

BA Conference: short report for DASSH ebulletin

The Associate Deans Learning and Teaching Network (ADLTN) hosted a conference on 'The BA in Australia and New Zealand' on Thursday 12 - Friday 13 March at Deakin University Melbourne City Campus (DUMCC). Universities were well represented, with 45 ADLTS and BA program directors from all states and territories in Australia and from Massey University and Victoria University Wellington in New Zealand.

Day 1 focused on structural issues while Day 2 concentrated on possible futures for the BA with sessions on themes and on further directions for investigating trends in the BA.

On Day 1, Sarah Paddle of Deakin University opened the conference with an energising address on effective ways of using data to defend and advocate for the value of the BA. In the keynote session, Deanne Gannaway shared the extensive knowledge of the BA gained from her work on the BA Scoping and Benchmarking projects, and from her doctoral research. Sara Booth of the University of Tasmania led a discussion of how the BA might articulate with the OLT-funded Peer Review of Assessment project. Case studies on structural reviews of the BA were presented by Lucy Potter of Adelaide University, Ellen Warne of Australian Catholic University, Julie Duck of the University of Queensland, and Royston Gustavson of The Australian National University. A session on indigenising the BA curriculum was led by Richard Shaw of Massey University and Bronwyn Cole of the University of Western Sydney.

Day 2 opened with a discussion of aspects of the BA that warrant further and ongoing investigation. The ADLTN would like to use the recommendations from this discussion as the basis for a dialogue with the DASSH Board as to possible future work on the BA. A session was led by Deanne Gannaway on work skills required of future graduates and how Arts programs are placed to provide them. Kathryn Sutherland of Victoria University Wellington and Troy Whitford of Charles Sturt University led a session on vocational aspects of the BA. Pam Allen of the University of Tasmania, who is AD International as well as ADLT, discussed the internationalisation of the BA. Jennifer Clark told a cautionary tale about the University of New England's work in promoting the BA. The conference ended with a summarising and synthesising discussion facilitated by Adel Wessell of Southern Cross University and Kathryn Sutherland of Victoria University Wellington.

The conference was widely acclaimed as practical, useful and inspirational. Delegates declared that they felt refreshed to return to their universities with many new ideas and strategies for defending, developing and advocating for the BA. It was unanimously acknowledged that the trans-Tasman bringing together of BA program directors – as far as we know, the first time this has been done – was of great value and should be repeated.

A full report on the conference with recommendations will be submitted to the DASSH Board for its consideration. The report, with associated materials from the conference, will also be placed on the DASSH website.

The ADLTN would like to thank DASSH, Deakin University, The Australian National University, Monash University, Swinburne University and the University of Melbourne for their generous sponsorship of the conference. The conference organising committee would like to thank all delegates for their knowledgeable, intelligent and enthusiastic participation and to the many ADLTS who encouraged their BA program directors to attend.

Joy Wallace, Charles Sturt University
Royston Gustavson, The Australian National University
Sally Totman Marshall, Deakin University