadership of the online learning environment at your University.



### Interactions between Framework elements

5. The Framework includes the possibility of important interactions between the elements.



You can access a brief background document on the Framework by clicking this [link](#).

Possible pair-wise interactions between the six Framework elements are listed in the table below. Please rate **how important** you feel that interaction is for the effective management of the online learning environment at your University.

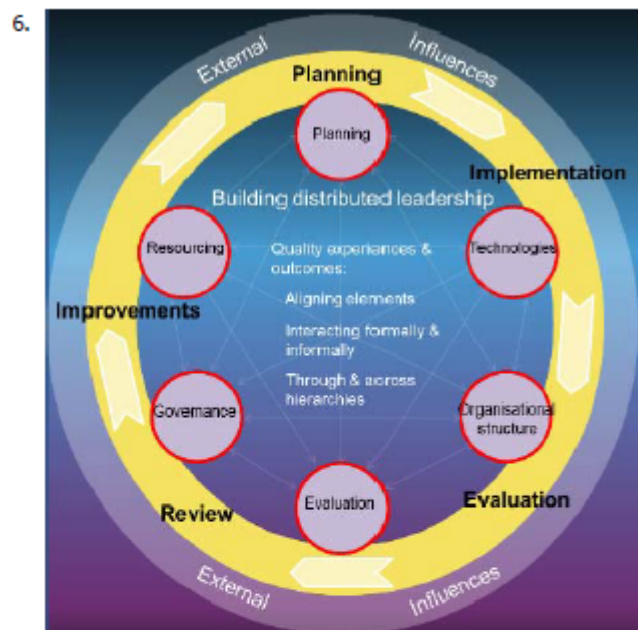
Hovering your mouse over the element name in the table below will show a description of that element.

**Please note:** N/A is the default selection for all interactions. Please use the drop-down box for other rating options.

Framework elements	Organisational structure	Governance	Technologies	Resourcing	Evaluation
Planning	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Organisational structure	--	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Governance	--	--	N/A	N/A	N/A
Technologies	--	--	--	N/A	N/A
Resourcing	--	--	--	--	N/A



### Additional Framework element interactions



You can access a brief background document on the Framework by clicking this [link](#).

Please list any other forms/combinations of interaction(s) between the elements of the Framework that you consider are important for the effective management of the online learning environment at your University.

### Distributed leadership for online learning environments

7. Distributed leadership approaches seem relevant to the complex task of managing online learning environments. We have defined distributed leadership as: **action by many people working collectively** across the institution to build leadership capacity in learning and teaching. Two measures of the performance of distributed leadership in an organisation are the alignments between

1. the vertical (formal line reporting relationships) and horizontal (peers in different work groups) actors/actions; and
2. the formal (organisationally appointed/sanctioned) and informal (emergent and relationship-based) actors/actions.

For the distributed leadership actors/actions identified below please rate:

- **how important** you feel the alignment between them is at your University; and
- **how effective** (generally) you feel the alignment between them is at your University.

Hovering your mouse over the distributed leadership actor/action in the table below will show a description of that actor/action.

Distributed leadership actors/actions	Importance				Effectiveness			
	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Not effective	Partially effective	Effective	Very effective
Alignment of vertical & horizontal leadership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alignment of formal & informal leadership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Additional factors indicating high performing distributed leadership

8. Please list any other factors that you consider are measures of distributed leadership for the management of online learning environments.

### Characteristics of distributed leadership

9. The Framework identifies a range of characteristics of distributed leadership. For each of the **12 characteristics of distributed leadership** listed below, in the context of quality management of the online learning environment at your University, please rate:

- **how important** that characteristic is for effective distributed leadership at your University; and
- **how clearly in evidence** that characteristic of distributed leadership is at your University.

Distributed leadership characteristic	Importance				In evidence			
	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Not in evidence	Partially in evidence	In evidence	Strongly in evidence
Enabled individual and collective agency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Co-created & shared vision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inclusive of all those who lead	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Broadest recognition of leadership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicative and engaging	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appropriate responsibilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Distributed leadership characteristic	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Not in evidence	Partially in evidence	In evidence	Strongly in evidence
Meaningful rewards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trusting and respectful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collaborative in development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nurturing of valued professional expertise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Valuing professional forums and communities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Continuity and sustainability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Building and sustaining distributed leadership

10. As with all forms of effective leadership, building and sustaining distributed leadership capacity are important for enhancing institutional performance. In the context of management of the online learning environment at your University, please describe strategies for building and sustaining effective institutional distributed leadership that you feel are important.

## Appendix 2 – Institutional groupings in Australasian Higher Education

### 1. South Pacific or New Zealand (SPNZ)

Auckland University of Technology  
 Lincoln University  
 Massey University  
 University of Auckland  
 University of Canterbury  
 University of Otago  
 University of the South Pacific  
 University of Waikato  
 Victoria University of Wellington

### 2. The Group of Eight (Go8)

Australian National University  
 Monash University  
 University of Adelaide  
 University of Melbourne  
 University of New South Wales  
 University of Queensland  
 University of Sydney  
 University of Western Australia

### 3. Innovative Research Universities (IRU)

Charles Darwin University  
 Flinders University  
 Griffith University  
 James Cook University  
 LaTrobe University  
 Murdoch University  
 University of Newcastle

### 4. Australian Technology Network (ATN)

Curtin University of Technology  
 Queensland University of Technology  
 RMIT University  
 University of South Australia  
 University of Technology, Sydney

### 5. Regional Universities Network (RUN)

Central Queensland University  
 Southern Cross University  
 University of Ballarat  
 University of New England  
 University of Southern Queensland  
 University of the Sunshine Coast

### 6. Non-aligned / No grouping

Australian Catholic University  
 Bond University  
 Charles Sturt University  
 Deakin University  
 Edith Cowan University  
 Macquarie University  
 Swinburne University of Technology  
 University of Canberra  
 The University of Notre Dame Australia  
 University of Tasmania  
 University of Western Sydney  
 University of Wollongong  
 Victoria University

Shaded institutions are those for which an ACODE representative could be publicly identified.