

Rosemary Williamson and Donna Lee Brien

Rescue from the deep end: The case for postgraduate awards in teaching writing

Abstract:

In the interests of continuing, and ensuring, teaching and learning excellence in the discipline of Writing, this paper proposes the provision of specialist courses to train university, and other post-compulsory education, teachers of writing. It will provide the rationale for doing so, drawing on Australian and international practice and research, and will put forward possible models for such a new program. This paper will show that such new qualifications will fill an immediate and, indeed an increasing, need for highly specialised pedagogic training in Australia, New Zealand and potentially the UK and the USA. The paper comprises three sections: the first demonstrates that there is an acknowledged need and proven demand for postgraduate qualifications that prepare staff to teach within higher education institutions; the second outlines the case for the provision of specialist training for those who teach creative or professional writing at post-compulsory level; and the third canvasses aspects of a proposed Graduate Certificate in Higher Education.

Keywords:

Creative and Professional Writing – Graduate Certificate – Academic Professional Development

Biographical notes:

Rosemary Williamson is completing a PhD at the University of New England. Her research interests include pedagogic aspects of the writing discipline, and special-interest magazine publication in Australia. As part of her doctoral program, she is studying craft magazines, particularly the rhetorical devices employed in the magazines to construct and validate a specific form of creative identity, and to foster the personal and professional development of readers as individuals and as members of extended communities. Prior to her doctoral studies, Rosemary's career focus was professional writing, editing and publishing. She has taught in writing, composition and new media units at UNE.

Associate Professor Donna Lee Brien is Head of the School of Arts and Creative Enterprise at Central Queensland University, and President of the AAWP. Her biography, *John Power 1881-1943*, is the standard work on this expatriate artist, and she is co-author (with Tess Brady) of the self-help books *Girl's Guide to Real Estate* and *Girl's Guide to Work and Life*. One of the Chief Investigators on a Carrick Institute funded project to create an online support network for postgraduate writing students and supervisors, Donna was, in 2006, awarded a Carrick Institute Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning.

Introduction

In the interests of continuing, and ensuring, teaching and learning excellence in the discipline of Writing, this article proposes a new, specialist course to prepare university, and other post-compulsory education, teachers of creative and professional writing for the workplace. This proposal results from a research project undertaken in 2007 at the University of New England (UNE) to investigate the demand for such a course. An important aspect of the project was consultation with leaders and practitioners in the Writing discipline, and dissemination and discussion of project findings within the Australian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP). This paper, therefore, has been prepared in that context.

The project was informed by Australian and international practice and research, and by a survey that was distributed to leaders in teaching and learning within the writing discipline in Australia and a representative sample of such figures in the UK, USA, New Zealand and Macao. From these sources, a compelling and clear argument has emerged for the introduction of a new, badged award, the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (GCHE) (Creative and Professional Writing). The following explains how the award will fill an immediate and, indeed, an increasing, need for a highly specialised form of pedagogic training in Australia and New Zealand, and, potentially, the UK, the USA and other parts of the world. It comprises three parts: the first demonstrates that there is an acknowledged need and proven demand for postgraduate qualifications that prepare staff to teach within higher education institutions; the second makes a case for the provision of specialist training for those who teach creative or professional writing at post-compulsory level; and the third outlines the proposed features of the GCHE (Creative and Professional Writing) while drawing attention to some aspects to be resolved in further consultation with the AAWP and other interested bodies.

The Graduate Certificate in Higher Education

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) states:

qualifications certify the knowledge and skills a person has achieved through study, training, work and life experience. They are a measure of our ‘intellectual capital’ and increasingly important in a society where unskilled jobs have disappeared and continuous upskilling is required in all forms of work and in day-to-day life. (AQF 2007: online)

A common means of ‘upskilling’ in Australia is the postgraduate award known as the graduate certificate, which may ‘[develop] vocational knowledge and skills in a new professional area’ (AQF 2002: 51).

