

METTLE 2003 Report – DRAFT

1. Event summary

METTLE 2003 followed the general format of previous years, but the afternoon focused case study presentation sessions were replaced with a poster session involving 63 case studies of teaching practice, research activities and support services. In shaping METTLE, the views of a wide cross section of staff in individual meeting with around 60 including T&L(M&ET)C members, HODs, Information Division staff, CSHE staff and individual teachers. Significant goals were to facilitate networking, exchange of ideas, publicise activities and represent the broad range of players in the equation.

A conscious effort was made to expand the audience this year. Emails were sent to all staff, HODs, Multimedia coordinators, and via the METTLE list, UniNews, Information Division newsletter and GradFlash. The changed format and option to just attend individual sessions were emphasised. METTLE was also promoted jointly with the VC's Colloquium and the Transition Forum as University. An invitation was sent to Monash via John Harris at Monash CELTS, but externals were otherwise not targeted.

Despite this effort, registrations were down to 271 from 288 in 2002. My personal feeling is that earlier enthusiasts are moving away, and while more support staff came on board, a disappointing number of regular teachers perceive the event as relevant.

24 staff were 'new' to the University in the last 12 months

11 were from Monash

147 registered for all four sessions, 60 for three, 28 for two, 26 for one

18 registered just for the poster session.

Faculty:	Architecture	Arts	Eco & Commerce	Education	Engineering	External	IFLR	Info Div	Law	MD&HS	Music	Other MU	Science	VCA	Vet science	(blank)	Total
Administration			1		1	1	1	8		2	1	5		1			21
Research		1		2	2		1	1		3		1	3				14
Student		2	2	2	1	1	1	1					1				11
Support		1		2		6	2	38	2	4		8	2				65
Teaching		2		1	2	4	3	2	1	15		4	8	1			43
Teaching & research		9	4	10	11	3	6	2	1	15		4	14	1	6		86
(blank)	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	10	1	1		4	4	1		1	31
Total	1	18	8	18	18	16	15	62	5	40	1	26	32	4	6	1	271

Staff 'new' to MU

Number	1	1	3	2				7		3		3	4				24
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Session

registrations:

Strategic directions	10	5	13	14	11	12	47	5	33	1	20	24	2	4	1		202
Faculty perspectives	14	6	15	15	12	15	47	4	34	1	20	22	3	5	1		214
Forum 1: Models	6	2	10	7	6	7	32	3	11		11	12	1	3			111
Forum 2: Research	3	1	5	3	4	4	7	1	12		6	8	2	1			57
Forum 3: Assessment	4	4		5	4	4	5		10		5	6	1	2			50
Poster session	13	4	13	15	15	14	52	4	33	1	20	24	3	5			216

Figure 1. Registration breakdown by faculty, role, number of new staff and sessions.

2. Discussion forum brief points

The following is my summary of reports of discussion sessions, drawing attention to current directions and issues raised.

2.1 Changing faculty perspectives session

Chair: Peter Otto

Presenters: June Gassin (Arts), Carol Johnston (Arts), Robert Barnett (Engineering)

Reporter: Paul Fritze

The University is entering a new phase of developing its “information architecture”. More than just the choice of an LMS, this involves creation of innovation cultures; engaging top- and bottom-up decision making; building online communities; and moving from cottage industry to system wide approaches - without losing quality of learning.

Arts

A faculty review by CSHE in 2002 revealed:

- Use and interest in the application of ICT had plateaued;
- Concerns about pedagogical value, time, communication problems, technical fatigue; and
- Lack of rewards and incentives.

Faculty initiatives in 2003 include:

- New Faculty staff development program - emphasising one on one assistance;
- Excellence in teaching awards;
- Presentation sessions about leaning approaches, use of ICT - promote cross-faculty communication;
- Web development in Arts recognised as an “important avenue for publishing”;
- New ‘Web Manager’ position undertakes extensive R&D to inform Web designs; and
- ‘Web Advisory Group’ connects content producers and technical developers.

Economics and Commerce

In-house systems provide enrich feedback and a broader range of assessment:

- immediate feedback; exercise higher order and critical thinking skills;
- Online tutor system used across 60 subjects is good for international students and first years;
- Faculty Assessment Tool for formal assessment - random, timed tests with stratified questions.
- The Faculty is working on a tool to handle formulas;
- Online audio streaming of lectures appreciated by international students – no attendance problem.

