This resource was funded by
The Australian Learning and Teaching Council,
formerly The Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education,
an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Education,
Employment and Workplace Relations.
June, 2008

the RED resource

Recognition • Enhancement • Development

The contribution of sessional teachers to higher education

Legal

Acknowledgements

The Project Leaders would like to thank the Project Team Members, the Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development (CADAD), the Linked University Representatives, the Reference Group Members, the Administration and Production Support staff, and other consultants across the university sector whose interest and contributions to the project have ensured its success. This project was funded by The Australian Learning and Teaching Council, formerly The Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

Resource Authors

Alisa Percy	University of Wollongong
Michele Scoufis	University of New South Wales
Sharon Parry	Southern Cross University
Allan Goody	University of Western Australia
Margaret Hicks	University of South Australia
Ian Macdonald	University of New England
Kay Martinez	James Cook University
Nick Szorenyi-Reischl	James Cook University
Yoni Ryan	Australian Catholic University
Sandra Wills	University of Wollongong
Lynn Sheridan	University of New South Wales

June, 2008
ISBN - 978-0-646-49189-9

Project Team Members

A/Prof Michele Scoufis (Project Leader)	University of New South Wales
A/Prof Sharon Parry (Project Leader)	Southern Cross University
Ms Lynn Sheridan (Project Manager)	University of New South Wales
Dr Alan Goody	University of Western Australia
A/Prof Margaret Hicks	University of South Australia
Prof Ian Macdonald	University of New England
A/Prof Kay Martinez	James Cook University
Dr Nick Szorenyi-Reischl	James Cook University
Prof Yoni Ryan	University of Canberra
Prof Sandra Wills and Ms Alisa Percy	University of Wollongong

Reference Team Members

Prof Gwendolyn Bradley	American Association of University Professors, Washington
Mr Colin Bryson	Nottingham Trent University, England
Prof Richard Henry	University of New South Wales
Ms Shard Lorenzo	University of South Australia
Dr Elizabeth McDonald	The Australian Learning and Teaching Council
Ms Lexie Smiles	Queensland University of Technology
Dr Kathryn Sutherland	Victoria University, Wellington
Dr Jennifer Weir	Murdoch University (Project Evaluator)

Linked Representatives

A/Prof Beth Cavallari	The University of Queensland
Prof Kym Fraser	Charles Darwin University
Dr Marina Harvey	Macquarie University
Dr Erika Martens	La Trobe University
Dr Duncan Nulty	Griffith University
Ms Bronwyn Robinson	RMIT University
Ms Julie Shinners	University of Southern Qld
Mr Neil Trivett	University of Tasmania

Administration and Production Support

Ms Alisa Percy	University of Wollongong Editor of the RED Report, Resource and Website
Mr Adam Orvad	University of Wollongong Graphic Design and Production
Ms Thomasin Litchfield	University of New South Wales Research Assistant
Mr Charles Santoso & Ms Anne-Louise Dadak	College of Fine Arts, Sydney UNSW Omnium Design
Mr Mark Foster, Mr Matt Holmes & Mr Tom Cavdarovski	University of New South Wales Production Team

Contents

Executive Summary

This large-scale study into the recognition, enhancement and development of sessional teaching in higher education builds on the Australian Universities Teaching Committee Report (2003a) *Training, Support and Management of Sessional Teaching Staff.* The aim of the current Project was to identify and analyse current national practice and refocus attention on the issues surrounding sessional teachers in the university sector.

The Project had three objectives: to establish the full extent of the contribution that sessional teachers make to teaching and learning in higher education; to identify and analyse good practice examples for dissemination; and to consider the possible developments for institutional and sector-wide improvements to the quality enhancement of sessional teaching.

Sixteen Australian universities were involved in the Project, representing the 'Group of 8' (Go8), regional, Australian Technology Network (ATN), transnational and multi-campus institutions in all states and territories. At each of the participating universities, the number and typology of sessional teachers was audited across the institution and sixty interviews were conducted with the full range of participants, from sessional teachers to university executive staff.

Recognition

The project investigated the contribution sessional teachers make to higher education. The Project found that:

All universities depend heavily on sessional teachers;

Universities are unable to report comprehensive and accurate data on the number of sessional teachers and their conditions of employment;

The DEEWR (formerly DEST) FTE[1] figures do not represent the magnitude of the contribution of sessional teachers to higher education;

The FTE disguises the supervisory load on permanent staff;

Sessional teachers are responsible for much of the teaching load, estimates suggest this could be as high as half the teaching load; and

Sessional teachers perform the full range of teaching-related duties, from casual marker to subject designer and coordinator.

In summary, sessional teachers make a significant but largely invisible contribution to the quality of teaching and learning in higher education. Both the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of this contribution need to be investigated and accounted for at an institutional level if risk management and quality enhancement policy and practice are to be effective.

[1] The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR formerly DEST) Full-time Equivalence (FTE) calculation is the Government required formula for calculating and reporting on the employment of all academic staff including sessionals.

Enhancement

The analysis of current policy and practice across the participating institutions found that:

Evidence of systemic sustainable policy and practice is rare;

There is a general lack of formal policy and procedure in relation to the employment and administrative support of sessional teachers;

While induction is considered important in all universities, the ongoing academic management of sessional teachers is not as well understood or articulated;

Paid participation in compulsory professional development for sessional teachers is atypical; and

Despite various national and institutional recognition and reward initiatives, many sessional teachers continue to feel their contribution is undervalued.

In summary, systematic attention to assuring the quality of sessional teaching in many institutions is inadequate; however, good practice does exist and may be widely adopted across the sector.

Development

Institutional developments for the quality enhancement of sessional teaching have been categorised under the five domains that emerged from the study:

Systemic and sustainable policy and practice;

Employment and administrative support;

Induction and academic management;

Career and professional development; and

Reward and recognition.

Further detail of these domains and a selection of good practice examples have been put together here in the RED Resource.

Sector-wide Improvement

Sector-wide improvement will rely on the leadership of individual universities and their capacity to promote sustainable initiatives at the faculty, school and program level.