The majority of Australia’s 38 universities¹ offer a GCHE or similarly named award that is designed to provide the theoretical and practical grounding deemed necessary for teaching in the tertiary education sector.² The extent to which these courses are offered attests to the emphasis placed by universities on achieving the highest possible levels of teaching and learning. For new staff at some universities,

completion of a graduate certificate is now mandatory: Victoria University requires all new staff (including those on contract) to complete the Graduate Certificate in Education (Tertiary) or obtain exemption; offer of appointment letters from Monash University stipulate that new staff without qualifications in university teaching must gain them during their probationary period; and from 2007 all continuing level A and B academic staff commencing at RMIT University without a qualification equivalent to the Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching and Learning must complete that program. RMIT University's website until recently stated that '[a]lthough there is no government requirement for a tertiary teaching qualification, the Graduate Certificate (TTL) is increasingly becoming the accepted standard by many universities for a tertiary teaching role' (RMIT University 2007).³

Partial or full payment or reimbursement of GCHE course fees for employees is common practice amongst universities, which is further evidence of the value placed on these qualifications as a form of staff development and certification. Some universities, such as Charles Sturt, Melbourne and South Australia, offer their GCHE only to their employees, whereas others, including those at the University of Canberra and RMIT University, are available more widely. In some cases, the courses may be undertaken by casual/sessional as well as continuing staff, and the University of Queensland even allows some enrolled doctoral students to complete their graduate certificate.

GCHE equivalents are also offered outside Australia. The University of Auckland in New Zealand has introduced the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice for its academic staff. Graduate certificates in further education under various names are available in the United Kingdom at, for example, the universities of Cardiff (PGCert in Education (Further Education)), Ulster (PGCert in Further and Higher Education), Leeds (PGCert in Education), Durham (PGCert in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education) and Glasgow (PGCert in Academic Practice), and the Glasgow Caledonian University (PGCert in Tertiary Level Teaching Methods). As in Australia, some graduate certificates articulate with higher-level awards: for example, Ulster's articulates with a postgraduate diploma, and Glasgow's articulates with the Diploma in Academic Practice and the Master of Education. The GCHE model appears to be much less common in the USA, although some postgraduate courses for university teacher training can easily be found online, such as the University of Missouri's Graduate Certificate in University Teaching, and the University of Maryland's Teaching in Nursing and Health Professions Certificate Program.

Questions have been asked about the extent to which GCHEs actually improve teaching and learning (see Devlin 2006). There has been no extensive measure of the awards in this regard (Devlin 2006), yet existing research suggests their worth: Nasr, Gillett and Booth (1997), who surveyed staff at the University of Wollongong, found that having teaching qualifications had a strongly positive effect on attitudes towards teaching and on teaching activities; similarly, a study of staff at the Auckland Institute of Technology by Haynes (1999) pointed to the advantages of qualifications in tertiary teaching. While these are isolated studies from the 1990s, they nevertheless provide evidence of the perceived benefits of these awards that has, since the publication of the studies, been confirmed by the proliferation of GCHEs.

The majority of Australian GCHEs are generic and include units of study obviously designed to encompass many disciplines. Typically, GCHEs include a mix of topics that covers major theoretical backgrounds, issues and pedagogic practices relevant to higher education, within which participants are asked to reflect upon and explore their own disciplinary experiences (sometimes in the form of project-based assessment). Most universities require, therefore, that participants be actively engaged in teaching in a higher education context for the duration of the GCHE program. Another, and less common, type of GCHE focuses on a specific skill set required in the contemporary tertiary sector. Examples are the University of Adelaide's Graduate Certificate in Online Learning (Higher Education), Central Queensland University's Graduate Certificate in Flexible Learning, and Macquarie University's Postgraduate Certificate in Educational Leadership (Higher Education).

Much less common is the discipline-based GCHE. Healey (2000: 169) posits that 'the scholarship of teaching needs to be developed within the context of the culture of the disciplines in which it is applied'. Webster, Mertova and Becker (2005: 76) note that Healey's view has been supported by scholarship since the 1970s. However, despite the widespread offering of the GCHE in Australia, the review of university websites completed for the project upon which this article is based found only three that are discipline-based: the Graduate Certificate in Law Teaching (Monash University), the Graduate Certificate in Health Professional Education (Monash University) and the Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching for Health Professionals (University of Tasmania). The specialised Monash University graduate certificates came about after the establishment of the University's generic GCHE and in response to staff demand for training in the teaching of law and health (Webster, Mertova & Becker 2005: 76). Both courses were produced by dedicated education units within those respective faculties; while there was some cooperation in the development phase, it was 'recognised that Law and Medical and Health Sciences are very different disciplines, and thus need very different discipline-specific approaches to teaching' (Webster, Mertova & Becker 2005: 76). Course planning and evaluation are reported in Webster, Mertova & Becker (2005). In summary, the authors found that the graduate certificates have 'highlighted the growing acknowledgement of the significance of a discipline-based focus in teacher professional development' (82).

