



Talking About Teaching and Learning

CHRONICLE

Summer

2025

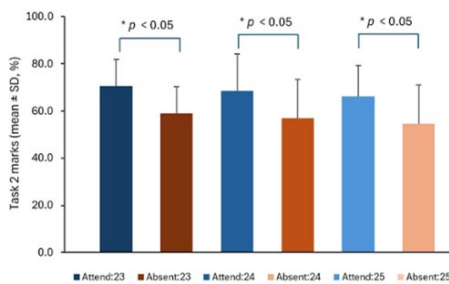


HERDSA TATAL Guide: Scholarly Reflection and Teaching Philosophies

Schonell, S., Reinke, N., Ruge, G., Shuker, MA.,
Lewis, A., Singleton, R., Romano, R., Panickar, P.,
Kennelly, R., and Schönwetter, D.J



Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australia Inc.



Inside: TATAL group updates | the new TATAL Guide | and much more

In this edition of the *TATAL Chronicle*

Inside, you'll find:

- Words of welcome
 - TATAL group updates
 - Special recognitions for TATALers
 - Other news
 - The new TATAL Guide
 - Looking ahead to TATAL Singapore
 - TATAL LinkedIn group
 - TATAL practices
 - Reflections about TATAL
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Welcome

Enjoy the following messages as you embark on your reading journey.

From the TATAL Officer

This year has been very busy for everyone; it has been filled with change and, hopefully, renewed energy. TATAL's connection with HERDSA has strengthened through our ongoing work with the professional learning portfolio, and our visibility has grown through research presence and more TATALers' engagement across HERDSA. I hope this edition of the *Chronicle* offers a moment for reflection in a rapidly evolving global higher education landscape. Enjoy!

Festive hugs,
Mei Li

From the TATAL Co-Founder

2025 has been a great year for TATAL and TATALers. We started a great TATAL in Perth with two groups continuing — one with Gesa Ruge, and the other with Abigail Lewis. We had seventeen new Fellows in Perth, three of them TATALers: Doug Jackman, Rosetta Romano and Jessica Borger. Under the stewardship of Stuart Schonell we have published the New TATAL Guide available from Jennifer Ungaro (office@herdsa.org.au) for \$30 hard or soft copy. We have formalized our TATAL facilitator team for Singapore 2026 and as we go to press we are about to add a Singaporean to the team. Thanks to our TATAL Officer Mei Li and her wise counsel Nicole Reinke and Luk Swiatek.

Reflectively,
Robert Kennelly

From the *Chronicle* editing team

We're delighted to present this evolution of the TATAL Newsletter as the *TATAL Chronicle*. The idea for the *Chronicle* emerged during one of the editorial team's weekly research meetings — research about TATAL, of course!

While we knew that both we and the wider TATAL community look forward to the usual newsletter, we also recognised that TATALers have far more to share than the current

format allows. With this in mind, we decided to expand beyond the brief two-page updates and include reflective, informative, and personal stories — aligned with the spirit of TATAL — to better facilitate the sharing of experiences within this wonderful community of educators.

We welcome written or visual contributions that inform, stimulate, or amuse the TATAL community in future editions.

Happy reading!
Mei Li, Nicole Reinke and Luk Swiatek

TATAL group updates

The TATAL groups have been keeping busy, as the following updates show.

TATAL 2012: Lucky 13th year and rolling along nicely

Stuart Schonell, John Gilchrist, Geoff Treloar and Gesa Ruge have had another great TATAL year together. Our monthly meetings include conversations and reflections across personal, professional, and philosophical topics. We support and care about each other's journeys and hope that many other TATAL groups will sustain their friendships.



We reflected that over the years, our involvement and contributions have continued to widen and deepen, and we are thankful to the TATAL founders Coralie McCormack and Robert Kennelly. All of us have been facilitators at many HERDSA TATAL workshops and we are excited to see the groups growing and thriving. This year we have also been actively involved as educational facilitators, authors, editors, reviewers, and mentors across many fields. The highlight was the Perth HERDSA conference TATAL workshop and new TATAL 2025 cohorts commencing their journey.

We are also proud of the new HERDSA TATAL Guidebook (2025), led by Stuart and a fabulous team of co-authors, as well as John's editorial expertise. We also continue to work on research publications, course accreditations, and organising important events like the annual Christmas lunch for ACT and NSW TATALers.

In grateful reflection and wishing you all happy TATALing in 2026.