Issues for the faculty include:

- Collusion - may be limited by time restrictions and random questions, but extent is being investigated.
- Overload of systems by last minute submissions.
- Student IT training – “students are not as computer literate as we think”.

Academic development and training is the key, but “problematic”. Faculty approaches include:

- Seminars on teaching issues;
- Regular newsletter summarising research in education to inform teaching practice;
- Videos of tutors incorporated into tutor training particularly helpful for new casual tutors;
- Ongoing teaching development grants and LMS development; and
- Role of Faculty Teaching and Learning Unit to “make things easier for teachers”.

Engineering

A survey of staff indicated that:

- educational outcomes are most important;
- no one expects a reduced workload;
- multimedia is seen as an enhancement to teaching, not a replacement.
- Problem in some projects not delivered due to time commitment.
- Mixed feelings in Faculty on central or local support resources – may be related to project budget
- Small amount of ongoing central support is considered essential.
- Many staff still wary of the low reward to workload ratio for ICT in teaching.
- Visualisation and simulations are valuable
- Possible backlash against “passive” PowerPoint slides.
- Better to allow incremental change in attitude to use of technology.
- Everyone who has been involved in projects reports a different attitude after exposure.

2.2 Forum 1: New models for sustainable teaching and learning with ICT

Chair: Peter Harris

Presenters: Peter Jones and Nicki McLaurin-Smith (Law), Harald Sondergaard (Engineering), Bronwyn Disseldorp (Education)

Reporter: David Cunnington

Key factors in sustainability of products are:

- A demonstrable need, student demand, student benefit;
- Endorsement by Faculty, Department or the University with support not tied to an individual; and
- Life-cycle management - version control, support, archiving, ancillary staff, staff development, ongoing funding and a sustainable business model.

Law

Development of information literacy skills for LLB students over a period of 5 years through 4 products:

- based on University Librarians Information Literacy Standards and Faculty requirements.
- Embedded within teaching program in key subjects to integrate skills;
- Hybrid (face-to-face and online) environment;
- There is continuing development and growth of program;
- Each module with different funding and target groups;
- Has survived the loss of at least 5 staff over the life of the products.

Engineering

Transforming teaching and learning on a budget - sustainability with ICT when there are no resources.

- Laurillard's learning activities can be used to analyse elements of lectures and tutorials with online,
- Email is a simple way of dealing with large groups of students with response posted to subject website for all.

Traditional lectures can be very effective, but problem-solving discussion can be captured easily and delivered online with simple tools such as AudioGraph:

- Very useful for creating FAQs for large classes;
- Students say this helps their learning, particularly the diverse range of learning styles;
- Low cost start-up for staff;
- Potential for students to develop teaching materials as part of their learning.

To be sustainable,

- some Faculty support is needed;
- contributes to professional skill development;
- allows for joint ownership; and
- is easy and reliable to use.

Education

The Faculty model for supporting staff using ICT in their teaching is responding to an immediate need to provide just-in-time, individual professional development.

- Part-time staff chosen for their ability to work with academics;
- work high level of flexibility;
- Provide assistance on academic's own computer.
- Also asked to deliver regular seminars on what they have discovered and how problems were solved;
- Most time spent on building, supporting and developing subject websites, with combination of simple site building with academics, use of templates and ongoing DreamWeaver training.

Question raised

What will be the nature of support when new Learning Management System is introduced?

2.3 Forum 2: Link between research and education

Chair: Richard James

Presenters: Paul Fritze (TeLaRS), Kaye Stacey (Education), Michael Lew (Pharmacology)

Reporter: Gregor Kennedy

Three views of research were presented

- A review of educational research papers, including technology based ones, currently being conducted in the University. The process and outcomes of this review should make local expertise more readily available to university staff.
- Research by a committed educational researcher in educational technology development and evaluation, excellence in technology in schools, and basic research into students learning.
- A teacher pursuing a educational research agenda in collaboration with CSHE and the BMU.

