REDESIGN PROJECT APPLICATION GUIDELINES

James Cook University (JCU) and the Australian Catholic University (ACU) invite participation in the Redesign Project, a new, university-wide initiative to redesign undergraduate units using technology-supported active learning strategies. The purpose of the Redesign Project is to improve student learning outcomes while reducing instructional costs, freeing up instructional resources for other departmental purposes. The project will run concurrently at both universities during the 2011-2013 period and expects to support the redesign of two units at each university.

Goals of the JCU and ACU redesign projects are to:
- Adopt new ways to improve student learning outcomes;
- Demonstrate these improvements through rigorous assessment;
- Reduce institutional costs;
- Free up instructional resources to be used for other purposes;
- Develop the internal capacity of academic and professional staff to continue the redesign process.

Universities will partner with the LH Martin Institute, the Australian Learning and Teaching Council and the US National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT). NCAT is the architect of the successful large-scale national and state-based course redesign programs in the United States. The Australian Redesign Project will build on the successful models and lessons learned from NCAT’s American programs. The support of NCAT will help develop internal capacity within the universities to support the redesign process on an ongoing basis, beyond the duration of the Redesign Project.

It is important to remember what NCAT means by unit redesign. Unit redesign is the process of redesigning entire units (rather than individual classes or sections, or an entire degree or major) to achieve better learning outcomes at a lower cost by taking advantage of the capabilities of information technology. Unit redesign is not just about putting units online. It is about rethinking the way we deliver instruction, especially large-enrolment core units, in light of the possibilities that new technology offers.

The high level of success achieved in NCAT’s redesign programs in the USA can be attributed to selecting participants who were ready to succeed, teaching them the planning methodology and actively supporting them as they developed their redesign plans. Academics and administrators involved in NCAT’s course redesign programs have repeatedly indicated that understanding the planning methodology is the key to the success of their redesigns. And once learned, the methodology is easily transferable to other courses and disciplines. In the Redesign Project, we will replicate this process by engaging with NCAT to provide prospective participants with a variety of planning resources through a series of webinars and consultations. Prospective participants will be supported directly by NCAT and LH Martin Institute staff throughout the process.

Following an orientation webinar on 26 August 2011, as described in the Call to Participate, the program will employ a seven-stage application process:

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1 NCAT resources which refer to ‘courses’ within an American context, such as the “Six Models for Course Redesign” and the “Course Planning Tool”, are analogous to ‘units’ and ‘subjects’ in Australia.
Stage One: Establishing Institutional Teams

Institutions will establish institutional teams to undertake large-enrolment unit redesigns. These teams should include the following people:

- **Academic Experts.** Unit redesign requires that academic experts explicitly identify the unit’s desired learning outcomes and agree on unit content. Large-enrolment units typically include more than one academic staff member. To ensure consistency, these academic experts must work together on the redesign, resolving any differences in how the unit will be offered, and collaboratively plan the most effective way to accomplish the redesign goals.

- **Administrators and professional staff.** Because these redesigns may impact multiple sections, large numbers of students as well as academic policies and practices, it is important to involve academic administrators on the team. The level of these administrators will depend on the organisation and size of the institution. For some it will be the Provost/Deputy Vice-Chancellor or designee; for others it will be a dean or department chair. These team members play an important role when institutional issues such as changes in scheduling or the use of classroom space arise. If unexpected implementation issues arise in the process of redesign implementation, administrators can help the team resolve them quickly and effectively across institutional offices.

- **Technology Professionals.** These team members provide expertise so that the redesign goals are accomplished in ways that make the technology as easy for students to use as possible. Technology professionals contribute ideas about how to increase interaction with content as well as with other students. They also suggest design approaches to ensure that the technology does not limit students’ learning options.

- **Assessment Experts.** NCAT will suggest straightforward methods to enable student learning in the redesigned unit to be compared to that of the traditional unit. It is, however, useful to include someone who is knowledgeable about assessment and research design on the team, particularly if the institution seeks to measure additional facets of the redesign such as performance in downstream units or student satisfaction, to name a few. This expertise may be found in departments of education or psychology or in offices of institutional research.

Stage Two: Identifying the Unit

Some units may be more ready than others to be the focus of a large-scale redesign effort. Because of prior experiences with technology-mediated teaching and learning, and because of numerous attitudinal factors, some academic staff members may be more ready to engage in large-scale redesign efforts to achieve the program's goals.

Those interested in participating in the redesign program will be asked to think carefully about which units are good candidates for redesign at their institution and to respond to the following unit Redesign Readiness Criteria.

Completing the readiness criteria also enables each institution to assess collectively its strengths and weaknesses, gaining an understanding of what it needs to do to address gaps in its preparation early in the process. No institution perfectly meets all of the readiness criteria, especially at the beginning of the planning process. Every institution will discover
things it needs to work on in order to carry out a successful unit redesign. The readiness criteria are designed to help you select the unit with the highest chance of success. Answering each as honestly as possible—and providing data to support your answers—will lead to the most positive outcome for your institution.