2015 Melbourne TATAL

The 2015 Melbourne TATAL group celebrated its 10th year this year with cheering Zoom meetings (and is planning a proper face-to-face celebration in the not-too-distant future). Jenny Coburn's Bachelor program was named first in Australia in the most recent QILT survey results. Ana Maria Ducasse was promoted to Associate Professor at RMIT in recognition of all of her extraordinary work across teaching, research and service (among other areas), especially in Spanish language education and applied linguistics. Nirma

Samarawickrema is in Vietnam with a group of academics and students to facilitate a summer intensive unit that is based on a global challenge. Maria Northcote has retired twice in the last two years and continues to do some casual academic work along with her retirement activities (going to the beach, gym classes, volunteering with the SES, family history research). Luk Swiatek has just received UNSW's Faculty of Arts, Design and Architecture Award for Teaching Excellence. We wish everyone a fantastic summer break and a brilliant start to 2026!

2019 Auckland TATAL Group

2019 Auckland TATAL's membership has been stable. 2025 was a year of supporting each other through change whether the change be chosen or thrust upon each member. Six of our TATALers were (very) happy to reconnect at the HERDSA conference in Perth.



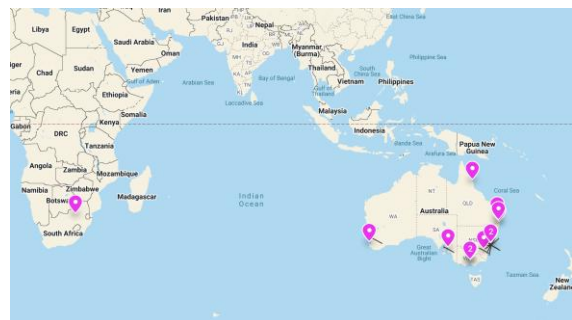
We have continued our reflective practice and are exploring options for our next collaborative research activity.

2020 Canberra

The University of Canberra cross-faculty TATAL completed its fifth year of operation in 2025 with continued active participation from academics in three of the University's five faculties. Mr Robert Kennelly and Dr Doug Jackman continued in their roles as co-facilitators. Planning is underway to continue to hold monthly online TATAL sessions in 2026.

2021 and 2023 Brisbane

The Brisbane TATAL group stretches across multiple time zones, from Johannesburg South Africa, north to Cairns QLD, south to Melbourne VIC, east to NSW (several locations) and west to Adelaide SA. As such, it has been challenging for everyone to get together this year. However, we have enjoyed our meetings with those who could make it.



There has been some movement of staff across institutions and geographical locations. Some of our group have been doing amazing things in Learning and Teaching such as publishing books, organising conferences, Indigenising curricula, working with (and against) generative artificial intelligence, and of course, supporting others in the TATAL group to achieve their goals (and to survive).

Some members celebrated reconnecting (face-to-face) at HERDSA Perth in July. We hope to reconnect next year, both virtually in Zoom, and in person at Singapore HERDSA, 2026.

2025 Perth TATAL group

Following the successful TATAL workshop in Perth at the HERDSA 2025 Conference, two new TATAL groups have commenced. We first met as a whole group in July to check in with how everyone was travelling and to consider everyone's individual goals. We then split into a Wednesday group and a Thursday group for monthly meetings. The Wednesday group is facilitated by Gesa Ruge and has 10 members. The group met four times already and starts each meeting with a collaborative reflective circle conversation, building connection, trust and synergies. We found that half of us who have already achieved the FHERDSA and/or the SFHEA can support the others embarking on their fellowship journey. All members are active scholars, and we are looking forward to TATALING together.

The Thursday group is facilitated by Abigail Lewis, with around five members. We share our teaching and learning experiences from the past month and in our November meeting many were engaged in end of year admin tasks (don't mention the M word) as well as planning teaching for 2026. We also engaged in free writing with most finalising their teaching philosophies. Some members are working on a HERDSA or HEA Fellowship and one is working on a distributed leadership philosophy. Abigail is enjoying the variety and sharing of the group and is looking forward to how the group takes further shape in 2026. Watch this space!

The Canberra Christmas lunch

This year's Christmas lunch in Canberra was a memorable occasion, and it was great to have Bob McCormack, as well as Maria Northcote and Luk Swiatek from afar. Robert read out the dedication to Coralie in our TATAL Guide to the gathering and presented Bob with a signed copy of the Guide by those present.



