

Disciplines-based Initiatives Scheme

Scheme Description

Information for Applying for Discipline- based Investigation Funds

Application Form for Investigation Funds

The Carrick Institute is an Initiative of the Australian Department
of Education, Science and Training

July 2006

This document provides information on the Carrick Institute Discipline-based Initiatives and instructions on how to apply for funding. The document is presented in three parts:

1. Description of the Discipline-based Initiative Scheme
2. Information for applying for Discipline-based Investigation Funds
3. Application form for Discipline-based Investigation Funds

Queries about this scheme should be directed to

A/Prof Janice Orrell
Director, Discipline-based Initiatives, RIN
The Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education
janice.orrell@carrickinstitute.edu.au
ph 02 8667 8506

Key Funding application dates for 2006-2007:

Friday, August 4, 2006

April 2007

August 2007

1. The Discipline-Based Initiatives Scheme

The introduction of the Carrick Institute Discipline-Based Initiatives Scheme provides an important opportunity to encourage greater sharing of quality practice, initiatives and learning within and across discipline communities. This Scheme is situated in the Carrick Institute's objectives and values *to provide for discipline-specific development, dissemination and application of good practice.*

Educational research has generated considerable evidence upon which the enhancement and development of learning and teaching in higher education institutions can be based. At the same time, new approaches indicated by this research often require translation and adaptation to be considered relevant to discipline specialists and accommodate the particular challenges and demands of individual disciplines.

Through the Discipline-Based Initiatives Scheme, the Carrick Institute will collaborate with various groups across the sector to identify and address issues of national significance for higher education. Discipline-Based Initiatives will be funded to address contemporary and future-oriented challenges to higher education, namely inclusiveness, globalization, internationalization, collaboration, generic and discipline specific graduate capabilities, quality assurance and effective and revitalized discipline leadership.

In the first stage of this Scheme, the Carrick Institute will work with disciplinary leaders to develop three large scale pilot initiatives in Science, Law and ICT. In addition, funds will be available to other disciplines to review and outline the scope of future Discipline-Based Initiatives that are of sector-wide significance.

The outcomes of the Discipline-Based Initiatives will be characterized by the **values** adopted by the Carrick Institute, that is:

- **Inclusiveness:** by assisting the development of networks and communities which support higher education staff who have a direct impact on the advancement of learning and teaching.
- **Diversity:** by recognizing and valuing institutional and discipline differences and similarities in terms of philosophy and predominant form of educational mode and delivery.
- **Long-term change:** through a focus on systemic change.
- **Collaboration:** through the schemes, its funds and its practices of engagement.
- **Excellence:** through the recognition of quality in its Schemes and awards and its encouragement of higher education institutions to recognise and reward quality teaching and learning.

The Discipline-Based Initiatives (DBI) Scheme will lead to outcomes consistent with the **objectives** for which the Carrick Institute was established. That is, they will:

- Promote and support strategic change in higher education institutions for the enhancement of learning and teaching, including curriculum development and assessment;
- Raise the profile and encourage recognition of the fundamental importance of teaching in higher education institutions and in the general community;
- Foster and acknowledge excellent teaching in higher education;

- Develop effective mechanisms for the identification, development, dissemination and embedding of good individual and institutional practice in learning and teaching in Australian higher education;
- Develop and support reciprocal national and international arrangements for the purpose of sharing and benchmarking learning and teaching process; and
- Identify learning and teaching issues that impact on the Australian higher education system and facilitate national approaches to address these and other emerging issues.

The **outcomes** of Discipline-Based Initiatives Scheme, as with the other Carrick Institute Schemes, will contribute to:

- Higher levels, and more distributed spread, of discipline-based engagement in leading positive, future oriented, **systemic change** in learning and teaching;
- **Increased engagement** of all related stakeholders in a discipline in the development of learning and teaching practice;
- The promotion and development of **improved discipline-based learning and teaching** through review, benchmarking, innovation, research and scholarship.
- Development within discipline-based communities of options for articulating and monitoring academic **standards**.

Discipline-Based Initiatives Organisational Framework

Disciplines in Australian higher education are diverse in their level of curriculum development and sector-wide collaboration in regard to learning and teaching. There is no attempt to define or determine disciplines in this framework. It does, however, provide Carrick Institute with a point of reference to ensure comprehensive provision of discipline-based funding.

