

ENGAGING NATIONALLY IN A DISCIPLINE BASED COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: LESSONS FOR SUCCESS

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ACELL is a successful national project which has been running for six years. The project established a national community of practice which has collaborated to improve the quality of student learning in undergraduate chemistry laboratories. Funded originally as a CUTSD project in 1999, under the name APCELL, it brought together more than 30 universities teaching Physical Chemistry. On the basis of the project's success the team successfully applied for funding from the Higher Education Innovation Program (HEIP) in 2004 and subsequently the Collaboration and Structural Reform (CASR) Fund to expand the project to all Chemistry disciplines.

ACELL is a practical example of what evidence based teaching enhancement can look like at a national and now international scale, within a discipline. It is student focused in that it is grounded in the idea of teaching improvement being driven by evidence about how students learn both from the literature and from students' evaluation of their teaching and learning experiences. It draws on the established processes of academic peer review and scholarly publication for quality assurance and dissemination.

This session will provide an overview of the project, including a presentation of the template and peer review processes. In the session we will identify the challenges and faced and strategies used in establishing such a disciplinary community of practice. We will draw on evaluation data from the project to illustrate the impact of the initiative in relation to benchmarking, peer review, dissemination of best practice and professional development of university teachers.