This will require ongoing support from The Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) through the promotion of scholarly research in the area, further exploration into the qualitative dimensions of the contribution of sessional teachers, the development and dissemination of creative solutions, and the inclusion of the academic management of sessional teachers in institutional benchmarking projects.

The ALTC might also consider the creation of links to their project on the Quality Indicators of Teaching and other leadership projects.

The Project

"Students want a seamless education. They do not want to know that their tutor or lecturer is sessional or permanent. They want high quality teaching and high quality subjects."

Kurt Steel, University of Canberra Student Association, at the National Colloquium on Sessional Teaching, November 2007.

The nature of the teaching workforce in Australian universities is changing. Concurrently, the operational environment of universities has become more flexible, dynamic and complex to manage. The combination of these factors poses a significant challenge to universities seeking to monitor and refine the student learning environment.

The RED Report, Recognition - Enhancement - Development: The contribution of sessional teachers to higher education raises the question of how well universities are able to report on the nature of their teaching workforce and enhance the quality of the learning environment where the proportion of sessional teachers in the sector is high and growing.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR formerly DEST) reported that between 1996 and 2005, the number of casual staff calculated in terms of Full-Time Equivalence (FTE) in the higher education sector grew from 10,396 to 13,530 (DEST, 2006), representing just under 15 per cent[2] FTE of the academic workforce. In this context, some universities have begun the process of reviewing the diversity of academic roles to consider appropriate ways forward (see Rix et al, 2007).

Over time, the operational requirements of universities have also changed, with increased vocational orientations in academic programs combined with off-shore, multi-campus, distance and flexible delivery challenges. Add to this the diversification of the student body, evolving pedagogical paradigms and new teaching technologies, and the professionalisation of teaching can be seen as an imperative.

[2] This figure is rendered problematic by the findings of this Project.

Yet this comes at a time when these contextual and dynamic factors pose significant challenges to the quality enhancement of sessional teaching within existing information gathering and policy frameworks.

Sessional teachers' contribution to teaching and learning in higher education is substantial, and in many cases, vital to the professional quality and relevance of the degree program. Further, their professionalism and commitment to student learning is highly regarded. However, despite the publication of the *Guidelines for Managing, Supporting and Training Sessional Teaching Staff at University* by the Australian Universities Teaching Committee (AUTC) in 2003, evidence of improvement is scant.

An analysis of the AUQA reports from 2003 to 2006 indicates that while there have been some improvements in the sector, few universities adequately integrate and support sessional teachers in a systemic way. The AUQA recommendations have highlighted the need for improved strategic workforce planning and the development of systems, policies and practices for the induction, management, integration and support of sessional teachers.

In 2007, the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education commissioned the Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development (CADAD) to analyse different approaches to the support of sessional teachers in Australian higher education with a view to disseminating successful practice and identifying areas for further development.

For the purpose of the project, sessional teachers were to be defined in the same way as in the earlier AUTC project; that is, sessional teachers include any higher education instructors not in tenured or permanent positions. This includes part-time tutors or demonstrators, postgraduate students or research fellows involved in part-time teaching, external people from industry or professions, clinical tutors, casually employed lecturers or any other teachers employed on a course-by-course basis.

A diagrammatic representation of the Project Context is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Project Context

Aim

The aim of this Project was to identify and analyse current national practice and refocus attention on the issues surrounding sessional teachers in the university sector four years after the release of the comprehensive and influential AUTC (2003) *Guidelines for Managing, Supporting and Training Sessional Teaching Staff at University.*

Objectives

The Project sought to answer the following questions:

To what extent do we recognise the contribution sessional teachers make to higher education?

What policies and practices do universities have in place to manage the contribution of sessional teaching staff?

How can sector-wide improvements be made?

The Products

The RED Report

The RED Report presents the key findings of the Project:

RECOGNITION calls attention to the growing diversity of the teaching workforce and the need for better systems, policies and procedures to assure the quality of teaching and learning in a more complex operational environment;

ENHANCEMENT highlights the general lack of improvement in sustainable policy and practice since the AUTC Report (2003a); and

DEVELOPMENT provides a series of discussion points for wholesale improvements across the sector.

The National Colloquium on Sessional Teaching in Higher Education

The National Colloquium on Sessional Teaching in Higher Education was held at the Australian National University on November 28, 2007. This Colloquium was the main dissemination event for the project, presenting the findings to date and stimulating further discussion.

One hundred and one participants registered for the event with over 90% attendance. The participants represented 33 of the 38 universities across Australia. The Program, presentations and transcripts can be found on the RED Website.

The RED Website
http://www.cadad.edu.au/sessional/RED

The RED Website contains:

- the RED Report,
- the RED Resource,
- the Program of The National Colloquium on Sessional Teaching in Higher Education with downloadable presentation slides and transcripts,
- links to websites, handbooks and resources, and
- the project literature review.

The RED Resource outline

The RED Resource has three sections:

The Five Domains

These domains emerged from this Project as broad areas requiring attention:

Systemic and sustainable policy and practice;

Employment and administrative support;

Induction and academic management;

Career and professional development; and

Reward and recognition.

Each Domain contains the relevant findings from the RED Report, identified characteristics of good practice, identified challenges, and suggested examples of good practice. These Domains suggest possibilities for action, but are not exclusive in representing all the issues related to the quality enhancement of sessional teaching.

The Good Practice Case Studies

These case studies are a selection of good practice examples in what needs to be an ongoing investigation into evidence-based practice in this area. While there can be no one standardised approach across the sector, responsibility for improving current policy and practice lies at all levels of the University: an institutional policy framework, faculty and school based procedure and practice, and quality practices at course and subject level. In this Resource:

Cases 1 - 3
provide examples of institutional approaches to addressing the professional needs of sessional teachers;

Cases 4 - 6
provide examples of policy, procedure and practice at the Faculty and School level;

Cases 7 - 8
provide examples of online initiatives;

Cases 9 -10
provide examples of good practice at the teaching team level.

Snapshot of the Colloquium

This section provides selected quotations from the various presenters at the National Colloquium on Sessional Teaching in Higher Education held as the main dissemination event for this Project.

The Five Domains

The five overlapping domains emerged from a thematic analysis of the interview data. They provide a focus for the quality enhancement of sessional teaching, but should not be seen as exclusive indicators in this area.

