

# Denise CHALMERS (EiRP 2017)

Emeritus Professor, University of Western Australia

National Senior Teaching Fellow (OLT)

Personal page: <http://denisechalmers.com.au/biography/>

[EiRP Ruth Wong Memorial Lecture 2017 "Quality Teaching: Why it matters and how it contributes to an excellent student experience"](#)

[EiRP 2017 Workshop "Evidencing Teaching"](#)

## About Denise Chalmers:

Denise, Emeritus Professor in the field of higher education teaching and learning at the University of Western Australia, was awarded an Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) National Senior Teaching Fellowship in 2015 and an Australian Awards for University Teaching: Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning in 2014.

She has over 25 years of demonstrated leadership in higher education. She led two university Centres of Teaching and Learning as Director and was the Foundation Director of the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (later renamed the Australian Learning and Teaching Council and subsequently the Office for Learning and Teaching in 2012) with responsibility for Awards, Fellowships and International Links. She served as President (2008-2013) and then as Vice President (2014-2015) of the Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development (CADAD). She has initiated and led several institutional, national and international initiatives and projects including developing and embedding teaching quality criteria and indicators and promoting the use of teaching and learning performance indicators to guide decision making and resource allocation.

Since August 2015, Denise has worked as a higher education consultant with institutions, organisations and individuals on aspects of teaching and learning that she has the expertise and experience. In recent years, she has been an evaluator, reviewer, presenter and advisor to organisations, universities and projects in Australia and internationally.

## Education:

M.Ed. Murdoch University, Western Australia, winning the W.A.I.E.R. Postgraduate prize in Education

B.Ed., Mount Lawley College of Advanced Education, Western Australia

DIPT, Graylands Teachers College, Western Australia

## Teaching Awards:

- National Senior Teaching Fellowship (OLT): Recognising and rewarding teaching: Australian teaching criteria and standards and expert peer review, 2015-17.
- Australian Awards for University Teaching: Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning for "25 years of scholarly innovation and leadership to enhance student learning and

engagement through developing university teachers and teaching” (Australian Government), 2014

- Award for Excellence in the Leadership of Academic Development (University of Western Australia), 2013
- Teaching Fellowship Award for Excellence in Teaching (Edith Cowan University), 1992.

## Select Publications:

### Books

Hunt, L., & Chalmers, D. (Eds.). (2012). *University teaching in focus: A learning-centred approach*. Victoria, Australia: Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) Press.

### Chapter(s) in books

Chalmers, D., & Partridge, L. (2012). Teaching graduate attributes and academic skills. In Hunt, L. & Chalmers, D. (Eds.), *University teaching in focus: A learning-centred approach* (pp. 56-73). Victoria, Australia: Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) Press.

Chalmers, D., & Tucker, B. (in press). A national strategy for teaching excellence – one university at a time. In Broughan, C., Steventon, G., & Clouder, L. (Eds.), *Global Perspectives on Teaching Excellence: A new era for Higher Education*. London: Taylor and Francis Books.

Hunt, L., & Chalmers, D. (2016). Change leadership, management and strategies to promote quality university teaching and learning. In S. Mukerji, & P. Tripathi (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Administration, Policy, and Leadership in Higher Education*, (pp. 377-403). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Hunt, L., Chalmers, D., & Macdonald, R. (2012). Effective classroom teaching. In Hunt, L. & Chalmers, D. (Eds.), *University teaching in focus: A learning-centred approach* (pp. 21-37). Victoria, Australia: Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) Press.

### Refereed Journals

Chalmers, D. (2011). Progress and challenges to the recognition and reward of the scholarship of teaching in higher education. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 30(1), 25-38.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2011.536970>

Chalmers, D., & Gardiner, D. (2015). An evaluation framework for identifying the effectiveness and impact of academic teacher development programs. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 46, 81–91.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2015.02.002>

Chalmers, D., & Gardiner, D. (2015). The measurement and impact of university teacher development programs. *Educar*, 51(1), 53-80. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5565/rev/educar.655>

Chalmers, D., & Hunt, L. (2016). Evaluation of teaching. *HERDSA Review of Higher Education*, 3, 25-55.