The Case for the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (Creative and Professional Writing)

A case can be made for extending the discipline-based GCHE to Creative and Professional Writing. Before doing so, some definitions will be useful. 'Writing', in the context of the discipline of Creative and Professional Writing, is a broad term that encompasses many types of writing that students wish to gain competence (and potentially employment) in, as opposed to the academic (essay) writing that has been traditionally and extensively taught in universities, that continues to underpin much university assessment, and that develops generic writing skills. While something of a simplification, the teaching of creative and professional writing emphasises the generation of text within defined professional contexts. Creative and Professional

Writing involves close reading of published texts, but the discipline's focus on the production and contexts of the texts and, indeed, the types of texts, distinguish it from other disciplines. 'Creative' and 'Professional' are two distinct but related disciplinary subsets. Creative Writing is based on the production of works of high literary quality; it may include poetry, novels, creative non-fiction, scripts (film, television, radio), ficto-critical work, short stories and texts that employ e-technologies. Professional writing, on the other hand, covers such types of writing as corporate documents, book and grant proposals, and advertising and publicity documents. Both develop the skills needed to write, edit and publish in different genres.

Creative writing is a relatively new field in Australian higher education teaching that in the past decade has seen an extraordinary increase in student numbers and the levels at which it is taught (Dawson 2005), and there are no signs that demand will abate.⁴ Some 35 Australian universities currently teach creative writing, over 20 offer doctoral level degrees in the discipline, and creative writing is also taught in New Zealand universities (AAWP 2005). Others offer significant amounts of creative writing, but in units and courses that are not named as such. Acknowledging market and industry demands, many universities also have courses in professional writing, as well as creative and professional writing hybrids (UNE's School of Arts, for instance, currently offers the units 'Writing for Work', 'Publishing and Editing' and 'Research in Writing' and in 2007 introduced 'Writing in Genres', all of which aim to provide content, teaching and learning which cross between the 'creative' and 'professional' fields). Secondary schools are also teaching increasing amounts of creative writing and a number of universities offer some kind of support, input or mentorship into their programs.

The scholarship of creative and professional writing pedagogy has been expanding and strengthening in Australia in the last decade to the extent that Australia is currently leading the field internationally. The fully refereed *TEXT: The Journal of the Australian Association of Writing Programs*, which recently celebrated its tenth anniversary, includes articles that explore aspects of the teaching of creative and professional writing at university level. The journal's archive of past articles is regularly accessed by national and international teachers of writing and other interested readers. In addition to students who are completing research higher degrees that include a creative writing component, some Australian universities have postgraduate students who are completing, and have completed, research higher degrees on the pedagogy of creative/professional writing.

While originally, and necessarily, staffed by academics from the areas of English, Literature and Communications, current teaching positions in Creative and Professional Writing increasingly demand that applicants possess higher degree qualifications in Creative/Professional Writing as well as significant industry experience and/or a profile as a writer. In Australia, many research higher degree students in the discipline are becoming teachers as the discipline expands, student numbers grow and the demand for casual/sessional staff grows. Yet, there are no academic staff development programs specifically for teachers of writing at tertiary level. This lack of professional preparation is particularly evident at a time when many professional writers are engaged to teach writing, but often without any

teaching experience or training (Kroll & Brien 2006). Even in the USA, where PhD candidates in rhetoric and composition commonly are trained to teach composition, few candidates in creative writing receive equivalent instruction (Ritter 2001). Ritter (2007) has also recently drawn attention to the practice in American universities of appointing 'star' writers to teach creative writing. Such writers may have little or no knowledge of sound pedagogic practice and, consequently, may fail to provide appropriate models of best teaching practice to students, many of whom rely on observation and participation as their sole form of teacher training.