Issues that emerged:

- The intrinsic difficulties associated with educational research in terms of controlling variables and ethical considerations providing students with two different educational ‘treatments’.
- How can academic staff afford the time pursue a educational research agenda, given discipline research demands?
 - a. having Departmental support
 - b. becoming interested in Education as a research topic
 - c. having the support of more educational research oriented collaborators.
- How can we encourage and foster cross Faculty/Department collaboration, e.g. to involve honours and graduate students in research programs?

How are people able to access expertise in fundamental areas such as questionnaire preparation and data analysis and interpretation?

- Units such as CSHE and BMU;
- A central suite of educational resources for those interested in educational research might be useful;
- Existing questionnaires of ‘good pedigree’ are available - noting dangers of an ‘off the shelf’ approach to data collection tools.
- For specialist researchers, data analysis was less of an issue than gaining ethics approval (especially for external school-based studies) and administrative aspects of the educational investigations.

2.4 Forum 3: Assessment Models and Current Issues

Chair: Paul Guba

Presenters: Catherine Maguire (Economics and Commerce), Shane McKenzie (Arts), Irene Stanley (MD&HS)

Reporter: Graham Moore

On line testing

Two examples of online testing were:

- The Economics and Commerce “FAT” (Feedback and Assessment Tests) on-line system for presenting questions (most of the multiple choice type) and gathering answers from students.
- Irene Stanley presented her experience with the use of “Test Pilot” through WebRAFT, primarily as review exercises for students on a regular basis throughout the semester.

Some of the salient points arising:

- Good multiple choice questions are difficult to write;
- Flexible delivery and immediate feedback to students and staff is seen as the main advantage;
- If used for assessment that counts to final grades then authentication of students is an issue.
- Some discussion on whether the University should be looking to provide a large (e.g. 300 workstation) lab to allow on-line examinations;
- Student acceptance seemed good;
- There was a preference for using these systems for focussing student revision rather than assessment
- There is a significant workload for someone to write the questions, etc. This would be over and above the current service to students in most cases;
- There was discussion about advertising and duplication of services. There are at least three test systems (Test Pilot, FAT, e-Assess in engineering, OCCA? Top class?) with significant resources being spent on installing, maintaining, developing expertise in these systems which is seen as a waste.

On-line Marking and Grade Administration.

OMAR the grade book developed for the Faculty of Arts has a range of features to allow better management of grading and feedback to students - for both traditional assessment (e.g. paper based essays) as well as online submissions. The main issues to come out of the discussion were;

- The quality of the product is depended on the quality and commitment of the staff, not the software.
- Students were accepting of the system, but need to be kept informed by the staff as to when marks will be released, etc.
- Care should be taken to avoid transferring costs to the University if on-line submissions are accepted. Unless they are to be marked on-screen, get students to submit both paper and electronic copies.
- OMAR allows easily structured grading and feedback to students.
- It would be in the University’s interest to finalise the development and get OMAR implemented University wide (perhaps through integration with WebRAFT) as soon as possible - seems little point in foregoing the possible benefits while waiting for the Learning Management System to materialize.

Concluding observations

- A common theme was a lack strategic direction being shown by the University.
- Encouragement of a “cottage industry” of development over the past six years has not been complemented systematically at the University systems level.

- The University could be well served to gather up the excellent range of in-house developments that clearly do meet our needs, e.g. WebRaft, and integrate them ourselves.

3. Evaluation survey feedback

68 responses to an online evaluation survey were gathered after the conference:
 25 poster organisers
 43 other attendees

Overall, 80% were satisfied or very satisfied
 Strategy: 48%
 Faculty: 63%
 Forums: 84%
 Poster: 88% (95% of poster organisers)