Some disciplines have been the subject of systematic investigation and development, supported by prior focused investment by DEST, CUTSD, AUTC and the Carrick Institute. While these investigations have differed in their focus on teaching and learning within the different disciplines, they have resulted in systematic research and clarification of issues and needs. The first broad category in the organisational framework includes **disciplines that have undertaken prior investigation and have had prior investment**. As a result of these prior opportunities to research and identify significant issues and form extensive networks, these disciplines are well placed to embark on discipline-based initiatives that develop and extend this initial work. This group of disciplines is identified as Category A in the Framework.

Other groups of disciplines have not attracted systematic funding support and **have not undertaken preliminary investigations** and scoping that the previous group has been able to achieve. These disciplines need to first engage in a scoping exercise to identify what resources, needs and priorities exist within their discipline. It is recognised that these disciplines may have long term challenges that need to be confronted as well as emerging issues that face them in the future. This group of disciplines is identified as Category B in the Framework.

Another group of disciplines can be categorised as involving **sector-wide institutional curriculum**. For example, one such curriculum concern is that of ‘service’ or ‘applied’ subjects and professional degree programmes. This includes disciplines that need to be taught in a large number of courses (sometimes called service teaching and often taught in courses that have professional requirements). Those who work within these (service

oriented) disciplines often do not have the opportunity to influence the curriculum design which involves their disciplines, nor the structuring of their input. There often are tensions around balance to ensure a rigorous foundation of disciplinary knowledge and the applied nature of professional practice. Also service topics may be attempting to teach students from quite diverse disciplines in the same class. These share a curriculum challenge of managing dual and sometimes competing requirements of the industry and the institution. On one hand they have to develop and protect the academic integrity of a body of knowledge and ensure that there is a group of young scholars sufficiently developed to become its academic leaders of the future. On the other hand, they have to ensure that the content and teaching processes have relevance for professions and meet beginning professional competencies or registration requirements. Other concerns within the group of sector-wide curriculum issues are cross cultural and indigenous curricular issues, and graduate and research education, including Honours and Coursework Masters Schemes. This group of disciplines is identified as Category C in the Framework.

Finally, a large and diverse set of **higher education enterprises** make significant but often under-recognised contributions to the effective functioning and improvement of learning and teaching in universities and to the capabilities of graduates. These include the work of various support and administrative units found in most universities, for example: Dean and Directors of Students Affairs, disability officers, indigenous education counsellors, academic professional development staff, work-based learning managers and coordinators, librarians, academic teaching and learning policy developers, student learning support academics. While it is recognised that this category is not strictly speaking a “discipline”, the focus of endeavour is underpinned by a body of scholarship and research. The importance of these endeavours to the quality of education in institutions are well recognised and represented in DEST and AUQA indicators of success and excellence in universities, (e.g., widened participation, graduate employment, student retention and teaching and supervision preparations and support, off-shore, transnational education among others.) Therefore, it is important that these communities of endeavour are given the opportunity to gain support from the Carrick Institute systematically to address and enhance their contribution to the quality of students’ experiences of learning and teaching. This group of endeavour is identified as Category D in the Framework.

The Discipline-Based Organisational Framework is summarized in the following table.

Table 1: Discipline-Based Organisational Framework

Subject-based Disciplines	Communities of Endeavour
Category A	Category C
Prior investigation and investment disciplines Focus: Extension and development of initiatives and networks for discipline-based initiatives.	Sector-wide curriculum and institutional concerns Focus: Curriculum development and issues in: Service-teaching or applied subjects in professional degrees; Professional degree programmes; Research and postgraduate programmes, Indigenous and Cross cultural
Category B	Category D
No or limited prior investigation or investment Focus: First stage investigations and scoping	Higher education enterprise Focus: Institution-wide functions and issues

Guiding principles

The following principles provide a **vision** for guiding approaches to the development of Discipline-Based Initiatives.