## Competitive National Teaching and Learning Grants and Reports:

Australian University Teaching Criteria and Standards Framework Project (2012-14).  
<http://uniteachingcriteria.edu.au/>

Identification and implementation of indicators and measures of impact on teaching preparation programs in higher education. (2011-12)

Recognising and rewarding teaching: Australian teaching criteria and standards and expert peer review (2015-17). <http://recognisinguniteaching.edu.au/>

Rewarding and recognising quality teaching and learning through developing teaching and learning indicators in Australian universities (2007-10).

# EiRP Workshop: Evidencing Teaching

Professor Denise Chalmers

*Why evidence teaching? How we do evidence teaching in a systematic, effective, and scholarly manner?*



*EiR 2017 Prof Denise Chalmers*

These are questions that the Educator-in-Residence (EiR) for 2017 Professor Denise Chalmers responded to at a workshop on **Evidencing Teaching** on 28 August 2017. The workshop was a follow-up on the EiRP-Ruth Wong Memorial Lecture she gave on 24 August 2017 on “*Why Recognizing and Rewarding Teaching is Critical to Achieving an Excellent Student Experience*”.

There are two purposes for evidencing teaching that Prof Chalmers impressed upon the participants, namely (a) to improve practice (with a focus on process); and (b) to document quality of practice (which is a summative exercise).

She then discussed a framework where evidence on teaching can be drawn from four sources—**peers and colleagues, self-assessment, input from students, and student achievement**. At a micro and more

individual level in enhancing practice, these sources inform us about how we as teachers have an impact on our learners. At a macro and on a larger scale, the four sources provide evidence on the impact of teaching on learning.

By walking through with the participants concrete examples for each source of evidence, Prof Chalmers illustrated how such data could be collected in a systematic and effective way. For instance, peers and colleagues could provide formative feedback on programme and course content, or participate in collegial observation of classroom practices. In terms of self-assessment, she highlighted reflective course memos as a good way to document and summarise changes made to course content. Meanwhile, student evaluation of teaching could be collected via student feedback surveys or focus group interviews, and student achievement could be gleaned from students' self-reports of knowledge and skills gained, evidence of learning (pre- and post-tests), or through externally verified learning achievements. She also underscored the importance of underpinning our practice, seeking external validation, getting feedback from industry about our graduates, and demonstrating upon reflection how our thinking (which has an impact on practice) has changed over a period of time. It is timely for faculty to think about how they evidence their teaching, in particular documenting their practice through the teaching portfolio.



*EiR 2017 Prof Denise Chalmers fielded questions from workshop participants.*

The general feedback from workshop participants was positive and enthusiastic. They found it to be insightful and practical, with a clear idea on how to get started on reflecting about good and effective teaching, and what specifically to work on within their own practice.



*Workshop participants in animated discussion*

Prof Chalmers referred participants to the following sources for further details:

Australian University Teaching Criteria and Standards (AUTCAS). Retrieved from <http://www.uniteachingcriteria.edu.au/>.

Chalmers, D. & Hunt, L. (2016). Evaluating teaching. *HERSDA Review of Higher Education*, 3, 25-55. Retrieved from <http://herdsa.org.au/herdsa-review-higher-education-vol-3/25-55>.

# EiRP Public Lecture 2017

## Quality Teaching: Why it matters and how it contributes to an excellent student experience

**Rebecca Seah**

CDTL Student Journalist

Why should an excellent student experience matter? What is quality teaching? These are two key questions addressed by Emeritus Professor Denise Chalmers at the EiRP-Ruth Wong Memorial Lecture on Education 2017 on 24 August 2017.

Titled “*Why Recognizing and Rewarding Teaching is Critical to Achieving an Excellent Student Experience*”, the talk started aptly by addressing the fundamental question on **how teaching is positioned in research-intensive universities**. More often than not, as Emeritus Professor Chalmers highlighted, teaching has been overshadowed by the pressure to produce quality research. She reminded us that while research is crucial, the positive impact of building an excellent student experience can be just as significant.