At the table are Doug Jackman (UC), Maria Northcote (formerly Avondale), Bernie Fisher (UNE), Luk Swiatek (UNSW), Moya Kennelly, Bob McCormack, John Gilchrist (formerly UC and ACU), Deb Veness (formerly UC and ANU), Robert Kennelly (formerly UC), Naomi Dale (Victoria Uni), and John Hawkins (UC).

You were with us all in spirit!!

Fêteing Kate at the Sydney lunch

The Sydney TATAL festive get-together gave everyone the chance to celebrate the promotion of Dr. Kate Thomson to Associate Professor. Kate looks after Occupational Therapy placements and Interprofessional Learning within the Sydney School of Health Sciences, in the Faculty of Medicine and Health, at the University of Sydney. She is a champion of professional learning for academics and clinical educators, especially when it involves conversations about teaching. Maria Northcote, Robert Kennelly and Luk Swiatek were delighted to toast the wonderful news. Three cheers and congratulations, Kate!



Special recognitions for TATALers

Multiple TATALers have received special recognitions over the past few months.

Global grant

TATALer Dr Gesa Ruge and colleague Dr Sherry Bawa from Curtin University Perth have been awarded \$29,500 through the 'Global Collaborative Seed Grant'. The project team consists of nine members from Universities in Australia, Asia, Africa and Europe with diverse educational roles and discipline backgrounds. This project will investigate innovative and forward-looking pedagogies for learning and teaching practice with emphasis on supporting educator capacity development across campuses, countries, and cultures. Activities and outputs will help us to apply for further grants next year. Seed funding grants are often aligned to medical or engineering research, I encourage you to revisit these, talk to the funders about your ideas and shape your application to demonstrate the importance of educational collaboration and research.

Mei's paddle award

My award recognises an improved lifestyle. :)

Since my move up to tropical North Queensland, I have taken advantage of the ocean and the beach. Over the last year, I have learned to sail a basic two-person dinghy and to paddle in a six-seat outrigger canoe.



As a reflective practitioner by trade, one never stops reflecting. What I have learned from paddling is the importance of timing. You must always sync with the person in front of you. "In together, out together!" That is the key to moving the canoe. One can be the strongest paddler, but if the timing is out, they can actually slow down the canoe or take it off track. This learning reinforces my experience of teamwork: a team progresses only when all members are on board with the same goal and mentality.

Fortunately, I have worked with some amazing people in several projects over the last year, who have taken me to places I would never reach on my own. This *Chronicle* is one of the projects. Those involved... you know who you are.

I love TATAL. It is not only a space to learn from others' experiences and share our challenges, but also a space where we feel safe to share our learning and our achievements. So I have learned to sail and paddle; next, I will keep working on my water confidence.

Regional Universities Network Learning and Teaching Awards: Finalists

Ann Parkinson and Nicole Reinke (*The University of Sunshine Coast*)

Ann and Nicole have been conducting research in the field of academic integrity for many years. Their philosophy is around educative approaches for academic integrity, highlighting the need for an entire community approach (for example Parkinson et al., 2022; Reinke et al., 2024; Reinke et al., 2025).

An opportunity arose in August 2025 to propose and submit an entry for the annual Regional Universities Network (RUN) Learning and Teaching Awards (<https://run.edu.au/event/run-learning-and-teaching-awards/2025-run-learning-and-teaching-awards/>). The theme for 2025 was “Innovative Learning and Teaching practice that responds to and incorporates generative artificial intelligence platforms towards enhancing the student experience and student learning journey”. The presentation also had to address and celebrate the regional identity of the students.

Working under time pressure, Ann crunched a lot of numbers (over three years of course data) so we could show the positive impact of our academic integrity interventions in the era of generative artificial intelligence. We were struggling with a tight deadline, teaching commitments, and with some very specific submission constraints on how the narrative could be communicated with and presented to a non-specialist audience. We had one title slide plus one informative, but static, slide and a maximum of 3 minutes of narration from a “talking head” video. As much as we love a challenge, things were getting desperate. With days left before the Friday submission deadline, the plan was still in a chaotic state.

It just so happened that submission week coincided with our Brisbane TATAL group meeting. Our generous TATALers put aside the meeting agenda to offer feedback on the submission. With us both needing to explain the work to a new audience and prompted by the TATALer’s questions of clarification, the submission took a new direction, and the narrative became clear.

