University educators from around the world recently visited two of ACU National’s campuses to explore innovative learning environments selected for showcasing by the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education Places and Spaces for Learning program.

The nursing laboratory at the North Sydney Campus was on show, featuring the Virtual Health Environment, which has been awarded an ACU National Teaching and Learning Enhancement Scheme grant and a Carrick Citation. Also on show was the Indigenous Reflection Space at the Brisbane Campus, which reaffirms strong Indigenous spiritual links with the land at Banyo and the Bora rings at the nearby Nudgee waterholes.

“The Indigenous Reflection Space is used creatively for teaching and learning while retaining respect for the spiritual purpose,” said Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Quality and Outreach) Professor John O’Gorman, pictured above.

It has become a significant area for conducting cultural studies, reconciliation learning circles, traditional welcome to country ceremonies at University functions, poetry readings and drama activities as well as liturgies and social events.

“As an outdoor teaching area, it provides flexibility and connections for Indigenous students who travel to the campus from rural and remote communities for residential programs several times a year. For non-Indigenous students, staff and visitors, it provides a learning space that allows them to understand better the concepts of Indigenous cultures and spirituality.”

The University received a five-star rating, well above average, for “Indigenous participation” in The Good Universities Guide 2008, but the space is used by Indigenous and non-Indigenous students alike.

“The learning space is only one manifestation of our commitment to the learning environment for all students,” Professor O’Gorman said. “Importantly, what happens inside these spaces is of prime concern to us, the quality of the learning experience, the sense of social responsibility our students develop, the relevance of their skills, and their confidence and capability to meet the needs of the communities we serve.”

TOP TEACHING SPACES ON SHOW