The Carrick Institute Discipline-Based Initiative Scheme:

- 1. Recognises the dynamism of discipline-based learning and teaching development*
Discipline-based initiatives for improving learning and teaching take place and are negotiated at the point of practice. For this reason, evidence-based initiatives have the potential for immediate and measurable impact on the nature of teaching, innovation in curriculum design and the quality of student learning experiences and outcomes.
- 2. Fosters creative interdisciplinary engagement*
Cross disciplinary interaction with the capacity to develop unique interdisciplinary relationships are encouraged, while ensuring that discipline specific issues are addressed. The aim is to develop both generic and discipline-based learning and teaching knowledge and expertise, building strong and robust discipline communities which work closely with their many stakeholders.
- 3. Maintains the focus of initiatives on the student experience*
One of the key purposes of the Carrick Institute and its initiatives is to ensure promulgation and uptake of high quality educational programmes for the benefit of students. The ultimate goal is enhanced student learning outcomes and experiences that will constitute a new generation of graduates who are well equipped to make constructive contributions to the Australian community and beyond. Within these initiatives attention must be paid to the diversity of the student body and the diversity of motivations for undertaking a university education.
- 4. Ensures constructive collaboration between disciplinary stakeholders*
A number of professional and industry bodies have high stakes investment in the capabilities of future graduates. In general, however, industry, government, community and professional stakeholder engagement in the development of higher education practice has been largely underdeveloped in Australia. Where high level engagement has occurred, it has largely been with professional bodies that have a role in professional registration. This discipline-based portfolio has the opportunity to promote a much needed deeper engagement between industry and institutions in regard to curriculum innovation and enhancing the quality of higher education in Australia.
- 5. Builds on past experiences, successes and existing resources*
Considerable work has already occurred in various disciplines. Deliberate attempts must be made to maximize the impact of this work and to disseminate it in areas where little has occurred. In addition, opportunities exist to support the development of critical sector-wide initiatives through encouraging and enabling synergies between grants, fellowships and discipline-based developments.
- 6. Engages with international issues and globalization*
The Carrick Institute's Discipline-Based Initiatives provides an opportunity to engage with international higher education issues and in particular to identify fields in which Australia can take global leadership. It is desirable for the longer term health of the Australian Higher Education sector to be recognized as the international benchmark in fields where we have the capacity to develop leadership.
- 7. Develops what is uniquely Australian*
There have been some very significant international developments in relation to some types of discipline-based development of learning and teaching (for example, the UK

and the USA); however, currency and relevance to the contemporary Australian context are very important. Therefore, it is equally important to develop Schemes that address particular issues pertaining to uniquely Australian national capabilities, priorities, interests and strongly felt needs in the Australian Higher Education sector and in other stakeholder groups.

8. *Attends to the research-teaching nexus*

Attention to evidence-based initiatives and the scholarship of teaching are sought as are the pursuit of authentic synergies between teaching and research to enable disciplines and academics who teach within them. To forge productive links between teaching and research activities in the institutions is an important goal for Discipline-Based Initiatives.

9. *Ensures sustainability of initiatives*

It is important to move beyond atomistic efforts that have often limited the value of past work. As a result, some of the important direction and motivation of discipline based projects was lost once the funding period was over. It is important to ensure that sustaining prior and new initiatives can be achieved by seeking to embed them in policies, structures, procedures and systems and where feasible, up-scale them across the sector and seeking transferability where appropriate across discipline boundaries. The Resource Identification Network (RIN) will also be an important instrument in supporting sustainability of networks, communities of common endeavour and resource availability.

10. *Is proactive through encouraging initiatives*

A critical question is: "How to stimulate into action those disciplines that need to address issues of learning and teaching?" The Carrick Institute will be proactive in its engagement with the disciplines and institutions.

Implementation of the Discipline-based Initiatives Scheme

To accommodate the diversity among Australian higher education discipline communities, it is proposed that the different categories of projects will be funded as pilot initiatives in the following ways:

1. **Pilot Discipline Initiatives.** Three specific discipline initiatives will be funded in Category A. These pilot initiatives will be used to provide tested indications of what will be the most appropriate discipline-based scheme for the Australian context. A discipline forum to explore the potential opportunities for discipline based development in Australia will be held in 2007 to capture and develop the learning from these pilot Programmes.
2. **Discipline-Based Investigations, Review and Scoping Funds.** This funding will apply to several categories. Firstly, disciplines that have undertaken prior investigation that have not been selected as pilot initiatives may seek Discipline Investigative Funds to review and scope projects that build on prior work (Category A-2). Secondly, Category B disciplines that have undertaken limited or no prior investigation may seek Discipline-based Investigative Funds to research, review, identify and scope the key issues for their discipline that they might address as sector wide initiatives if successful in subsequent discipline-based funding rounds. Thirdly, disciplines that represent Category C sector-wide, institutional curriculum concerns may apply for investigative funds to outline the dimensions of concerns and to identify possible means for attending to them. These disciplines include service teaching disciplines and professional degree programmes.