As noted above, this program will require you to establish a redesign team because of the multiple dimensions involved in large-scale unit redesign. The first activity of the team will be to complete the responses to the following readiness criteria. In some cases, you will be asked to read an article, discuss the reading as a team and make a tentative decision, which may change as you learn more about the redesign process.

1. Unit Choice

Choosing the right unit is the first step in a successful unit redesign project. Units that face academic or resource problems or both are the best targets. What impact will redesigning the unit have on the curriculum, on students and on the institution—i.e., why do you want to redesign this unit? Please be specific—i.e., provide data on pass rates, enrolment numbers, and so on.

*Is there an academic problem in this unit such as a high failure rate? Does the unit face a resource problem such as how to meet increased enrolment demand with no commensurate increase in resources? Is the redesign linked to some larger institutional goal—e.g., a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), campus strategic plan, a re-accreditation process?*

2. Redesign Model

When you develop your redesign plan, you will be asked to select a redesign model. Please read "Six Models for Course Redesign", which describes six possible models for unit redesign. At this point in the planning process, which redesign model do you think would be most appropriate for your redesign? Why?

*When you look at the models chosen by successful redesign projects, you will notice that certain disciplines select particular models—e.g., math uses the emporium model, foreign languages use the replacement model, and so on. What aspects of the model you are thinking about using fit your particular discipline and your particular students? Have other successful redesign projects in your discipline used this model?*

3. Assessment Plan

When you develop your redesign plan, you will be asked to select an assessment model. Please read "Four Models for Assessing Student Learning", which describes four possible models. At this point in the planning process, which assessment model do you think would be most appropriate for your redesign? Why?

*Successful large-scale redesign efforts begin by identifying the intended learning outcomes and developing alternative methods other than lecture/presentation for achieving them. Have those responsible for the unit identified the unit’s expected/intended learning outcomes in detail? Do you have baseline data for the unit in its traditional format? If so, please describe.*

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If not, how do you plan to collect baseline data and compare it to student learning outcomes after you have redesigned the unit?

4. Cost Savings Plan

When you develop your redesign plan, you will be asked to select a cost reduction strategy. Please read "Cost Reduction Strategies", which describes a number of strategies for producing cost savings. At this point in the planning process, which cost savings strategy do you think would be most appropriate for your redesign? Why?

What does cost savings mean in practice? In the past, cost reduction in higher education has meant loss of jobs, but that's not the NCAT approach. In every NCAT unit redesign project, the cost savings achieved through the redesigned units remained in the department that generated them, and the savings achieved were used for instructional purposes. By reducing the cost of offering the redesigned unit, institutions have been able to reallocate and do what they would like to do if they had additional resources.

5. Learning Materials

Successful unit redesign that improves student learning while reducing instructional costs is heavily dependent upon high-quality, interactive learning materials. Are the participating academic staff members able and willing to incorporate existing curricular materials in order to focus work on redesign issues rather than materials creation? What learning materials are you thinking about using in your redesign?

Ideally, one wants the academic staff to have a "head start" in the redesign process if possible. Is the discipline one with a comparatively large existing body of technology-based curricular materials and/or assessment instruments? Are the academic staff members willing to use these materials if they meet unit objectives? Will they employ an appropriate blend of using these materials and created "home-grown" materials in a non-dogmatic fashion? Are they willing to partner with other content providers such as commercial software producers or other universities who have developed technology-based materials?

6. Active Learning

Greater student engagement with unit content and with one another, supported by information technology, is essential to achieving student success. Do the unit’s academic staff members have an understanding of and some experience with integrating elements of computer-based instruction into existing units to support active learning?

Sound pedagogy is the key to successful redesign projects. When sound pedagogy leads, technology becomes an enabler for good practice rather than the driver. Some academics may have a great deal of enthusiasm for large-scale redesign but little prior experience in this area. It is difficult to complete a successful project by starting from scratch. Having some experience helps to prepare for large-scale redesign efforts. Have the academic staff systematically thought about and investigated alternative methods for empowering students to learn? What evidence can you provide to demonstrate staff experience with integrating computing into existing units in order to support active learning?

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7. Collective Commitment

A collective commitment is a key factor for the success and the sustainability of redesign projects. As part of the planning process, you have been asked to form an institutional team. Please describe the members of your team, the skills they bring to the project and what their roles will be in both the planning and implementation phases of the project.

Are the academic staff members ready to collaborate? Have they engaged in joint conversations about the need for change? Are decisions about the unit made collectively—in other words, beyond the individual academic staff member level? Substantive changes cannot rely on academic staff initiative alone because they are systemic and involve changes in such areas as policy (class meeting times, contact-hour requirements, governance approvals); budgeting (planning and processes that support innovation); systems (registration systems, classroom assignments); and, infrastructure (equipment purchase and deployment). What is the level of support for the project beyond the departmental level?