Domain 1: Systemic and Sustainable Policy and Practice
This domain is concerned with the existence and implementation of formalised policy and practice pertaining to the support, management and development of sessional teaching staff. Policy and practice are considered systemic and sustainable where they are relevant to the needs of sessional staff, are embedded and funded at the University and Faculty level, and are reflected in the culture of the institution.

Domain 2: Employment and Administrative Support
This domain is concerned with the conditions of employment, benefits and ongoing administrative support for sessional teachers. The major focus is on formalised policy with timely, equitable, thoughtful and flexible procedures and conditions.

Domain 3: Induction and Academic Management
This domain combines induction with academic management to emphasise the integrated nature of orientation and ongoing academic support within communities of practice. Induction refers to the way sessional staff are oriented to the goals, policies, services, practices and culture of the organisation, faculty and program within which they work. Academic management refers to their ongoing management at the Faculty, School and teaching team levels.

Domain 4: Professional and Career Development
This domain is concerned with the types of professional development provided to sessional teaching staff, and their accessibility, articulation into formal qualifications and relevance. Broader ties to performance management are also considered.

Domain 5: Rewards and Recognition
In addition to the national and institutional recognition of the overall contribution of sessional teachers to higher education outlined in the RED Report, this domain is concerned with the micro-level forms of recognition and reward universities might offer their sessional teachers.

Domain 1

Systemic and Sustainable Policy and Practice

Project Findings

Evidence of systemic and sustainable policy and practice is rare across the participating institutions. Of the 16 universities participating in this study:

- few universities have attempted a 'whole of university' approach to addressing the professional needs of sessional teachers;
- few have formalised policies and practices specifically for sessional teachers;
- several have informal policies and practices, usually at a faculty or school level;
- the majority rely on policies and practices for permanent staff which may or may not be relevant to sessional teachers;
- a few have developed some form of advocacy body, such as a university or school-based Sessional Teaching Working Party, to investigate and address employment issues and the quality enhancement of sessional teaching;
- only one has a formal mechanism for sessional teachers to provide feedback on their satisfaction with their engagement, support and experience of teaching with the university; and
- examples of good practice are often developed and delivered by a committed individual, a discipline with professional networks, or a university with strong leadership in a specific area.

Characteristics of Good Practice Drawn from the Interviews

Specific policy and procedure pertaining to sessional teachers

Integrated 'whole of institution' approach linked to University Strategic Planning

Centralised and decentralised policies and practices allowing for contextual diversity in the sector

Ownership and implementation at a faculty/school level

Resource allocation that supports faculty/school implementation

Collaboration between development units and faculties

Clearly articulated monitoring and reporting mechanisms

An auditing system to review and improve compliance

Mechanisms for collecting and disseminating feedback from sessionals on current institutional policy and practice

Key Challenges

Creative and appropriately resourced implementation

Awareness of and commitment to institutional policies

Strategic alignment and communication between policy and practice across departments (e.g. Human Resources, Learning & Teaching Units and Faculties)

Cultural change that recognises the important contribution that sessional teachers make to quality teaching and learning

Good Practice Examples

Case 1
Whole of University Approach - Policy and Practice
University of New South Wales

Case 2
Devleoping a Whole of University Approach
University of Wollongong

Case 3
Streamlining Human Resources and Induction Processes
University of South Australia

Domain 2

Employment and Administrative Support

Project Findings

There is a general lack of formal policy and procedure in relation to the employment and administrative support of sessional teachers. Of the 16 universities participating in this study:

- there are few examples of formalised policies and procedures for the recruitment and employment of sessional teachers;
- transparent and timely employment processes are not widely evident;
- employment practices are often carried out at a unit or school level with limited central Human Resources guidance or support;
- many universities have dedicated administrative support at the faculty or school level, but these are not always well communicated to sessional teachers; and
- few universities allow for the negotiation of rates of pay or salary sacrifice.

Characteristics of Good Practice Drawn from the Interviews

Employment

Formalised, transparent and timely processes relevant to the context and profile of sessional teachers

Contracts that clearly define the roles and responsibilities of sessional teachers

Processes that allow for a skills match in terms of identifying and selecting sessional teachers

Opportunity to negotiate rates of pay within university-defined parameters

Eligibility for salary sacrifice

Continuing contracts linked to professional development and performance review

Combining of multiple contracts into one formal agreement that takes into account workload and pay

Central implementation of a sessional teachers employment register online (database of sessional teachers)

Contracts which include paid time for induction, meetings, professional development, moderation and additional marking

Administrative Support

Centralised/accessible support within Faculty or School

Resource support for teaching

Online support – FAQ's, policies and procedures

Memory stick with relevant documents they may need

Inclusion on faculty and school email lists

Key Challenges

A lack of timely, merit-based and transparent employment processes

Delays in administration of contracts and remuneration

Workloads of administrative staff

Inadequate communication channels between the school and the sessional teachers

Good Practice Examples

Case 3
Streamlining Human Resources and Induction Processes
University of South Australia

Case 6
A Departmental Approach to Employing, Developing and Supporting Sessional Staff
Macquarie University

Domain 3

Induction and Academic Management

Project Findings

While induction is considered important in all universities, the ongoing academic management of sessional teachers is not well understood or articulated.

Induction

Of the 16 universities participating in this study:

- there is wide variation in how induction is offered within and between universities (centrally, locally or both; mandatory or voluntary);
- there is a wide variation in payment for induction;
- most induction focuses on policy requirements with only a few including aspects of teaching and learning;
- since sessional teachers often work in dispersed locations, there are significant logistical difficulties in providing induction; and
- some universities are trialling alternative modes for the delivery of induction.

Academic Management

Given the variation in induction provision, the role of the academic supervisor of sessional teachers is often the most crucial in establishing quality processes in teaching and learning. Of the 16 universities participating in this study:

- there are some instances of a dedicated role of Tutor Coordinator at the university, school and subject level;
- the academic management of sessional teachers is normally undertaken at a subject level by the subject coordinator;
- there are a number of examples of subject coordinators providing subject briefings, detailed tutor notes, meetings, opportunities to be part of curriculum design, review and assessment moderation;
- the casual contract does not always allow for paid quality practices, such as moderation in marking and meetings;
- there is little formal acknowledgement of or support for the subject coordinator's leadership role in ensuring quality teaching practices; and
- there are virtually no instances of formalised standards of practice or professional development for the subject coordinator's role in managing the teaching team.

