



## The Deakin Students Helping Students Coordinator Development Program

### Key Words:

Shared meaning, identity, learning experiences, professional development, peer learning capability, community of practice

### Abstract:

The benefits of peer support programs for students, student leaders and institutions within the Higher Education sector have been widely recognised and discussed. As a result Australia has experienced the rapid growth of a variety of academic, social and practical students-helping-students programs. Resources have been allocated and new and experienced program coordinators from a diversity of backgrounds engaged. Such growth and expansion, though, has highlighted the need for program coordinators to receive appropriate training and on-going professional development. The Deakin University Coordinator Development Program was created as an innovative response to this need. A Community of Practice model for peer support had already been flagged as an appropriate vehicle for the sharing of resources and expertise across the Deakin landscape and one that models and acknowledges Wenger-Trayner's (1998) contribution to social learning theory and its importance to peer learning capability. While the Deakin Coordinator Development Program is informed by the Community of Practice approach it also models and demonstrates the workability of this approach and extends its influence. This paper will discuss the pilot program that has been developed at Deakin and will examine the four parts or stages of the program that have been delivered to coordinators from many Students Helping Students programs across Deakin. At each progressively more complex stage the university context, pedagogy and theoretical underpinnings and practical considerations for coordinators, mentors and for programs will be examined. Outcomes, objectives and methodologies will be scrutinized for relevance and artistry. Challenges and advantages arising from the diverse backgrounds, learning experiences and work environments of coordinators will be investigated as will the relationship between coordinators and AALL staff. The concepts of shared meaning and identity will be highlighted and the paper informed by core theorists including Etienne Wenger-Trayner and Beverly Wenger-Trayner (2015), Jennifer Keup (2016) and Mick Healey (2013).

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