Being part of a TATAL group, with members having diverse backgrounds and perspectives, and so much expertise enabled us to bring our message in our presentation to the forefront. The support offered and the trust built in the TATAL group empowers us to believe in ourselves and our learning and teaching goals. We are proud to report our submission was judged by our institution as worthy of submission to 2025 RUN L&T Awards and we were Finalists!

EMPOWERING REGIONAL UNIVERSITY PHYSIOLOGY STUDENTS: REWARDING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY WHEN USING GENAI

LFS203, INTEGRATED PHYSIOLOGY | DR ANN PARKINSON, DR NICOLE REINKE & DR GEORGIA KAFER

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE:

Academic misconduct can have serious consequences to students' progression and can contribute to attrition. Education around the appropriate use of GenAI tools in learning and assessment is critical in avoiding unintentional academic misconduct. Teaching students to complete assessments with integrity in mind is imperative in the age of ever evolving GenAI tools.

LEARNING & TEACHING INITIATIVE:

WEEK 4 TUTORIAL

PART 1: Students critique sample exam answer (covertly written by ChatGPT – reveal at end!)

PART 2: Facilitate student discussion on benefits, risks and ethical use of GenAI for assessment, data collected into Padlet

OUTCOME: Generate guidelines on GenAI use for Task 2 group assessment, post to Canvas



TASK 2 GROUP ASSESSMENT, 25%:

2 – 3 students; 600 words + 1 x figure, 8–16 academic sources; Individual Self reflection (2%)

2025 IMPROVEMENTS:

- Assessed **process** of assessment
- Group OneDrive folder, early Milestone feedback
- Strengthened justification of citation use

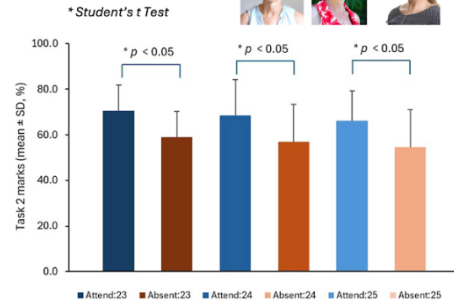
CAN GENAI USE BE RESPONSIBLE ?

"Sometimes, as it can save time and increase efficiency. You need to know enough on the topic to be able to identify if it's correct information and should be used" [LFS203 Student: 2024]

Human Ethics UniSC # A24055

Reinke, N. B., Parkinson, A. L., & Kafer, G. R. (2025). A tutorial activity for students to experience generative artificial intelligence: students' perceptions and actions. *Advances in Physiology Education*, 49(2), 461-470. <https://doi.org/10.1152/advan.00245.2024>

OUTCOMES & IMPACT:



GENAI USE IN TASK 2 ASSIGNMENT

2023 (n=172) 2024 (n=194) 2025 (n=168)

Attendance at tutorial

71.5% 58.2% 61.9%

GenAI use declared, deemed appropriate (# groups)

5 9 5

Inappropriate GenAI use detected (# groups)

0 3 0

References

Parkinson, A. L., Hatje, E., Kynn, M., Kuballa, A. V., Donkin, R., & Reinke, N. B. (2022). Collusion is still a tricky topic: Student perspectives of academic integrity using assessment-specific examples in a science subject. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 47(8), 1416-1428. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2022.2040947>

Reinke, N. B., Hatje, E., Parkinson, A. L., & Kynn, M. (2024). It (still) takes a village: From academic dishonesty to a culture of academic integrity. In M. B. Rao, A. Singh, & P. M. Rao (Eds.), *Worldviews and values in higher education* (pp. 81-94). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80262-897-520241006>

Reinke, N. B., Parkinson, A. L., & Kafer, G. R. (2025). A tutorial activity for students to experience generative artificial intelligence: Students' perceptions and actions. *Advances in Physiology Education*, 49(2), 461-470. <https://doi.org/10.1152/advan.00245.2024>

Other news

A range of other exciting developments is taking place in the TATAL program.