On **why an excellent student experience matters**, just as excellent research boosts university rankings, quality teaching and learning likewise enhances institutional prestige and reputation through word of mouth, namely by students who graduate with strong school pride. Additionally, in providing its students with quality education, a school fulfills its obligation to the community and nation by value-adding its students to contribute more to society. Equally important, given that most reputable tertiary institutions are moving towards producing world-class research, a key pillar distinguishing a quality institution from others is its ability to create excellent and memorable student experiences.



*“If we’ve accepted those students into our institution, we have an obligation to do what we can to make sure that they have every opportunity for success. Of course the students have to work, of course they have to learn, but we should not be putting any roadblocks in front [of them].”*

Prof. Chalmers on why an excellent student experience matters.  
[Click on the photo or this [link](#) to watch the video.]

On **what constitutes an excellent student experience**, Prof. Chalmers' response was that it varies widely from student to student—ranging from an environment that encourages robust teacher-student interaction, to one which exposes its students to a diversity of viewpoints, to the freedom to choose modules according to interest.

On **what makes a teacher outstanding**, Prof. Chalmers shared insightful perspectives. She questioned the wisdom of placing too much emphasis on charismatic classroom teaching. Instead, she called for the use of grounded practices and established frameworks and criteria that take into account multiple aspects—input from students (feedback and achievement), peer feedback on curriculum and classroom teaching, and self-reflection.



*“He (an outstanding teacher) won an award not because he was a star performer but because he was a complete teacher.”*

Prof. Chalmers on the importance of establishing criteria for quality teaching that consider other factors besides charismatic classroom teaching. [Click on the photo or this [link](#) to watch the video.]

On **what constitutes an excellent student experience**, three students who were asked prior to the talk had this to say (which seems to exemplify Prof. Chalmers' views):

“... most crucially a buzzing environment where they (students) can not only talk about their ideas, thoughts and not receive blank stares, but also receive the warm welcome from their academic seniors who discuss and not mollycoddle.”—*Ching Ann Hui, Year 2 Medicine*

“My personal opinion on excellent student experience—an environment where students enrol in modules out of interest. Learning should be passionate, and lecturers should make an attempt to make their subjects universally appealing.”—*Dean Tin, Year 2 Biological Sciences*

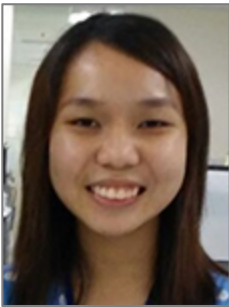
“... a diversity of perspectives, as well as ample time for reflection and meaningful conversations would be especially important in shaping an enriching and stimulating experience for us.”—*Rebecca Seah, Year 2 English Language & Literature*

On **recognising and rewarding quality teaching**, Emeritus Professor Chalmers advocated concrete incentives such as awards, promotion and pay rise. In responding to the contentious issue of placing too much emphasis on extrinsic motivation, her response was that good teachers are already intrinsically motivated. Rewards are incentives that the university leadership could use to further encourage and inspire quality teaching for the rest of the teaching community.

We all have had amazing teachers who were instrumental in shaping our notion of an excellent student experience, and it might occur to us that they can have vastly different teaching styles. Yet, even now as we feel the echoes of their affirmative influence on us, we know that Prof. Chalmers' words ring all the more true and encouragingly so.

While we may not all fully agree on what quality teaching constitutes and how quality teaching can be encouraged, it is possible to formulate criteria that describe it. Doing so can help us recognise it better, thereby resulting in what we can agree is important: an excellent student experience for everyone.

This is one dialogue that should continue...



### **About the Author**

**Rebecca Seah** is a second-year undergraduate at the National University of Singapore, majoring in English Literature along with a minor in Chinese Translation. Outside of school, you can find her curled up with a book, in the company of food documentaries, or in search of her next favorite tune.