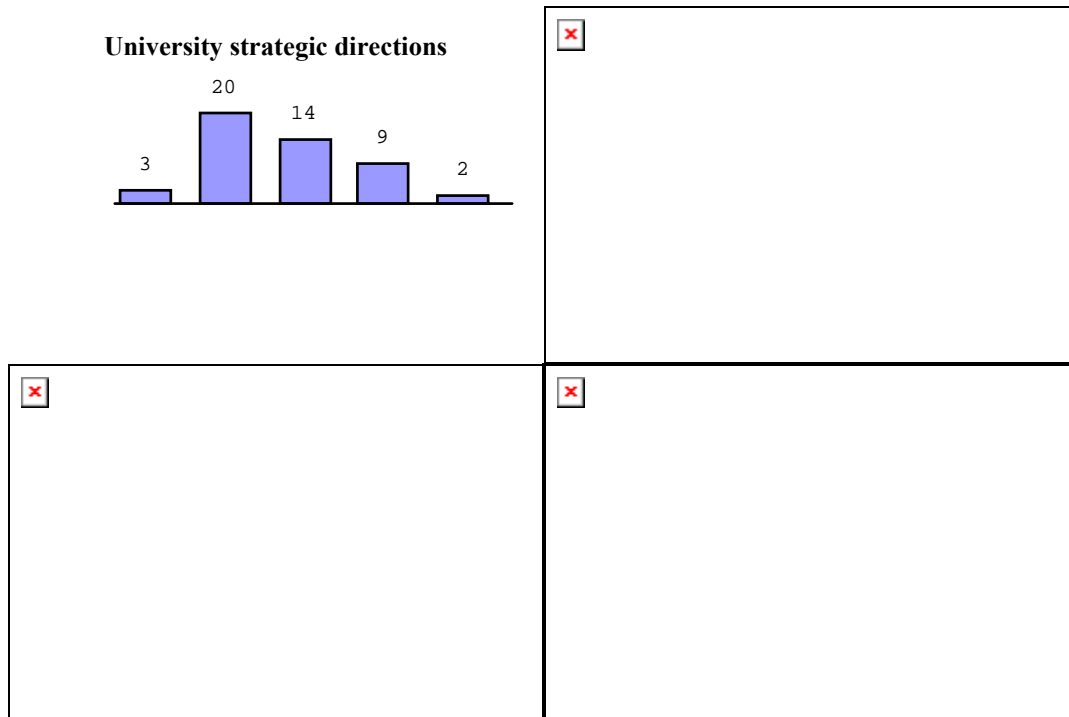
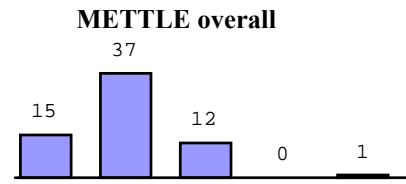
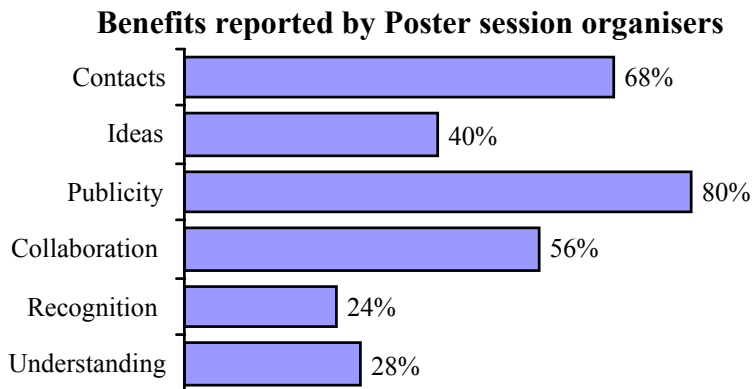


Figure 2. Satisfaction with individual sessions

The poster session was clearly appreciated by the vast majority. Of note are the benefits reported by poster session presenters themselves.



3.1 Feedback comments

The following comments were selected to represent four pages of comments in the survey.

University strategic directions session

- “don't think I learned anything new from this session.”
- “too long.”
- “seems to be unchanging from year to year.”
- “liked to have heard some views on the debates ahead rather than just a list”
- “speakers were ill-prepared”

Reports should “be put online so that it can be digested by staff at leisure.”

Changing faculty perspectives session

“More sessions like this would make for a more rewarding conference.”
“really good to see what is happening in Arts and Economics/Commerce”
“Nothing earth shattering. but certainly valuable to see what was going on around the University”
“I think these would have been better presented as an optional key issue forum session.”
“Possibly the guidelines to speakers could be clearer next year?”
“didn't feel that the theme of 'change' was addressed strongly enough.”
“programs need to be checked in advance to ensure that they work”
“would have been much more engaging if we had been shown online EXAMPLES.”

