

## **ACADEMICS MAKING STRATEGIC DECISIONS:**

A case study of decisions and decision making in a student development unit in an Australian university.

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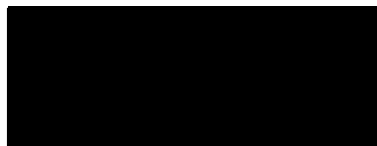
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## CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being currently submitted for any other degrees.

I certify that to the best of my knowledge any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.

Signature

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis reports on a study of decisions and decision making among academics in a student development unit, the Educational Development Department, located on the Footscray Campus of the Victoria University of Technology (formerly the Footscray Institute of Technology). The study reviews literature on academic culture and decision making. Broad ideas from that field are applied to empirical data gathered at the field work site from 1986 to 1991. Individual academics gave key decisions sampled from their workplace settings and each was interviewed for their perceptions about further key decisions being made or contemplated. During the data gathering phase, the researcher tried to stay close to actors' own perceptions of the field. The study focusses mainly upon the many and varied ways in which academics perceived the domain of decision making within their own close circles of work. Among its findings, the thesis calls for a more careful approach to discourse upon decisions and decision making, finding that confusions arising in ordinary language distort social realities. Decisions are more usefully seen as pinnacle points of meaning that do not remain static within social settings. Widely and deeply across fields of legitimation, actors in this higher education setting were found to use them to both support and undermine; and by that dual process, to displace persons, ideas and programs that are normally seen to be held static in authority locations.