Characteristics of Good Practice Drawn from the Interviews

Induction

Mandatory paid induction into university policy and practice (Teaching and Learning, Health and Safety, Services and Facilities)

Consideration of the context for induction – centralised (Learning & Teaching unit and/or Human Resource units) or de-centralised (school/faculty)

Induction information provided in different ways e.g. website, kit, on-line, face to face and made available for off-shore and off-site campuses, remote campuses and late employment

Audit of induction compliance

Domain 3

Academic Management

Development of a 'teaching team' approach to managing sessional teachers at a course or subject level

Regular paid meetings and/or communication with the teaching team

Guidelines for tutorials

Guidance in the moderation of assessment

Systems for debrief, feedback, evaluation

Mentoring model or buddy system for new sessional teachers

Peer observation and peer review opportunities

Head tutor in large units

Academic contact in remote or off-shore campuses

Systems to encourage social contact and networking among peers

A Faculty/School /subject website dedicated to sessional teachers

Support and professional development for subject /course coordinators

Key Challenges

Limited school/faculty funds for induction

Timing of induction sessions may not align with recruitment

Finding a time when all sessional teachers are available for induction

Disproportionate numbers of sessional teachers to permanent staff

Inadequate workload allocation for permanent staff supervising sessionals

Organisational complications managing off-shore, distance or distributed staff

Good Practice Examples

Case 3
Streamlining Human Resources and Induction Processes
University of South Australia

Case 4
A Multi-layered Approach to a University Tutor Training Program
University of New South Wales

Case 5
A Systems Approach to Supporting Sessional Staff at the School Level
Griffith University

Case 6
A Departmental Approach to Employing, Developing and Supporting Sessional Staff
Macquarie University

Case 7
Tutor Training & Orientation CDRom
University of Wollongong

Case 9
Academic Management of a Multi-location Teaching Team
University of Wollongong

Case 10
Developing Teaching Communities at the Program Level
Swinburne University of Technology

Domain 4

Professional and Career Development

Project Findings

Paid participation in compulsory professional development for sessional teachers is atypical. Of the 16 universities participating in this study:

- in most cases, there is no clear distinction between induction, professional and career development;
- examples of good practice are often developed and delivered by a committed individual, a discipline with professional networks, or a university with strong leadership in a specific area.
- only two universities in the study mandate and pay for professional development that is linked to articulation and career development for sessional teachers, and in one case, this was restricted to a single school;
- professional development at a school or subject level is largely unpaid and, where it is present, is developed and supported by individuals at that level;
- the logistics of providing relevant and accessible professional development for diverse and dispersed communities of teachers is a complex challenge for most universities; and
- some universities are trialling alternative modes of delivery.

Characteristics of Good Practice Drawn from the Interviews

Distinction between induction and development

Programs designed for the needs of sessional staff

Types

Short courses and online modules

Development of professional portfolios

Mentoring and peer observation/review opportunities

Performance evaluation and review

Opportunity to extend themselves; for example, paid to lecture or contribute to curriculum design

Research opportunities and access to conference funding

Opportunities to network with peers

Programs articulating into more formal qualifications, e.g. Graduate Certificate of Higher Education

Professional development linked to repeat contracts

Access

Opportunities to access the same professional development as permanent staff

Mandatory and paid professional development for those sessional staff teaching more than five hours per week

Flexible modes of professional development

Key Challenges

Limited institutional infrastructure to cater for their needs

Limited funding and resources

Limited formalised career paths for sessional teachers

Good Practice Examples

Case 3
Streamlining Human Resources and Induction Processes
University of South Australia

Case 4
A Multi-layered Approach to a University Tutor Training Program
University of New South Wales

Case 5
A Systems Approach to Supporting Sessional Staff at the School Level
Griffith University

Case 8
Online Professional Development for Clinical Educators
The University of Queensland

Case 9
Academic Management of a Multi-location Teaching Team
University of Wollongong

Case 10
Developing Teaching Communities at the Program level
Swinburne University of Technology

Domain 5

Rewards and Recognition

Project Findings

Many sessional teachers continue to feel their contribution is undervalued, despite various national and institutional recognition and reward initiatives. Of the 16 universities participating in this study:

- informal rewards and recognition occur at many of the universities in the form of letters, gifts and invitations to social functions;
- some universities specifically designate awards for sessional teachers;
- some sessional teachers observed that recognition of their capacity to contribute to curriculum design and development would be sufficient acknowledgement of their role; and
- in general, there are no formal mechanisms for sessional teachers to provide feedback on subject design and delivery or their satisfaction with the way they are engaged at an institutional level.

Characteristics of Good Practice Drawn from the Interviews

Reward

Dedicated Sessional Staff Excellence in Teaching Awards - awards linked to a financial prize, eg. money for conferences and resources

Recognition of the importance of their contribution

Appropriate access to physical and professional facilities – computer access, access to an office space, parking, email, library card before and after contract period

Invitation to be involved in decision making within a school

Invitations to contribute to working groups or professional networks

Opportunity to contribute to the ongoing enhancement of teaching in courses

Opportunity for performance management from supervisor

Personal acknowledgement or formal letters of appreciation from university

Opportunity to engage in research (paid)

Opportunity to access conference funding

Opportunity to access certificate course at the university (paid)

Key Challenges

Limited or no support in applying for awards

Lead-up time in submitting for awards too long; for example, only employed 12 weeks, need to work for 12 months

Award system not always transparent

Uneven capacity of sessionals staff to do own evaluation of teaching

Limited link to promotion or career path

Unable to apply for grants as a causal staff member

Good Practice Examples

Case 1
Whole of University Approach - Policy and Practice
University of New South Wales

Case 3
Streamlining Human Resources and Induction Processes
University of South Australia

Good Practice Case Studies

The Good Practice Case Studies presented here are only a selection of examples in what needs to be an ongoing investigation into evidence-based practice in this area.