Institutions wishing to participate in the program should send a narrative addressing each of the seven readiness criteria (about one page each) as they apply to the selected unit, focusing on evidence that demonstrates the way in which they meet each criterion.

Please include a cover page with your proposal on which you
• List all team members by name including titles, academic affiliation, phone numbers and email addresses;
• Identify the person who is the primary contact for your team project, with the understanding that the primary contact will share communications appropriately with the rest of your team.

Responses to the Course Readiness Criteria should be submitted electronically to Carolyn Jarmon, NCAT Vice President, at cjarmon@theNCAT.org with a copy to your Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (James Cook University) or Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students, Learning & Teaching) (Australian Catholic University).

Deadline for submission: Thursday 13 October 2011.

Stage Three: Planning for Redesign

Based on their responses to the Redesign Readiness Criteria, institutional teams will be invited to participate in a second webinar, "Developing the Proposal," conducted by the National Center for Academic Transformation on Thursday 20 October 2011.

This webinar will provide an in-depth understanding of the redesign process with emphasis on selecting an appropriate redesign model, determining how the redesign model will embody key pedagogical principles, planning for cost savings, assessing student learning outcomes, and developing a budget for the redesign project.

Webinar participants will be the core team members who will implement the redesign project. The webinar will also provide an opportunity to share ideas, obtain feedback from program staff, and assess the quality of their proposal ideas in relation to others.
Prior to the webinar, teams will be asked to complete additional background reading about unit redesign.

Stage Four: Developing Final Project Plans

Institutions that participate in the 20 October 2011 webinar will be invited to submit a final project plan according to a specified format, which includes both narrative and forms. Staff from NCAT will provide individualised assistance as prospective participants prepare their plans. Institutions will be encouraged to submit drafts of their plans for review and feedback before the final submission.

Each final plan must include a project budget developed in consultation with your Senior/Deputy Vice Chancellor. Final proposals should be submitted electronically to Carolyn Jarmon, NCAT Vice President, at cjarmon@theNCAT.org with a copy to your Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (James Cook University) or Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students, Learning & Teaching) (Australian Catholic University)

Deadline for Submission of Final Plans: 8 February 2012.

The provosts/chief academic officers from James Cook University and the Australian Catholic University, in consultation with NCAT, will review the final proposals from their respective universities and make the final selections. In addition to selecting projects that are likely to succeed and to have the highest impact, the Redesign Project will give priority to working in a variety of academic disciplines.

Projects will be selected to participate in the program by 29 February 2012 so that campuses can begin planning for the pilot redesigns for second semester 2012.

Selection Criteria

• Large-enrolment units may have very large sections (e.g., traditional lecture units) or offer large numbers of smaller sections. In all cases, more than one person should be involved in teaching the unit.
• The units selected to be redesigned should face an academic problem (e.g. low successful completion rates), a resource problem (e.g. an inability to meet demand based on current resources), or a combination of both.
• The unit selected must be at the undergraduate level.
• Participants must be fully committed to completely redesigning and delivering a large enrolment unit currently offered at their respective university.

Stage Five: Planning and Developing the Pilot

Participants must plan to conduct a pilot implementation during second semester 2012 and collect data on comparative student learning outcomes between traditional sections and redesigned sections. Pilot implementations should involve a substantial percentage of students enrolled in the unit in order to test the efficacy of the redesign. Pilots do not have to involve all students and sections but should be designed such that they can scale to all sections if they are successful.

Institutional teams will be expected to engage in focused on-campus planning during first semester 2012. They will complete redesign preparations, finalise project teams, train
academic and professional staff, complete redesign activities, modify existing unit materials when necessary, and incorporate additional content into unit materials.

**Stage Six: Piloting the Redesign**

During second semester 2012, campuses will conduct pilot implementations of their unit redesigns. Teams will collect initial assessment data that compares student learning outcomes in the traditional unit with those in the redesigned format. Teams will make adjustments in the unit materials and organisation, if needed, in preparation for a full implementation in first semester 2103.

**Stage Seven: Implementing the Full Redesign**

In first semester 2013, institutional teams will fully implement their unit redesigns and collect data on comparative student learning outcomes and on final instructional costs.

**TIMELINE**

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For further information about the Redesign Project, please contact:

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- Peter Bentley, Research Fellow, LH Martin Institute, peter.bentley@unimelb.edu.au tel. 03-8344 0756.
- Kristen Smith, Personal Assistant to the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, James Cook University, kristen.smith@jcu.edu.au tel: 07-4781 5451. (JCU staff only)
- Anne Cummins, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students, Learning & Teaching), Australian Catholic University, Anne.Cummins@acu.edu.au tel: 02-9739 2936. (ACU staff only)

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