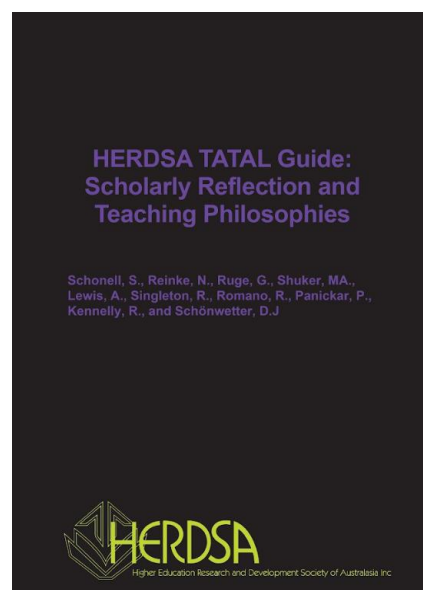
The new *TATAL Guide*

Stu Schonell (*Advocacy WA*)

Exciting news! The second edition of the TATAL Workbook, now called *HERDSA TATAL Guide: Scholarly Reflection and Teaching Philosophies*, has been written/published/printed

and is sitting at the HERDSA offices ready for sale. Once again, it is available in both hard copy and PDF. The second edition of the TATAL Guide offers educators:

- A learning map of the TATAL journey from commencing in the TATAL community to extending your learning and teaching scholarship.
- Frameworks, reflection tasks, tables and prompts to draft, test and refine teaching philosophies.
- A theoretical grounding of TATAL from a larger variety of pedagogies.
- Advice on setting up conversation communities in your own institution.
- Exemplar teaching philosophies from two stars in the field, Nicole Reinke and Dieter Schonwetter.
- The HERDSA fellowship portfolio structure as well as information on other fellowships.



An amazing group of TATALers helped co-author the latest edition, all TATAL and teaching icons in their respective fields. This includes Gesa Ruge, Nicole Reinke, Abigail Lewis, Mary-Ann Shuker, Rachelle Singleton, Pearl Panicker, Rosetta Romano, Dieter Schonwetter and of course the most affable Robert Kennelly. John Gilchrist was the editor.

TATAL continues to build resilience and professional identity through reflection that is both personal and collaborative, helping academics clarify who they are as teachers while sustaining teaching passion. We highly recommend that you purchase a copy of the new guide before it sells out!

The anatomy of the Singapore TATAL 2026

Robert Kennelly and the Singapore TATAL facilitation team

This is HERDSA's third venture outside of Australia and New Zealand. In 2004, we went to Miri in Sabah, a state of Malaysia on the island of Borneo. In 2014, we went to Hong Kong and we brought TATAL with us. And now in 2026 we head to Singapore. As Peter Kandlbinder has remarked in a recent HERDSA blog "the founding vision of HERDSA is to be a truly International Society" We know that Misty So-Sum Wai Chook, Mark Gan and Liu Mei Hui (convenors of the Conference) are in the process of formalising a HERDSA Branch as was created in Hong Kong.

HERDSA and TATAL stand on the precipice of a billion + person market; Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Bhutan, China, Philippines, Japan, South Korea where we are already growing small shoots and Hong Kong where we have much bigger shoots.

One might ask for how long can we confine TATAL to one language?

TATAL is "Talking about Teaching and learning" workshops create a safe, trusting, respectful space for cohorts of reflective practitioners to meet, discuss the pressures and changing nature of academic work, learn from each other, and develop their teaching philosophy.

The focus of this full-day workshop is to:

- Establish a safe collaborative environment in which to investigate the challenges and successes of teaching and learning.
- Enhance skills and confidence in talking and writing about teaching and learning.
- Begin to articulate a personal teaching philosophy.

You can register now on the Singapore HERDSA Conference website, <https://conference.herdsa.org.au/2026/> (by going to Attending > Register), and find further details about the TATAL workshop on the conference workshops webpage: <https://conference.herdsa.org.au/2026/pre-conference-workshops/>. The workshop costs \$80 and, for that amount, you get a copy of the new guide, lunch and a photo with a TATAL cake. (Taken from TATAL Singapore accepted abstract 2025.)

The TATAL Singapore facilitation team is made up of HERDSA Fellows who are TATAL Luminaries:

Stuart Schonell, graduate of the Hobart TATAL of 2012, the longest surviving TATAL (14th birthday in Singapore) Stuart is the lead author of the TATAL workbook 2015 and also of the recently published HERDSA guide of 2025.

Nicole Reinke, graduate of the Auckland 2019 TATAL, a TATAL that continues and has written at least two papers. Nicole has been involved in all recent TATALs including the online Brisbane one of 2021.