While there can be no one standardised approach across the sector, responsibility for improving current policy and practice lies at all levels of the University: an institutional policy framework, faculty and school based procedure and practice, and quality practices at course and subject level.

Contents

Good Practice Case Studies

University Level

Case 1
Whole of University Approach - Policy and Practice
Associate Professor Michele Scoufis, Director of the Learning and Teaching Unit & Ms Colina Mason, Sessional Staff Coordinator, Learning and Teaching Unit, University Of New South Wales

Case 2
Developing a Whole of University Approach
Professor Sandra Wills, Director of the Centre for Educational Development and Interactive Resources (CEDIR) & Ms Alisa Percy, Sesssional Teaching Project Coordinator, University Of Wollongong

Case 3
Streamlining Human Resources and Induction Processes
Associate Professor Margaret Hicks, Acting Director: Flexible Learning Centre, Shard Lorenzo, Director of Human Resources & Bryanne Smith, HR Manager: Division of Health Sciences, University Of South Australia

Faculty/School/Department Level

Case 4
A Multi-layered Approach to a University Tutor Training Program
Dr Kerry Howells and Ms Colina Mason, Education Development Unit, Australian School of Business, University Of New South Wales

Case 5
A Systems Approach to Supporting Sessional Staff at the School Level
Associate Professor Keithia Wilson, Tutor Development Co-ordinator & Associate Professor Alf Lizzio, Head of School, School Of Psychology, Faculty of Health, Griffith University

Case 6
A Departmental Approach to Employing, Developing and Supporting Sessional Staff
Louella Almeida, Department Manager & Steven Cassidy, Senior Lecturer in Computing Department of Computing, Macquarie University

Online Initiatives

Case 7
Tutor Training & Orientation CDRom
Dr Anne Porter & Dr Caz Sandison, Senior Lecturers, School of Mathematics and Applied Statistics, Faculty of Informatics, University of Wollongong

Case 8
Online Professional Development Model for Clinical Educators
Professor Helen Chenery, Director of Studies, Faculty of Health Sciences, The University of Queensland

Teaching Team

Case 9
Academic Management of a Multi-location Teaching Team
Dr Jeannette Stirling, Subject Coordinator, Faculty of Arts, University of Wollongong

Case 10
Developing Teaching Communities at the Program level
Professor Ian Macdonald, Director, Teaching and Learning Centre, University of New England & Dr Tom Edwards, Education Development Coordinator, Faculty of Engineering and Industrial Sciences, Swinburne University of Technology

Note: The terms ‘sessional’ and ‘casual’ are used interchangeably in these cases.

1

Whole of University Approach – Policy and Practice

UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Contributed by:
Associate Professor Michele Scoufis, Director of the Learning and Teaching Unit

Ms Colina Mason
Sessional Staff Coordinator, Learning and Teaching Unit

Contact:
Colina Mason [cm.mason@unsw.edu.au]

Abstract

In 2005 the employment, induction and professional development of sessional teachers was ad hoc. Recognising the need for a whole of institution approach to improvements in this area, in 2006 the University implemented its *Sessional Teaching Staff Strategic Action Plan*.

The Plan is linked to performance indicators and funding for the faculties, and is supported by the Sessional Staff Coordinator located in the Learning and Teaching Unit. Through a facilitated implementation process, all schools in 2008 have a nominated staff member who is responsible for the overall support of sessional staff.

Context

At UNSW, 40-60% of undergraduate teaching is provided by sessional staff.

The *UNSW Sessional Teaching Staff Strategic Action Plan:*

- was developed by the Learning and Teaching Unit after an extensive consultation process;
- was formally approved by Committee on Education in March 2006;
- drew upon the AUTC Sessional Staff Teaching Project, the UNSW Guidelines on Learning that Inform Teaching (see Links and Resources) and international best practice; and
- recognises the diversity of employment of sessional teachers across disciplines/faculties.

The University recognises that faculties and schools require assistance in interpreting and implementing the Plan in their own context.

Implementation is supported through the Sessional Teaching Staff Coordinator, based in Learning and Teaching @ UNSW, and through the UNSW Faculty Learning and Teaching Performance Indicators.

Aims

The Sessional Teaching Staff Strategic Action Plan sought to:

- highlight and acknowledge the key roles played by sessional staff in the student learning experience;
- acknowledge and articulate the roles of all responsible for sessional staff and the quality of the learning and teaching experience;
- provide a basis for benchmarking, sharing and reporting on all aspects of the employment, induction, professional development and recognition of sessional staff; and
- establish a baseline of acceptable support for sessional staff against which improvement could be measured.

Outcomes

All schools have a nominated academic staff member who is responsible for the overall support of sessional teachers.

Most faculties have a Human Resources person whose role explicitly includes the employment and induction of sessional staff.