Of course, those who teach writing in Australian universities may undertake one of the generic GCHEs available to them, and apply their own disciplinary slant within it. However, as Kroll and Brien (2006: 6-7) note, 'such units and modules are usually not developed or taught by those with any particular disciplinary speciality (such as creative writing) unless by chance', and therefore the student will have little guidance in specialist disciplinary pedagogy. Any discipline-based instruction they do obtain outside these courses is, moreover, likely to be ad hoc, informal and labour intensive and may not satisfy all the emergent teachers' needs:

The responsibility ... usually falls to the unit coordinator with whom any particular sessional staff member is working. This training is often offered as an intensive mentoring process with class preparation assistance, regular meetings, assessment moderation and even instructional handbooks produced to support tutors and guest lecturers in team-taught units. Caught up in day-to-day administrative matters and detailed discussion of topic content and student needs, coordinators usually have little additional time, however, to give any broader attention to such areas as the pedagogy of creative writing or the philosophy underlying this pedagogy. (Kroll & Brien 2006: 7)

Exacerbating this situation is the unique mix of challenges faced by teachers of creative or professional writing. As Ritter (2001: 214-15) notes, the teaching of poetry writing at undergraduate level, for example, is quite different from teaching generic composition or writing skills. Her argument can be extrapolated to other forms of fiction and creative non-fiction, as well as to professional writing, which encompasses forms and styles that have characteristics distinct from each other and from the academic essay. Creative writing, furthermore, is a particularly self-reflective, self-reflexive discipline. Central to many creative writing programs, for instance, is the regular conduct of workshops and other group activities that generate peer feedback on students' writing, all of which demand discipline-specific knowledge and skills (see, for instance, Anna Leahy's collection of essays on the dynamics of the workshop and other issues in teaching creative writing in *Power and Identity in the Creative Writing Classroom: The Authority Project* 2005). Teaching well at the postgraduate research level also requires an exposure to, and understanding of, a set of pedagogic issues unique to the discipline as masters and doctoral degrees in creative writing commonly take the form of a creative work with exegesis.[5] This model has prompted extensive deliberation within the discipline in terms of best practice (see, for instance, the articles contained in Fletcher & Mann 2004), and presents another example of the range of challenges that even the most accomplished creative writing teacher must negotiate in their work. Another challenge common to all in the

discipline is the preparation of graduates for future work within the context of the decline of traditional markets and employment pathways (that is, mainstream publishing opportunities and continuing academic positions) and the global growth of the creative industries. These discipline-specific issues then intersect with others that all contemporary higher education teachers grapple with, such as online/flexible delivery of learning materials in changing technological contexts and the broad range of students serviced by the university.

There are signs that universities overseas are becoming mindful of the need for appropriate preparation of creative writing teachers at tertiary level. In the USA, some are incorporating relevant instruction in PhD programs in the form of electives, apprenticeships or mandatory studies (see Ritter 2001) so that PhD candidates can teach competently within the academy both during, and after, their higher degree candidatures. Antioch University has a one-semester Post-MFA⁶ Certificate in the Teaching of Creative Writing that prepares for classroom and workshop teaching at all levels. In the UK, Newcastle University offers a modular Postgraduate Certificate in Creative Writing (one-year full-time or equivalent) that is ‘designed for students who wish to develop their skills in creative writing and/or gain accredited training the professional skills of teaching creative writing or using creative writing in a community or health care setting’ (Newcastle University 2006: online). The University of Gloucestershire delivers an articulated Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma/MA in Creative and Critical Writing that includes a core module, Teaching Creative Writing, that promises to:

give the student a solid grounding in a wide variety of practical techniques for teaching creative writing at school and university level and to analyse the appropriate theoretical considerations that inform them [and] will offer training in specific methods/techniques appropriate as preparation for research or professional practice. (University of Gloucester 2006: online)

Survey of discipline leaders

A solid argument for an Australian GCHE (Creative and Professional Writing) emerges from this overview. This is confirmed by survey data obtained from prominent national and international creative writing educators, conducted as part of the research undertaken for this project. Of thirty surveys distributed, twenty-four responses were obtained. This sample is significant as the survey demanded in-depth commentary from leaders in the discipline, and the high level of response (80%) shows these leaders’ commitment to the discipline. Responses were also received from all states and territories in Australia where creative writing is taught, as well as New Zealand, Macao, the USA and UK. While the findings of this survey will be reported and discussed in detail, a summary of findings that relate to this article follow.

