

# Assessment and Learning Partnerships

## Building Essential Skills

The University of Melbourne offers professional development for Australian Independent and State Government schools, focused on building the capacity of teachers to actively contribute to the learning of all students. The teachings stem from a collaborative research project carried out by the University. Three pathways are offered: [Assessment and Learning Partnerships Professional Development Program](#), [Online Short Course for School Leaders](#) and the [Specialist Certificate of Leadership of Assessment Practice](#). All courses reflect the commitment of the University to support the building of knowledge and capacity of both education leaders and teachers in their use of assessment data and the effective identification of students' learning needs.

### Assessment and Learning Partnerships Professional Development Program

The program is offered for Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) in schools. The program is targeted towards PLTs with students in years 3-10. No background knowledge is required. It runs for two years:

*Year 1: Learning about data and collaboration*

*Year 2: Implementing data driven decision-making and introducing frameworks for sustainability*

The online program involves PLTs of **4-6 people** working together. Each team is coordinated by a **team leader**. The collaborative decision making among the teachers is an essential aspect of the program and this takes some time to embed. The emphasis on the team rather than particular individuals ensures continuity even when members are absent or leave the school. Over 250 schools have been involved in the program since its inception.

The first year of the program consists of 10 compulsory modules – usually one module per month across the school year. The program is delivered through video lectures, webinars, videoconferencing tutorials, and podcasts. Each module consists of objectives, content, readings, apply to practice exercises and progress checks. The second year consists of an optional 10 modules.

PLTs will be assisted in both years by an online facilitator who will provide reflective feedback. Facilitators also make visits to PLTs in schools at important times of the year. Feedback will be provided in terms of developmental levels reached and advice will focus on possible action to move to the next level. This will model for teachers the same action recommended for student improvement. Briefings are also held at key times of the school year and seek to provide feedback to schools and provide updates on the latest research.

### Short Course for School Leaders

An alternative online pathway is provided for Principals, Assistant Principals and others who do not have direct access to a class or a functioning PLT to gain an overview of the program. The short course is available to all [here](#).

### Specialist Certificate in Leadership of Assessment Practice

The University of Melbourne offers a Specialist Certificate in Leadership of Assessment Practice which is available to teachers after completion of the professional development program. This certificate is a formal award course offered by the University and consists of two subjects 12.5 points each, which can be classed as credit towards a Masters of Education at the University of Melbourne. The cost of the Certificate is \$1900 (GST exempt); enrolment is on an individual basis.

*“The program has built teacher capacity in schools to use data to inform their teaching”*

**Jeremy Beard**  
Senior Advisor  
DEECD, Victoria

*“Schools in the former Southern region have been involved in the program for several years and you can see the improvement. The benefits are showing in improved student outcomes. The best thing about this program is that it works”*

**Bob Stephens**  
Deputy Regional Director  
North Eastern Victorian Region  
DEECD, Victoria

Schools have two enrolment options for the ALP Professional Development Program:

#### ALP Professional Development

**\$1800 (plus GST) for 2 years per PLT**

An early-bird price of \$1500 per PLT is also offered; see the Subject Guide for further detail.

#### ALP Research Program: Professional Development, Student Testing and Teacher Feedback

**Free for 2 years per PLT**

***Intake 12 beginning January 2014 is the last free Research intake for this course.***

Research participation includes PLT members completing online questionnaires in areas of: PLT functioning, metacognition, beliefs and attitudes, classroom practices and knowledge. Questionnaires are completed in one month during the course and total approximately one hour per year. School, PLT, teacher and student level data contribute to the investigative research project.

## Student Testing

Student testing is carried out twice a year using the [Assessment Research Centre Online Testing System \(ARCOTS\)](#). There are three multiple-choice item format tests which can be administered via ARCOTS: reading comprehension, numeracy and problem solving for Years 3 - 10. The testing system is quasi-adaptive to help teachers target assessments and match the tests to the student ability level to gain maximum information for teaching intervention. ARCOTS provides same-day reporting and uses test results to identify the point of readiness, or zone of proximal development of the student assessed and reports this against a developmental progression. Students with additional learning needs may complete the [SWANS](#) or [ABLES](#) assessments.

## The Mantras

There are many messages in our program and the use of mantras is a way of trying to make more complex messages easy to understand and to remember. Their use is meant to help emphasise and focus teachers' attention on particular behaviours. They, like the use of the professional learning team and a leader, are vehicles or media through which we convey the idea that data informs decisions. PLTs must continuously reflect on whether or not these mantras are being used and understood. More importantly, PLTs must routinely verify that the behaviours encapsulated are being enacted.

- i. Challenge, collaborate and check (decision making, use of evidence and accountability)
- ii. Evidence vs inference (explicit teaching to change observable behaviours)
- iii. 'Our' students not 'mine' (collective responsibility for group decisions)
- iv. Do, say, make, write (nature of evidence)
- v. Talk about the students not teachers (focus on outcomes not process)
- vi. Focus on development not deficit ( scaffolding and ZPD)
- vii. Teach to the construct not the test (developmental learning and assessment)
- viii. Assessment is for teaching (use of data for decision making)
- ix. Skills not scores (report on outcomes that are verifiable)
- x. Challenge not share (justify the use of evidence for decisions)
- xi. Use more than tests (multiple measures include test performance but test data should not be the exclusive piece of evidence. Measurement error applies to all forms of evidence interpretation).

## Professional Development Enrolment Procedures

**To enrol in the ALP Professional Development course or the Specialist Certificate in Leadership of Assessment Practice please contact UoM Commercial:**

Nalini Shyamsundar, Program Coordinator, UoM Commercial Ltd.  
[alpos@commercial.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:alpos@commercial.unimelb.edu.au), P: +61 3 9810 3342

Principals must ensure that the PLT is provisioned formal meeting time, on average one hour per fortnight. PLT members will also require additional preparation time to engage in lectures, readings, webinars etc, at least two hours per month.

Once a team has enrolled they will be allocated a facilitator who can provide guidance in setting up the team.

*Enrolments are not required for the Short Course for School Leaders.*

### Research requirements:

For schools wanting to take part in the Research option the Principal must provide consent for the school to participate and nominate a Research Contact for the school. The Principal must ensure adequate resources are available for the team to participate and must brief the PLT on the school's participation in the research. For more information on the research please contact [alp-research@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:alp-research@unimelb.edu.au).

## Background

### Assessment and Learning Partnerships Research

The Assessment and Learning Partnerships research investigates teachers' collaborative use of assessment data and the way in which it informs teaching. The project investigates the implications of shifting from a deficit or remedial model of teaching to a developmental approach. The criterion of success is the improvement in student learning outcomes.

The study uses the seminal work of Vygotsky which emphasises a developmental approach and focuses on students' readiness to learn and individual differences in their capacity to respond to scaffolding of learning.

The research study examines teachers' team based approach when working with student assessment data and making decisions about an intervention approach to teaching of literacy, numeracy and critical thinking. The links between the function of a PLT, the development of teacher knowledge, skills and attitudes are examined. The final link to student achievement is a major focus of the study.

The research is supported by the Australian Research Council, with the chief investigators located at the University of Melbourne and Partner Investigators from the Catholic Education Office, Melbourne and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria.

For more information and findings from the project please see the [project website](#) or email [alp-research@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:alp-research@unimelb.edu.au)



**Catholic Education Office**  
Archdiocese of Melbourne



**Department of Education and  
Early Childhood Development**



**GRADUATE  
SCHOOLS**

**MELBOURNE GRADUATE  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**  
Shaping minds, shaping the world