Key issue forum sessions

“Always good to see what strategies other people are employing.”
“Good presentations - factual with good targeted examples.”
“Great session - very relevant and informative”
“Great to have ... the administrative point of view counterbalancing the academic perspective of using on-line assessment.”
“The feedback from the audience was very encouraging...”

“‘sustainability’ was kind of a side issue, rather than a recurring theme...”
“This session needs to be longer... no time for discussion or questions.”
“slight concern that various folk are reinventing wheels and duplicating effort.”
“disheartening to discover that various people across the University are developing almost exactly the same types of tools. unaware that others are doing the same...”
“Demonstrated a crying need for better communication across the uni.”
“expecting to see more demonstration. so I was a bit disappointed.”

Poster session general comments

“Good to have a chance to talk with poster presenters.”
“Good variety of posters present... a wide range of topics.
“the more interesting part of METTLE... good overview of a variety of initiatives... opportunity to talk with individuals... about their experiences and projects.”
“It was useful ... seeing the demonstrations of their packages. I got a lot of ideas... made some good contacts.
“Provided an excellent opportunity to network with others.”
“Terrific to see how proud of their achievements and services people are.”

“a bit disappointing that some poster owners did not show up to answer questions.”
“Many posters were of poor quality”
“need to prepare the displays a bit better so they actually demonstrate the work that was done”
“This session seemed to have plenty of energy.”
“I didn't get to see much of the posters :- (“

“difficult to locate a poster that had been identified as being relevant to the attendee.”
“should have ... displayed numbers that correlate with those in the program.”
“The place was chaotic.”
“venue probably ended up being too small.”
“better to have a little more space”
“I would suggest a photo of the presenter would be useful”

Additional comments and suggestions

“An excellent day. Thank you. The format worked very well. Liked the posters rather than lots of presentations.”
“Congratulations on a superbly organised event”
“Extend time and space for poster sessions.”

“not impressed at being given name tags that stated our Dept as - university other.”
“caterers forgot to allow for vegetarians.”
“I am intrigued as to how the presenters are chosen... surprised that I was not invited to participate - even in poster form... “didn't seem to be an avenue for individuals to put themselves forward to participate”
“Make posters and papers available on the web for those who are unable to attend at the last minute.”

“2003 seems to have been a year of drift not progress on this evidence.”
“disappointed in the lower turnout numbers and wish that more senior staff would be encouraged from on top to send their staff - and come themselves.”
“A visiting speaker of interest would perhaps encourage better attendance ... a bit of 'oomph'.”
“felt that it is the same people talking again. I wanted to hear from new users. new ideas”

“wonder whether it is really that useful to split METTLE from the VC's colloquium?”

“please return to the afternoon format in which there are simultaneous sessions in which software developers showcase their teaching programmes”

“The key note addresses have to be made more relevant in some way.”

“More time for the forums (less for the larger morning sessions).”

“Extend time and space for poster sessions.”

4. Suggestions for discussion

It is important to set the context of strategic University directions, but thought needs to be put into how to represent these in a manner useful to staff.

Discussion forums should ensure adequate time for discussion and stricter focus on the chosen issue.

Introduction of the poster session was a significant risk, which seems to have paid off. It could be better arranged to encourage people to seek out specific items of interest by indexing of displays and putting abstracts up earlier.

While there is demand for more demonstrations, these may be best suited to regular seminar sessions during the year.

Differentiation with the VC's colloquium and other events could be clarified.

A central mapping of staff development initiatives could be useful, e.g. PD courses, TeLaRS seminar series, METTLE, VC's Colloquium, as well as Faculty seminars and expos.

METTLE could be better incorporated into faculty and department strategic plans and promoted as a key SD opportunity of benefit to all staff.

Parallels with and complementary nature of the FLITE community of practice in IT support could be usefully investigated. (I presented on 'teaching' themes emerging from METTLE at the FLITE Conference on 22 Nov). Careful consideration of poster and presenter selection next year should be given to obtain a representative cross section of activities aligned with current directions.

Rather than seeing METTLE as just a transitory event, it is useful to consider its contribution to organisational learning across three stages:

- prior to the event: significant networking activity and resource 'discovery', consolidation of services;
- during: networking, information exchange, discussion; and
- after: consideration of discussion reports, an ongoing online resource practice and research case studies and support services, evaluation.



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