There was general agreement (all responses) that teachers of writing learn largely by hands-on experience with students, ‘mostly via the act of teaching itself’, using a process of modelling, osmosis and instinct. This is also, it was generally reported, often in a ‘crisis response mode’ with little time for reflective practice:

in my experience, teachers seem to be thrown in at the deep end and just expected to get on with it; this means they tend to teach the way they were taught, rather than thinking intellectually, analytically and reflectively about teaching practice and educational theories. (anonymous survey respondent, 2007)

The terms ‘trial and error’ and phrases to the effect of ‘being thrown in at the deep end’ were frequently cited in relation to learning how to teach. Past experience in different arenas (for example, as a professional writer) as well as mentoring by, and modelling behaviour on, their own teachers and peers were also prominent. An indicative response here is of learning to teach:

[b]y doing. When we’re lucky, we have experienced good modelling from other teachers, and have supportive mentors we can seek advice from if necessary; largely, however, I think we continuously learn from our own writing and classroom experiences. Most of us teaching the professional writing side are trained practitioners (eg, editors, journalists, etc) and still keep our hand in even if we’re teaching full time. Likewise, those of us who teach creative writing are also writers. (anonymous survey respondent, 2007)

Professional support and mentoring from, and even just talking to colleagues, were mentioned in almost every response, with many citing the AAWP’s annual conference as a prominent arena where this occurred. Teaching oneself, by reading textbooks and ‘both theoretical/pedagogical works, and works on the process of writing’ and following a process of reflective practice were also a prominent form of learning – although the time to dedicate to such inquiry and practice was problematic for many respondents. About half the respondents also mentioned the formal training available to them, including their institutions’ own professional development seminars and workshops. While 3 respondents were very or quite complimentary about these, many more were dismissive of these beyond their ability to provide generic and, often, basic material in university teaching. An indicative answer here also relates to the special challenges of supervision in the discipline:

General subjects on supervisory matters are often available at tertiary institutions but don’t relate specifically to teaching creative and professional writing. (anonymous survey respondent, 2007)

Although the survey did not ask for such information, a number of respondents also indicated the various problems with such an ad-hoc and/or self-directed learning methodology. The difficulty of putting aside the time for such self-directed learning was frequently mentioned, as were securing conference funding, choosing ‘the appropriate journal’ or finding ‘someone [who can] lead you into the professional networks via publications or via conferences’ (anonymous survey respondents, 2007). Generally, it seems to be felt that, despite good intentions and even some knowledge of best practice in pedagogical inquiry, luck and chance override planning:

If you are lucky enough to have a key supervisor/mentor during Honours or PG studies then you have a first step into the game. If you are lucky enough to be given support as you carry out teaching while a PG student then you also have a steppingstone into effective teaching. For the most part, I think it really is a hit or

miss affair for most people moving into teaching writing. (anonymous survey respondent, 2007)

These leaders in the field also responded overwhelmingly that such methods of ‘teacher training’, although common, were completely inadequate (14), with another 8 answering that it might work in individual cases but was generally inadequate. Only 2 respondents felt it was adequate and noted that they were speaking about their own personal situations. More specifically, only 2 respondents felt such ‘training’ did identify and ground best practice within a framework of research and theory (and, again, this was speaking for their own experience only); the rest did not. Only 1 respondent felt such an approach was ‘sufficiently comprehensive’ and ‘timely’. 6 ranked the ‘potential usefulness of the GCHE (C&PW)’ as ‘essential’, 14 as ‘very useful’ and 2 as ‘useful’. No one ranked its potential usefulness as ‘limited’ or ‘useless’. There was, thus, a general feeling that the discipline was supportive of such an initiative. This was backed up by the call for ‘other comments’ section at the end of the survey, which garnered such remarks as: ‘I think the ideas overall are commendable and practical’ (anonymous survey respondent, 2007). Others wrote at length about the potential interest in such a course of study and qualification internationally:

I believe that there is both a need for and a desire to be involved in this sort of programme in New Zealand. Many teachers within the polytechnic/new universities system have an interest in this field and need to upskill and do research as well as complete doctoral study. I would strongly support the move to put this on-line and develop a suite of qualifications leading to a doctorate. (anonymous survey respondent, 2007)

Others were characteristically supportive and wanted action: ‘I hope this comes about ... really necessary and timely’ and ‘A great innovation! I hope it comes to fruition’ (anonymous survey respondents, 2007). Still others were supportive, but brief: ‘Great idea!’ (anonymous survey respondent, 2007).