Mary-Ann Shuker is a graduate of Fremantle 2016 and facilitator in the following TATALs in Sydney, Adelaide and Auckland. She continues to be an active member of the Auckland TATAL group. She and Stuart helped take TATAL to an online and face-to-face approach.

Rachelle Singleton started her TATAL career in Adelaide in 2018. Rachelle agreed to become a facilitator in Auckland, but unfortunately Adelaide did not continue. However, Rachelle and her colleague Angela Tsai helped get the team culturally aware of what we needed to know to run TATAL in New Zealand. Rachelle is still active in the Auckland TATAL.

Mei Li is also a graduate of the Auckland program. Mei continued her facilitation in Melbourne in 2022 and in Perth in 2025 had her first mentee gained a fellowship. In recent years Mei has become the TATAL officer and also editor of our newsletter now to be called the *TATAL Chronicle*.

Jessica Borger, graduate of Melbourne 2022 and welcome new blood to our team. As the most recent fellow in the team, she has the best handle on the experiences leading to a fellowship.

Robert Kennelly, pioneer fellow Christchurch in 2003, life member Auckland 2013. I just like TATALing and supporting our most passionate teachers.

Rosetta Romano is a graduate of the University of Canberra program, 2020. While not part of the facilitation team, she has made a significant contribution to the new TATAL guide, specifically through the inclusion of an increased Indigenous perspective.

TATAL Singapore 2026 starts at 8.30am on Monday 6th July, continues on Wednesday morning at 7.30am and then online and/or face-to-face in Singapore for many months to come. On Monday 6th July we have two more fellows joining us: **John Gilchrist**, a graduate of 2009 (and facilitator of other TATAL groups), and **Yoko Mori**, a graduate from Adelaide 2024.



Stuart Schonell



Nicole Reinke



Mary-Ann
Shuker



Rachelle
Singleton



Mei Li



Jessica Borger



Robert Kennelly



Rosetta
Romano



Yoko Mori



John Gilchrist

Developments in Education and Technology: Insights from the London International Conference on Education

Marie B. Fisher (*University of New England*)

I was invited to Chair an Education and Technology international conference at Oxford University in the United Kingdom in November 2025. From my past experience of chairing this conference in 2024 and in 2023, I learned about new and emerging research, transforming my practice and support of colleagues. It was a pleasure and honour to contribute and support international education and technology research. I learned so much more than I realised.

I am grateful to the committee for their support and guidance on academic research from when I commenced as an academic to the present. This conference provided an opportunity to connect with international colleagues, promote HERDSA conferences and services, as well as support new and emerging academic and professional colleagues. It provided me with a UK-sponsored opportunity to present my reflective practice research work in building academic resilience during the higher degree research (HDR) journey.



As part of the duties of this role, I organised, led and facilitated face-to-face and virtual sessions ensuring that participants were supported and encouraged. In addition, I linked the sessions by providing mini summaries of what we experienced each day.

Congratulations to all the academics, HDR students, professionals and business participants (in person and online) who presented at the joint conference, 3-5 November (2025), at St Anne's College, Oxford University, in the UK. Professional, insightful and well-researched projects demonstrated real world application not limited to the increasing influence of artificial intelligence. I was privileged to serve as Chair at the joint conference with my fellow chairs and Professor Charles Schoniregun. We encouraged everyone to follow up with new connections and continue to build their personal and academic resilience. On behalf of the Committee, I thank these organisers for making the conference a success, in addition to thanking the quiet achievers behind the scenes, as well.

I was humbled by the struggles that many academic and professional colleagues have to overcome to progress their research. Many colleagues from certain parts of the world who are experiencing conflict, famine or violence showed great courage and generosity in sharing their practice and research. I look forward to contributing in 2026 to the L.I.C.E committee and conference.

TATAL LinkedIn group

In wonderful news, TATAL now has its own LinkedIn group*! This professional online space gives TATALers the opportunity to connect with each other. If you're interested in joining, simply head to <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/14869026/> or scan the QR code to the left. (Please note: to enter the group, a person already needs to have a LinkedIn account.) Also, all TATALers are welcome to share their thoughts about the formation of the group. (Needless to say, membership of the group is voluntary; in other words, there is no obligation for any TATALer to join the group.) Questions about the group, or joining the group, should be directed to Mei (mei.li1@jcu.edu.au).



*Please note, for the avoidance of confusion: The TATAL LinkedIn group is not a TATAL group in the traditional sense; it is simply an online networking space that gives TATALers, from existing TATAL groups, the chance to connect with each other online.