3. **Higher Education Enterprise Consortium-Based Tenders.** A forum of higher education teaching and learning leaders will be held in August 2006 to focus on Category D (and some aspects of Category C) to identify and prioritise sector-wide curriculum issues and teaching and learning enterprise concerns. Following the forum, briefs will be developed taking into account issues and priorities identified at the forum and a call will be made for discipline and institutional leaders to tender to undertake the projects.

Action Plan for Implementation and Funding in 2006/7

1 Category A

This category includes those disciplines that have the best immediate potential for generating a model of a successful discipline initiative upon which to develop future initiatives. This category consists largely of those disciplines where considerable work has already been undertaken as AUTC grants or similar DEST funding schemes and where there are reasonably clear and commonly agreed needs and priorities.

- A limited number of Category A discipline projects will be piloted in the first eighteen months. The experience and learning from this first phase will inform subsequent full implementation of the Discipline-Based Initiatives Scheme.
- The selection of Category A initiatives has been delegated to the Chair of the Carrick Standing Committee, Executive Director of the Carrick Institute and the Director of the Discipline-Based Scheme who will advise the Standing Committee. The selection of the three pilot disciplines is based on background research of national and international significance. A consultation process will occur with the discipline leaders and stakeholders for these selected Category A disciplines to identify the key issues that ought to be addressed in any funded initiative. These pilots will provide models for the development of future discipline based development initiatives.
- The 2006 disciplines selected for 2006 are Science, Law and ICT (Now identified as A-1).
- Funds in the vicinity of \$200,000 will be made available to support the undertaking of already identified, specified developmental and dissemination activities and ensure their uptake sector-wide.
- Drawing from the experience of this consultation process, Carrick Institute will develop a Category A brief. This will be advertised and collaborative and representative discipline-based groups will be encouraged to submit tenders.
- A national Discipline Development Forum of key stakeholders including Councils of Deans, discipline leaders and related professional and industry groups will be held in early (March/April) 2007. This forum will establish a vision for sustained discipline-based development and gain sector engagement and support.
- Concurrent with the Category A-1 selected pilot initiatives, some Discipline-based Investigative Funds will be made available for investigative projects for previously investigated disciplines (A-2) but not selected as pilot Programmes. In these projects discipline leaders will be able to seek funds to identify core issues and assess their potential for development for future larger discipline-based projects. A general brief, inviting disciplines to submit a tender to conduct a preliminary investigative and scoping project will be advertised.
- Category A-2 Disciplines will be invited in August 2006 and April and August 2007 to apply for funds of up to \$100,000 to review and update the findings from the prior studies and develop scoping plans for initiatives that will revitalise their discipline-based activities for 2007-2009 funding rounds.

2. Category B

This category includes those disciplines where there is a lack of baseline data relating to existing resources and/or national priorities where little funded developmental activity has occurred to date. These disciplines need to establish commonly agreed needs, interests and priorities.

- Discipline-based Investigative Funds in the vicinity of \$100,000 will be made available in the first instance to facilitate dialogue between the relevant stakeholders, and for scoping and research to develop a baseline of information to guide future planning to address commonly agreed priorities. These funds will be offered in August 2006 and April and August 2007. The intention is that following these scoping activities some of these disciplines would be re-categorised as Category A when more detailed, evidence-based initiatives can be proposed.

3 Categories C and D

Categories C and D are characterised as **Communities of Endeavour**.

Category C includes disciplines that are challenged by common sector and curriculum and institutional concerns. This includes disciplines that need to be taught in a large number of courses (sometimes called service teaching and often taught in courses that have professional requirements). **Category D** includes those who are engaged in the development of the higher education enterprise in order to develop or improve student learning outcomes and experiences activities.