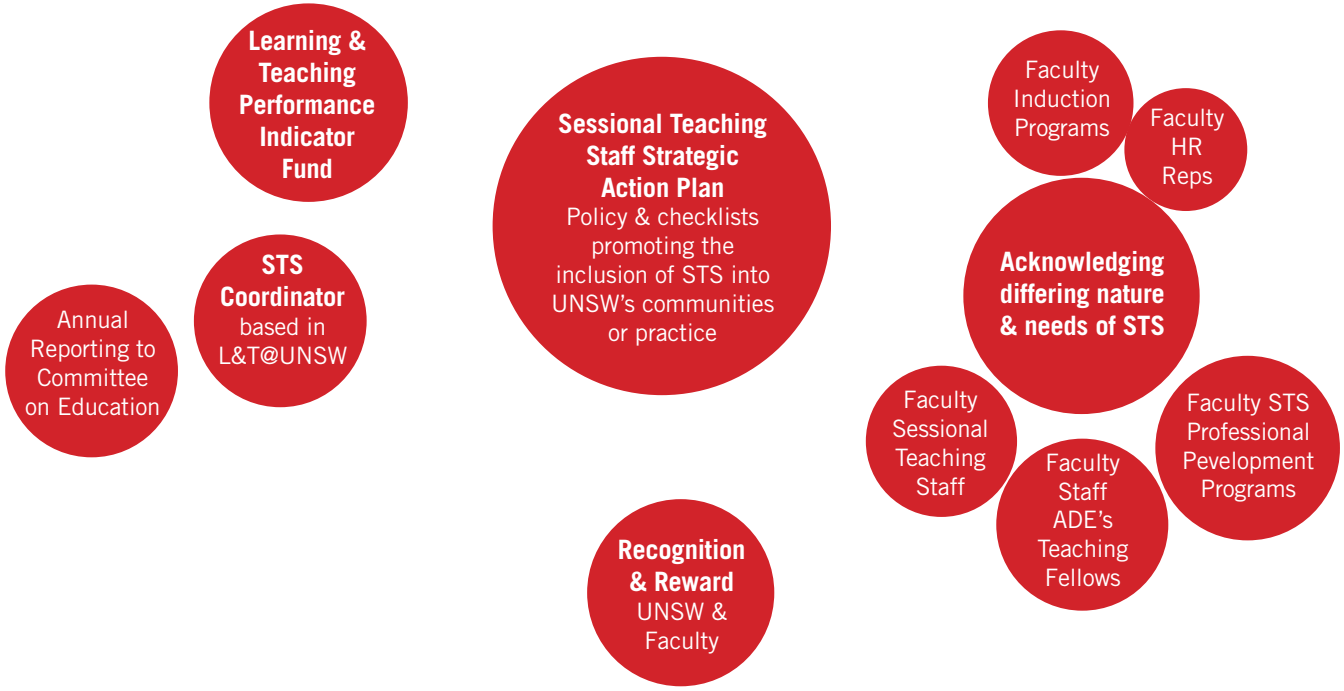
With the appointment of a Sessional Teaching Staff Coordinator within the central Learning and Teaching Unit, ongoing support has been provided through close collaboration with the faculties/schools.

Focus has been placed on key learning and teaching issues such as assessment and feedback. The coordinator ensures that useful practices are shared across the university.

Most faculties now provide at least 3 workshops for sessional staff (although the form varies greatly depending on the context).

There are 2 Vice Chancellor's Teaching Excellence Awards for sessional staff, and most faculties have sessional staff teaching awards.

The UNSW Sessional Teaching Staff Strategic Action Plan framework



What was done?

Sessional Teaching Strategic Action Plan: Policy and Checklists

A university-wide investigation into faculty policy and practice was instigated by the Pro Vice Chancellor and the Director of the Learning and Teaching Unit.

Building on the work of the 2003 AUTC *Guidelines for Training, Managing and Supporting Sessional Teachers* (see Links and Resources), the University's *Sessional Teaching Strategic Action Plan: Policy and Checklists* for the Employment, Management and Development of Sessional Teaching Staff was then developed.

Using a similar framework to the AUTC Guidelines, the Strategic Action Plan sets out faculty, school and course responsibilities according to recruitment, employment, integration and communication, opportunities for development in learning and teaching, and evaluation and recognition.

The Plan also provides a series of checklists to guide the implementation of those stated responsibilities. From 2005 the Strategic Action Plan was linked to Faculty Learning and Teaching Performance Indicators. This strategy was considered to be critical to ensure engagement with the Policy.

The process meant that Faculties received remuneration in part based on provision of professional development for sessional staff. From 2006 onwards the value and weighting of this indicator, relative to other indicators, has progressively increased to reflect and acknowledge the importance of providing induction, orientation and professional development for all sessional staff at UNSW.

Sessional Teaching Staff Coordinator

In 2003, a part-time Sessional Teaching Staff Coordinator was employed in the Teaching and Learning Unit to investigate the needs of sessional staff and develop strategies to support them.

In 2006, the role of the Sessional Teaching Staff Coordinator became a full-time position. The role is intended to:

- improve student learning as an outcome;
- foster a culture that values and rewards the contribution of sessional staff and encourages their engagement in course and program development;
- ensure that sessional teachers are supported and aware of the influence they have on students' learning and choice of career;
- assist in making the experience of teaching a positive one for new teachers as well as students. This could in turn influence their career paths;
- encourage faculties to take ownership of their professional development programs for sessional teachers;
- maintain a comprehensive website for sessional teachers;
- evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of the support provided for sessional teaching staff and make recommendations for improvement;
- report annually to the Committee of Education.

Human Resources

The Sessional Teaching Staff Coordinator worked with faculty Human Resources staff to improve processes relating to employment contracts, induction, access to IT and email accounts and access to the Library.

Professional Development

The Sessional Teaching Staff Coordinator works closely with faculties to design, develop and implement professional development programs for their sessional teachers.

These programs are contextualised, acknowledge specific disciplinary needs, and are facilitated by the UNSW Sessional Teaching Staff Coordinator and faculty staff.

Some faculties have initiated and developed their own programs for sessional teachers:

- The Australian School of Business has its own Education Development Unit and has an embedded program for new tutors (see Case 4 in this resource);
- The Science Faculty EdSquad has also developed its own program for tutors and lab demonstrators.

It is envisaged that embedded programs will change the university culture, with Learning and Teaching providing more of a resource position in the future.

In February 2007 a Compendium of Good Practice in Learning and Teaching focussing on sessional staff was published (see Links and Resources). This includes case studies of contextualised programs for sessional teachers across UNSW.

Improved communication

A contact list is available on the Support for Sessional Staff website (see Links and Resources) to identify those responsible for the overall support of sessional staff in each faculty. This list includes both administrative and academic staff contacts in each Faculty.

Recognition

In 2006, recognition of the contribution of sessional staff to the students' learning experience was achieved through the Vice-Chancellors Teaching Award for sessional staff and through various faculty-based awards.

Critical Success Factors

This model of practice is dependent on the central role of the Sessional Teaching Staff Coordinator, financial drivers and faculty performance indicators.

The use of performance indicators and faculty funding is critical to engagement with the policies.

The online environment is helpful in terms of support.

Review and Improvement

The model of having faculty-based learning and teaching support with central support for wider framing and the sharing of good practice is excellent.

Ideally, sessional staff would be paid to attend PD sessions. Often they are not.

There needs to be greater recognition that in a number of instances a teaching team (which may include sessional staff) is responsible for the quality of learning and teaching in any given course/subject/unit and this has implications for subject coordinators, especially in terms of assessment moderation.