TATAL Practices

Find out about the practices with which TATALers have been engaging.

Insights into facilitation, teaching strategies, and what you are trying out in your context

Margi Gibb (*BPP Institute*)

I teach a subject entitled, Engaging with Communities. The subject serves as a prerequisite for students wishing to take a masters specialisation in the aged care and disability sectors.

Throughout the Unit students are introduced to both sectors, and the importance of community participation for older Australians and for people living with a disability.

Approximately two years ago I decided to introduce Creating a Friendship Mandala workshop into this class, an activity I have previously facilitated when working in the community sector.

I first learnt this methodology when studying for my master's degree in experiential learning. I wrote a thesis called *The Mandala and its Application in the Fields of Health and Education in the 21st Century*. As part of my research, I travelled to America to study with two renowned mandala facilitators and artists Dr Judith Cornell and Bailey Cunningham, Director of the Mandala Project. Cunningham (2003) states:

I am convinced that the mandala, as a representation of wholeness, can be a potent and even necessary element in education. When information is supplied within a context that is united by a central focus, learning makes sense and is more easily assimilated (mandalaproject.org).

This supports Kolb's (1984) claim that experiential learning asserts that to learn something you need to do it in context. Using the methodology for creating a friendship Mandala in *Engaging with Communities* assists students in considering their experience in the context of older Australian and those with a disability who may be experiencing isolation or lacking opportunities to engage.

According to Kolb (1984), learning is knowledge created through the transformation of experience (p.38). Reflecting on the outcomes of the mandala workshops I have held in the classroom I can confidently claim that I have found this statement to hold merit.

On the surface, the activity appears to be a simple exercise in coloring but through the guidance of an experienced facilitator students learn experientially the value of community, participation, group work, having fun, and the consequential effect this has on our wellbeing.

The workshop breaks down the barriers between students and allows them to learn the value of participating in community and coming together to create something bigger than the individual. As well, students work as a team to bring the final design together, which prepares them to work in a group for their assessment tasks.

This then acts as a point of reference for their future learnings as they can reflect on what they experienced in the workshop when they study principles such as participation, inclusion, connectedness, and belonging.

I have found that the opportunity to take students through an experiential learning process rather than just a theoretical one is invaluable to their learning and allows me as a teacher to illustrate concepts such as inclusion, participation and group work to students.

Reflecting on this has now led me to formally embed the mandala workshop in the curriculum, to create an opportunity for experiential and transformative learning.

Reference

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice-Hall.

Reflections About TATAL

In this final section, you'll find first-hand accounts about TATAL experiences.

One of the many reasons I love TATAL

Nicole B. Reinke (*University of the Sunshine Coast*)

I started TATALing in 2019 when I attended the Auckland HERDSA conference. Looking back, selecting the TATAL pre-conference workshop was extremely lucky – I was keen to get value for the workshop registration, and TATAL's workshop lasted the whole day, as opposed to the other half-day workshops. Being a social introvert, I was a bit unnerved by the idea of collaborative reflective practice with a large group of strangers, but I figured I could always leave the workshop early if I was not comfortable. Also, with my love of learning and teaching, I thought I might learn a lot. It turned out to be a fantastic day, and I was amazed at the educators that were participating in the workshop, the facilitators who were running the workshop, the activities that we completed and the lack of pressure. Choosing this workshop changed so many things in my life in a positive way! (Perhaps they are better shared another day). Needless to say, after the conference I was keen to participate in the monthly online TATAL meetings. As the TATAL 2019 group met post-conference, we continued to get to know each other and we were working on our own teaching philosophies, when I had to take some unexpected medical leave. I was away from TATAL for quite a few months and was nervous about returning, as with other academic meetings, I thought this would involve uncomfortable questions and explanations of why I was away. To my surprise, when I again rocked up to the next TATAL meeting, I was greeted by Robert K. with the words "Welcome home, Nicole". There was no judgement or comments about why I was away, or probing questions; just a warm welcome leading to the self-recognition that I was in the right place and with the right people. It was in this moment that I knew I wanted to be involved more with the broader TATAL community, and that I wanted to help facilitate the same opportunity for others. What an amazing community!

From turbulence to transformation: The critical role of TATAL as professional and personal support

Angela Tsai (*Auckland University of Technology*)

2025 has been a year of professional and personal transformation for me. In this reflective piece, I wish to acknowledge the critical role that the members of the Auckland 2019 TATAL group played in supporting me through a time of immense change and challenge.