Proposed Features of the GCHE (Creative and Professional Writing)

This section canvasses some key features of a proposed GCHE (Creative and Professional Writing) that could be offered nationally and internationally. While not intended to be prescriptive at this stage, it attempts to shape a GCHE that responds to the needs of the discipline while also reflecting, realistically, the conditions under which students would undertake the course.

The primary market for a new GCHE (Creative and Professional Writing) is those staff currently employed by an Australian university or other higher education institution who are engaged in teaching creative or professional writing, or who work in a cognate field (such as literature, media or communication studies, or theatre) and wish to gain expertise in teaching creative and professional writing. Participants may be full-time, part-time or sessional staff. The course would also suit information technology librarians and professional educational developers.

While demand within Australia for the GCHE (Creative and Professional Writing) is clear, the course is also expected to appeal strongly to those teaching creative writing in New Zealand, the UK and the USA, where the postgraduate certificate is already an established form of certification of competence. It may also appeal to those in other countries wishing to extend their expertise and qualifications, or to teach in the countries where such qualifications are becoming more widespread and recognised. Others for whom the course may be relevant include recent PhD graduates of creative and professional writing, TAFE teachers of creative or professional writing, and those with portfolio careers, such as professional writers or editors who engage (or plan to engage) in some form of adult education related to their profession (for example, delivering programs through writers' centres) or who wish to widen their future employment options.

While the course will be unique and will, therefore, represent an innovative offering, it could, within a modular structure, make use of existing (and highly relevant) material in the hosting university's (or universities') generic GCHE or equivalents. Existing content could be re-purposed, modified and complemented by disciplinary-specific material where necessary and assessment tasks modified to suit this course's learning objectives and proposed outcomes. If this re-purposing was carried out by discipline experts, only one completely new, specialised unit in the pedagogy of teaching creative and professional writing would need to be created for a graduate certificate. Such a unit would include highly specific disciplinary content, much of which could be gathered from existing publications. The survey cited above gathered some data on what this content would most usefully be, but such a course of study would need to be developed with the close input of discipline leaders. This content should be designed and delivered as a series of modules.

Several Australian universities acknowledge that those who are undertaking generic GCHEs may have demanding workloads and other responsibilities, and consequently build flexibility into their programs. Our survey of online course descriptions for the GCHE found that at Deakin University, participants in the GCHE could 'negotiate their own preferred pathway through the course' (Deakin University 2005: online); at RMIT University, participants in the Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching and Learning could negotiate their assessment dates; and at several universities external or online options were available.

While it may be feasible to limit a generic GCHE targeted at staff in one university to internal mode, a discipline-based graduate certificate that is the only one of its kind nationally (and that seeks an international audience) lends itself to flexible delivery to reach the widest possible audience, and for this reason it is proposed that the GCHE (Creative and Professional Writing) be offered online. Monash University's Graduate Certificate in Law Teaching in 2005 was delivered flexibly and combined online teaching with phone conferencing, and feedback on this aspect of the course was generally very positive (see Webster, Mertova & Becker 2005: 79). Although a number of respondents to the survey noted that some face-to-face contact in the GCHE (Creative and Professional Writing) would be beneficial, most acknowledged that the more flexibly such a course was delivered, the more likely it would be to attract students and, therefore, achieve its objectives.

We therefore propose that this GCHE (Creative and Professional Writing) should be delivered online, in modules, to facilitate participants' control over the timing, pace and progression of their study. Modular, online delivery would suit in particular those participants teaching creative and professional writing at universities, many of whom combine their academic responsibilities with creative pursuits, and publishing and associated creative and professional activities outside the academy.

Further course development could investigate delivery of a module or modules over summer for those participants who wish to accelerate their progress or who wish to have a lighter study load during semesters 1 or 2 because of teaching or other commitments. Further planning could also determine whether Summer School delivery need or could involve an optional residential component and, indeed, whether such a component could be combined with a high profile writer's event, as many of the US summer writing conferences do very successfully. Such events would generate income, introduce potential new students to this and other programs, and value-add to the program for existing students.