There needs to be better recognition for sessional staff as part of the university's fabric.

Challenges

It is difficult to encourage sessional staff to voluntarily attend non-paid professional development.

It is challenging in a large research intensive university to change recruitment practices to ensure greater equity and fairness of employment.

Effective curriculum development, implementation, review and improvement processes must be tied to effective professional development processes for all staff, including sessional staff.
Key leadership roles in learning and teaching at all levels, including that of the course and program coordinator, need to be recognised, supported and valued.

Links and Resources

UNSW Sessional Teaching Staff Strategic Action Plan
www.unsw.edu.au/learning/pve/sessional.html

Support for Sessional Staff website
www.learningandteaching.unsw.edu.au/content/LT/sessional_staff/sessional_home.cfm?ss=2

UNSW Compendium of Good Practice
www.ltu.unsw.edu.au/content/userDocs/Compendium_Issue4_Feb07.pdf

AUTC (2003) Guidelines for Managing, Supporting and Training Sessional Teaching Staff at University
www.tedi.uq.edu.au/sessionalteaching

2

Developing a Whole of University Approach

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

Contributed by:
Professor Sandra Wills, Director of the Centre for Educational Development and Interactive Resources (CEDIR)

Ms Alisa Percy
Sesssional Teaching Project Coordinator

Contact:
Alisa Percy [alisa@uow.edu.au]

Abstract

This case reports on the process undertaken by one university to develop an institutional policy framework for managing, supporting and enhancing the contribution of sessional teaching staff. Building on a history of research and reporting on the issues of sessional teaching at the University of Wollongong, in 2006, the Sessional Teaching Project was established to develop a strategic approach to the quality enhancement of sessional teaching.

The Project Coordinator conducted various scoping activities, convened a university-wide Sessional Teaching Steering Committee, engaged in wide consultation across all of the faculties and led the development of a university-wide framework.

Context

The University of Wollongong is a medium-sized regional university that delivers its degree programs across multiple campuses as well as offshore. The local teachers at all 5 satellite campuses are in the main employed on a sessional basis. Approximately 25% FTE of all academic teaching staff are employed on a sessional basis. At the end of 2006, University Teaching and Learning Performance Funding was successfully sought to establish the UOW Sessional Teaching Project to scope the issues and develop a university-wide approach to adequately preparing and supporting casual teachers in their various roles.

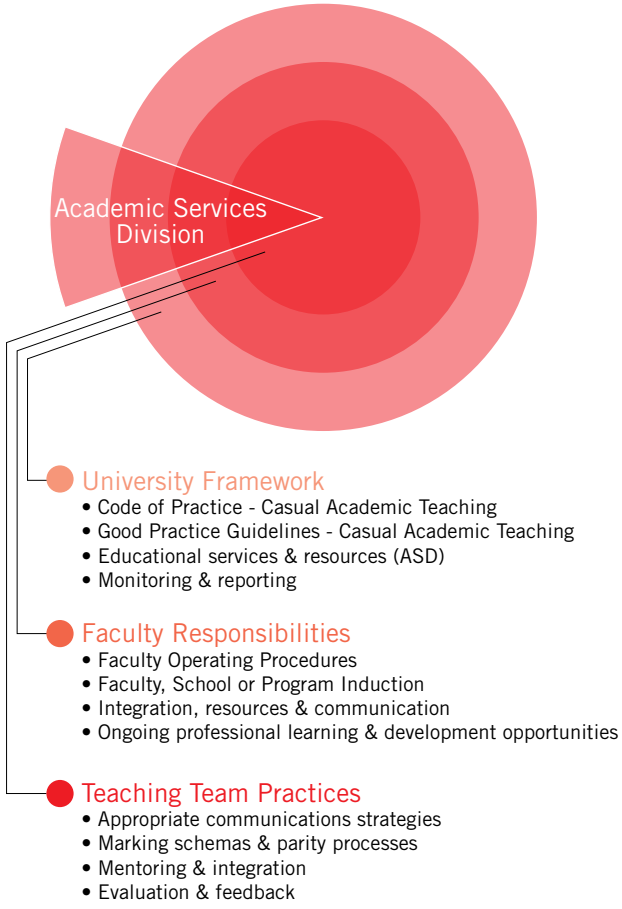
Aims

The Sessional Teaching Project sought to:

- develop a deeper understanding of the breadth and complexity of the casual teaching sector at UOW;
- explore the professional needs of casual teaching staff;
- develop a university-wide framework to facilitate sustainable and systemic improvements to the management, preparation and recognition of casual teaching staff; and
- explore implementation issues by working with the Faculty of Commerce.

Outcomes

A university-wide framework for improving the management, support and enhancement of the contribution of sessional teachers was developed. The framework has three layers as illustrated on page 22.



At the University level

The *Code of Practice - Casual Academic Teaching* articulates university, faculty and casual teachers' responsibilities. For the most part, it locates responsibility for interpreting and implementing the Code with faculties. The faculty responsibilities include recruitment, employment, induction, management, communication, professional development and recognition.

The *Good Practice Guidelines - Casual Academic Teaching* (in development) is designed to assist faculties and schools with implementation by elaborating on each of the faculty responsibilities and providing a range of contextualised examples.

The Academic Services Division, comprising Learning Development, the Library, and the Centre for Educational Resources and Interactive Resources (CEDIR), is an educational service/resource provided at the university level to assist all faculties with implementation. Staff in these units work in cross-unit, and cross-disciplinary teams to assist faculties with the implementation of a wide range of teaching and learning projects.

In addition to the above service, the University Professional and Organisational Development Service (PODS) run a mandatory induction for all sessional staff which covers compulsory policy and related issues (eg. OHS, EED, Privacy, Services for staff and students).

Faculties and schools are required to report on their implementation of the Code through their annual Learning and Teaching Strategic Plans.

At the faculty level

Faculties are expected to formalise their implementation of the Code through the development of *Faculty Standard Operating Procedures – Casual Academic Teaching.*

In line with existing university policy and the Code, faculties and/or schools are expected to appropriately recruit, employ and induct their sessional teaching staff.