After 15 years of being a front-line, teaching focussed academic in a STEM-focussed faculty within a research-intensive university, I made the shift to a professional (allied) role

in a different tertiary institution as a Learning Designer/Academic Developer. Shortly after my appointment, I was promoted to a Senior Learning Designer. To have my skills and expertise recognised and my contributions valued and affirmed in this way was a novelty. In reflection, the “peripheral” activities that I undertook whilst being a teaching-focussed academic played a pivotal role in my

successful transition into the “third space”. These include supporting other educators to grow and develop/capacity building; undertaking peer observation of teaching (and being observed myself); sharing (and facilitating others to share) practices on documenting evidence of teaching practice and excellence, assessing the impact of educational innovations, and supporting others to unpack/respond to their student feedback. To readers who may be doubting the value of their engagement with such activities, I believe your perseverance will be rewarded.



Another milestone worthy of celebration was the submission of my PhD thesis, some 10 years after its initiation. I am deeply grateful for TATALers who steadily believed, generously reassured and constantly encouraged me throughout my Doctoral journey.

Throughout these major life changes, TATAL was instrumental in my transformation and adjustment. The practice and habit of addressing TATALers’ Questions of Clarification in our monthly meetings helped me to develop the confidence and conviction to be outspoken about my beliefs and ideas, as well as staying curious about different perspectives. The collective wisdom of TATALers helped to provide practical support and insights that I needed. For me, this speaks to the power of the collaborative community that is TATAL. Mary-Ann, Rachelle, Nicole, Ann, Jen, Mei and Josephine: your collegiality has sustained and invigorated me. Thank you for your support and friendship. I am so grateful.

Headache-busting with TATAL

Lukasz Swiatek (UNSW)

For years, I’ve been telling colleagues that TATAL helps relieve headaches. On many occasions, I’ve joined a TATAL Zoom meeting with a headache only to find (roughly an hour later) that the headache has disappeared. Not all community of practice, or conversation community, meetings provide such relief from headaches. As we all know, many meetings that we have to attend cause headaches.

I've been very fortunate that my main (2015 Melbourne) TATAL group has been such a wonderful source of headache-busting all these years. My dear group members – namely (in alphabetical order), Ana Maria Ducasse, Jenny Coburn, Maria Northcote and Nirma Samarawickrema – have always been able to ease the tensions created by pressurised academic life brilliantly with their friendliness, good humour, kindness and compassion just through the course of our conversations. I've been tremendously lucky, indeed.

When I think about the differences between my TATAL group meetings and other meetings (and even other community of practice or conversation community meetings), I put the tension-relief down to the warm atmosphere and enormous care in the TATAL meetings. We always focus supportively on each other, particularly taking the time to check in on one another's state at the start of every meeting, listening attentively to each other and providing genuine individual care. I especially vividly recall the way we spent the majority of many meetings during the pandemic just focusing on each other's wellbeing and sharing stories of workplace tragedies and triumphs. During many bleak months, each TATAL group meeting was the bright point in my week.

TATAL isn't currently listed as an official headache-fix, but I think it could be. A recent scholarly review of the diagnosis and management of headaches (Robbins, 2021) lists all kinds of great treatments (acute, preventative, and so on), but TATAL is missing. It's an oversight that should be fixed.

References

Robbins, M. S. (2021). Diagnosis and management of headache: A review. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 325(18), 1874-1885. <http://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2021.1640>

Growing Into Academia, Together

Mei Li (*James Cook University*)

My TATAL group and fellow TATAL facilitators have been instrumental in my growth as an international academic and immigrant in Australia. They have helped me work through cross-cultural barriers in approaching working relationships, seek professional development opportunities, look after my own and others' wellbeing, and become a mentor in the higher education learning and teaching community. Knowing there is a safe place with a group of people who are knowledgeable, generous, and non-judgmental is reassuring. Thankfully, I have slowly learnt to become more confident navigating through the complexities of academic life, feeling a little more grounded and a little more at home along the way.

Over the last year, I have also realised how much TATAL sits alongside many of the transitions in my life: moving to North Queensland, stepping into new leadership roles, and simply, being human. In many ways, TATAL has been the thread that holds these pieces together: a place where ideas become clearer, where uncertainties feel shared, and where I am reminded that growth is rarely linear, but is always possible.

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