The course could also usefully draw on the resources of the Australian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP), given that it is the premier professional body for teachers of writing in Australia and that it has strong links with the Australian Society of Authors (ASA) and other industry bodies. Collaboration with the AAWP could, for instance, take the form of a module within the GCHE that offers as an assessment option attendance at the AAWP's annual conference and participation in the pedagogically focussed seminars and workshops suited to GCHE students as well as many others. Other assessment options could include assessment by scholarly publication – in this case, presentation of a paper at the annual AAWP conference (including by video conference), participation in an AAWP conference panel discussion, conducting a workshop for other seminar participants, or participating in the Carrick Institute-funded and AAWP supported online Australia Postgraduate Writing Network (which will be operational mid-2008).

In addition to being a component in the GCHE (Creative and Professional Writing), the modules which make up this pedagogy unit (and, indeed, the other 're-worked' units) could also be completed on a fee-paying, non-award basis. This would provide a form of professional development (possibly endorsed by the AAWP) for those teachers of creative and professional writing who have already attained generic teaching qualifications such as a GCHE, or who wish to complete specialised modules without making a commitment to the full graduate certificate. Appropriate nomenclature for the modules and/or unit and some form of recognition of their completion (such as a 'associate certificate' and 'certificate'), together with the fact that successful completion of such could, at a later stage, be used as credit towards the GCHE (Creative and Professional Writing) or even another award would, we believe, make the modules and the unit very attractive to a broad range of teachers of writing.

In some universities, the generic GCHE articulates with higher-level graduate awards. The new GCHE (Creative and Professional Writing) should, thus, be the first step in an articulated program that allows graduates to progress through graduate diploma, masters and doctoral levels. Given the absence of an equivalent to the new GCHE in

any Australian university, any move to articulate the course within discipline-specific higher-level awards would not only provide a clear professional development path for GCHE graduates, but also have a positive effect on postgraduate student enrolments for the university or universities involved.

Related to the notion of flexibility is the duration of the program. Most GCHEs are offered part-time over one or two years, and the University of Tasmania allows up to four years for completion. The duration of the new GCHE (Creative and Professional Writing) should take into account three factors: currency of knowledge in a competitive academic environment; the advantages to the student (and to the university/universities involved) of timely completion; and the potential for the GCHE to articulate with higher-level award courses, such as graduate diplomas, masters and doctorates.

Further action

In summary, a proposed suite of postgraduate courses to train teachers of writing could rationally begin with a course to be known as the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (Creative and Professional Writing). Such an award is envisaged as modular and online, but with a range of assessment options that enable participants to develop their strengths and interests and that give them the opportunity for face-to-face contact with other students, teachers, researchers, supervisors and leaders in their profession. Professional networking opportunities and the chance to publicly build a teaching and scholarship of teaching profile within the discipline would, therefore, be integrated into the course and enhance its vocational relevance.

This paper disseminates research that was supported by a Teaching Development Grant at UNE. Having provided a rationale for the GCHE (Creative and Professional Writing), we therefore invite further consideration of, and feedback on, aspects of the course(s) that are outlined above. A detailed report will then be presented to UNE that will make recommendations for the further development of the GCHE (Creative and Professional Writing) in association with the AAWP and, if recommended, other interested individuals, associations and/or universities.

Thank you to the survey participants who generously and thoughtfully responded to our queries and to UNE for funding this project.

Endnotes

1. For the purposes of this study, 'Australian universities' are those listed as members of the Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee (AVCC) in the AVCC's *Australian University Handbook 2006*.
2. This statement is based on a survey of Australian universities' websites conducted during Summer 2006-07. The survey was intended to give an overview of the availability of these courses in Australian universities; checking the currency or accuracy of the online information was, however, beyond the

scope of the project. While recognizing the varied nomenclature of these awards, this article will use 'Graduate Certificate in Higher Education' (GCHE) as a generic title.

3. Since this website was accessed, it has been revised and no longer includes this statement. Part of the revision, however, has been to include a statement that completion of the graduate certificate is now mandatory for new RMIT staff at levels A and B.