Some Category C and D groups are already well organised and have well developed plans and priorities. Many are also underpinned by a substantial body of scholarly work. In the first instance, the full scope of this field will need to be identified as some aspects are often marginal or somewhat invisible within institutions and across the sector. As is the case in Category B, some scoping of what is available and what is commonly agreed to be priorities will need to be developed.

1. Disciplines that are commonly service providers or preparation for professions are eligible to apply for Discipline-based Investigative funds.
2. A forum of higher education teaching and learning will be held with leaders from the institutions, for example, DVC and PVC (Academic and/or Teaching and Learning), Directors of Academic Development and Deans and Directors of Student Affairs to identify priority issues for the Higher Education Enterprise and Curriculum Issue. In addition, background papers on sector wide curriculum issues and teaching and learning enterprise concerns will inform the Forum. Following the forum, agreed directions and priorities will be developed into project briefs.
3. A call will be made for disciplinary teams and institutional leaders to tender and undertake the projects in a process that is similar to the way in which the AUTC projects were undertaken.

Structural Organisation and Management Systems

Discipline-based Initiatives will:

- Be led by disciplinary and institutional leaders;
- Be hosted by institutions that will provide coordination and leadership;
- Involve, where appropriate, multiple institutions and stakeholder groups;
- Utilise existing structures and forums in the Higher Education sector rather than generating new groupings. (For example, Councils of Deans, Assistant Deans, and the DVC/PVC (Academic) Group). Only where such bodies do not exist will the DBI Scheme seek or assist in the generation of alternative on-going structures;
- Vigorously pursue the involvement of middle management (Heads of Schools/Departments) to ensure the embedding of new initiatives in systems and structures. This will ensure support of initiatives at the highest level and sustainability of the initiatives;
- Adopt a common web-based architecture for DBI websites and ultimately be incorporated into the Resource Information Network;
- Maintain communicative and consultative links with the Carrick Director for the Discipline-based Initiative Scheme.

Selection Criteria for Initiatives

Criteria for selection of discipline-based initiatives will include (but not necessarily be restricted to) considerations of sustainability of the initiative, applicability to a wide cross-section of the Australian higher education community and demonstrable commitment from the relevant leaders and stakeholders in the discipline groups. In addition it is envisaged that each discipline-based pilot initiative will have its own specific criteria corresponding to the recommendations from the consultative process.

General selection criteria include:

Category A: Pilot Programmes

1. Potential for success
2. Well developed cross-sector collaboration and representation of expert and stakeholder groups;
3. Clear vision and well developed strategies for implementation that accounts for, and builds on, prior discipline-based initiatives.
4. Clear articulation of deliverables that have potential usefulness for the sector as a whole including cross-disciplinary learning and initiatives as well as consideration of the nature and extent of infrastructure that will be required to sustain discipline-based collaboration;
5. Attention to the values and objectives of the Carrick Institute and the principles of the Discipline-Based Initiatives Scheme;
6. Unambiguous endorsement by national and institutional discipline leaders;
7. Clear plan for managing and distributing the funds;
8. Appropriate budget justification;
9. Well developed and practical plan for evaluation and dissemination.

Category A-2, B and C: Scoping Initiatives

1. Unambiguous endorsement and engagement by national and institutional discipline leaders;
2. Well developed collaboration and representation across the sector and with expert and stakeholder groups;
3. Clear vision and well developed strategies for generating a direction for future discipline leaders;
4. Engagement of the principles of the Discipline-based Initiatives Scheme
5. Clear plan for managing and distributing the funds;
6. Appropriate budget justification.

Category C and D: Investigative Initiatives

1. Well developed collaboration and representation across the sector and with expert and stakeholder groups;
2. Clear articulation of deliverables that have potential usefulness for the sector as a whole;
3. Attention to the values and objectives of the Carrick Institute and the principles of Discipline-Based Initiatives Scheme;
4. Unambiguous endorsement by national and institutional discipline leaders;
5. Clear vision and well developed strategies for implementation that will benefit the sector as a whole;
6. Clear plan for managing and distributing the funds;
7. Appropriate budget justification;
8. Well developed and practical plan for evaluation and dissemination.