4. While no discipline specific figures are available, the most recent Australian government report on higher education enrolments states that while enrolments in most fields of higher education increased between 2004 and 2005, the creative arts was one of the five areas which experienced the most growth during this time (DEST 2007: 7, 9).

5. The Australian Qualifications Framework explicitly lists 'creative work with exegesis' as one of the accepted forms of 'substantial and original contribution to knowledge' (<<http://www.aqf.edu.au/doctor.htm>, accessed 17 February 2007).

6. In the general absence of doctoral level studies in creative writing in the USA, the MFA (Master of Fine Arts) was also the terminal postgraduate academic qualification for those who intended to work as academics teaching creative writing in the US. The recent (and expanding) introduction of PhD degrees in creative writing in the US has been an issue of much debate in the US but it is now becoming apparent that, when given a choice, tertiary level employers will choose a candidate with a PhD above an MFA.

List of works cited

Australian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP) 2005 *AAWP Guide to Australian & New Zealand University Writing Programs* <<http://www.griffith.edu.au/school/art/text/cwcourses.htm>>, accessed 16 February 2007

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) 2007 <<http://www.aqf.edu.au>>, accessed 16 February 2007

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Advisory Board 2002 *Australian Qualifications Framework Implementation Handbook*, 3rd ed, Carlton South, Vic: AQF Advisory Board

Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee 2006 *Australian University Handbook 2006*, Canberra

Dawson, P 2005 *Creative Writing and the New Humanities*, London and New York: Routledge

Deakin University 2005 'Graduate Certificate of Higher Education course structure', <<http://www.deakin.edu.au/education/gche/structure.php>>, accessed 16 February 2007

Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) 2007 *Higher Education Report 2005*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia

Devlin, M 2006 'Teaching the teacher' *Campus Review*, 16:8 (1 March), 8-9

Fletcher, J and Mann, A (eds) 2004 *Illuminating the Exegesis*, Text Special Issue Website Series, No 3, <<http://www.griffith.edu.au/school/art/text/speciss/issue3/content.htm>>, accessed 3 March 2007

Haynes, D 1999 'What impacts do tertiary teacher education courses have upon practice?', in *Cornerstones: What Do We Value in Higher Education? Proceedings* [HERDSA Annual International

Conference, July 12-15, Melbourne] Canberra: Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia, 1-11

Healey, M 2000 'Developing the scholarship of teaching in higher education: A discipline-based approach' *Higher Education Research & Development* 19:2, 169-89

Kroll, J and Brien, DL 2006 'Studying for the future: Training creative writing postgraduates for life after degrees' *Australian Online Journal of Arts Education* 2:1, 1-13

Leahy, A (ed) 2005 *Power and Identity in the Creative Writing Classroom: The Authority Project* Clevedon, Buffalo and Toronto: Multilingual Matters

Nasr, AR, Gillett, M and Booth, T 1997 'Do university teachers require qualifications in education? An investigation of lecturers' attitudes toward teaching development', in R Murray-Harvey and HC Silins (eds) *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Advancing International Perspectives: Proceedings of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia Conference, Adelaide, South Australia, 8-11 July, 1997*, [Adelaide S Aust]: R Murray-Harvey, HC Silins and named contributors, 529-34

Newcastle University 2006 'English literature, language and linguistics. Creative writing postgraduate certificate' <<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/taught/subjects/English-Literature-Language-Linguistics/courses/412>>, accessed 1 March 2007

Ritter, K 2001 'Professional writers/writing professionals: Revamping teacher training in creative writing PhD programs' *College English* 64:2, 205-27

Ritter, K 2007 'Ethos interrupted: Diffusing "star" pedagogy in creative writing programs' *College English* 69:3, 283-92

RMIT University, 'Higher Ed PD Graduate Certificate (Tertiary Teaching and Learning)', <<http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=s1bdon3z5pdp>>, accessed 8 January 2007

University of Gloucestershire 2006 'CCW407 Teaching Creative Writing', <<http://www.glos.ac.uk/subjectsandcourses/postgraduatetaught/ccw/descriptors/ccw407.cfm>>, accessed 1 March 2007

Webster, L, Mertova, P and Becker, J 2005 'Providing a discipline-based higher education qualification' *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice* 2:2, 75-83