They are expected to improve procedures for communication, resourcing and integration of sessional staff into their communities of practice.

They are expected to provide contextualised and relevant training and professional development opportunities.

At the Program and teaching team level

Emphasis is placed on developing improved systems of communication, providing guidance on teaching and marking, and establishing evaluation and feedback mechanisms.

2

What was done?

Scoping activities

To develop a deeper understanding of the breadth and complexity of the casual teaching sector at UOW, the Project implemented:

- surveys and interviews with Heads of School and Associate Deans across all faculties; and
- a collection of National and UOW statistics (ARD).

To explore the professional needs of casual teaching staff, the Project:

- conducted focus groups and interviews with sessional teaching staff;
- developed and trialled the Tutor Engagement Survey; and
- conducted an extensive review of the literature and national and international practice.

Development of university-wide framework

To develop a university-wide framework, the UEC/ASDC Sessional Teaching Steering Committee was convened to:

- review current policy and practice as it pertains to sessional teaching staff to identify good practice and areas for improvement;
- establish a benchmark of current faculty policy and practice to measure future improvements;
- develop the *Code of Practice* and *Good Practice Guidelines - Casual Academic Teaching* that can be interpreted and implemented at the Faculty, School and program level; and
- engage faculty in the development of the Code and Guidelines.

Exploring implementation

To explore implementation issues, a Sessional Teaching Working Group in the Faculty of Commerce was convened to:

- establish a model for the induction and development of sessional teaching staff in the faculty;
- develop a faculty-wide website for Sessional Teachers; and
- foster practices that recognise, include and engage sessional teaching staff as key contributors to a quality learning experience for students.

Critical Success Factors

The leadership of the Project Coordinator

The assistance of the Steering Committee with extensive faculty representation

The initial scoping activities and wide ongoing consultation

The development of a clearly articulated framework

University policy and procedure

Monitoring and reporting mechanisms

Review and Improvement

Refinement and consolidation of the policy, monitoring and reporting framework needs to be ongoing.

Focused work with other faculties will be required for implementation issues.

Development of tools, templates, examples and models for faculties and schools to adapt would be useful.

The scope needs to be expanded to investigate the professional needs of subject coordinators leading large teaching teams.

Further research into appropriate formal and non-formal professional learning opportunities for sessional teaching staff would help to provide sound advice on sustainable practice at the Faculty/ School or teaching team level.

Challenges

At this early stage, the greatest challenge will be facilitating Faculty and School implementation with limited resources.

Links and Resources

Code of Practice - Casual Academic Teaching
www.uow.edu.au/handbook/codesofprac/cop_cat.pdf

3

Streamlining Human Resources and Induction Processes

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Contributed by:
Associate Professor Margaret Hicks
Acting Director
Flexible Learning Centre

Shard Lorenzo
Director of Human Resources

Bryanne Smith
HR Manager
Division of Health Sciences

Contact:
Margaret Hicks [Margaret.Hicks@unisa.edu.au]

Abstract

The University of South Australia recognises that sessional teaching staff are an integral part of the workforce and provide a valuable service to the University, particularly in undergraduate teaching. This case study outlines action taken by the University to streamline human resources and induction processes for its sessional teachers.

Context

The main concerns listed below were identified through external research (eg Carrick survey, NTEU) and internal consultation (UniSA Sessional Staff Working Group):

- payment and level;
- tools of the trade; and
- involvement in decision making.

Aims

The University's aims were to adopt a consistent approach to the identified areas of sessional staff contracts, access to resources and facilities, and involvement in activities with full time academic staff.

Outcomes

- The development and implementation of an online employment register for sessional staff
- Improved contract documentation
- Paid induction
- Improved online resources for sessional teachers
- Professional development opportunities for sessional teachers tied to performance management
- Greater involvement in decision-making
- Opportunities for reward and recognition

What was done?

University-wide Working Party

UNISA has a Sessional Staff Working Party that is chaired by one of the Deans, Teaching and Learning.

Membership of the Working Party consists of an Associate Head of School, Dean: International, Director: Teaching and Learning, Human Resource staff and sessional teachers.

This Working Party is trying to systematically identify and address the issues relating to sessional teachers. The activities of this Working Party have put in place many of the initiatives identified below. The Working Party has received sound recognition of their work by the senior management group.

Recruitment, selection and appointment	**Development and implementation of online employment register for sessional staff**	Sessional teachers register details of experience, qualifications, availability, contact details and what they are interested in. (see Links and Resources). Faculty staff can search register for eligible people and register vacancies.
	Improved contract documentation	Contract documentation was improved to clarify rates of pay, teaching responsibilities and expected duties. Role statements were an important part of this clarification: for example, if the contract says that you are employed to present tutorials there is a drop down underneath that that gives a whole range of dot points that go with what presenting tutorials mean.
	The online contractual arrangements	Sessional teachers have the right to negotiate their rates of pay through this facility. They also have the option of salary sacrifice if they wish
Paid Induction	**Sessional staff at the University are paid to attend the induction sessions at two levels**	There is a divisional induction session which is held twice yearly across the four academic divisions; and there are also local school induction sessions.
Resources	***A Quick Guide for Sessional Staff*** **(see Links and Resources)**	The Quick Guide is available on the website and includes the answers to many of the questions raised by sessional teachers.
	An induction website for all new staff	This website provides a comprehensive introduction to the whole University (see Links and Resources).
	At the Division level	New sessional staff in the division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences receive a UNISA memory stick, which includes relevant documents that sessional staff may need.

Performance Management	**Performance review for new tutors**	A final review is undertaken at the end of the first contract. This includes: a self assessment by the sessional academic; and a meeting with the supervisor (Course Coordinator or Program Director) to discuss performance, professional development opportunities and career aspirations.
	Performance review for continuing tutors	Upon completion of the initial contract, the decision to offer a subsequent contract for the same program is based on satisfactory performance. During the second and subsequent contracts Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) data is required (where feasible) to provide additional quantitative data to support performance assessment. Satisfactory performance is required for further contracts to be offered.
	Performance assessment data	Performance assessment data is retained at school level to inform future staffing decisions.
	Formative feedback	On a regular basis sessional teachers can get feedback about what they're doing and also provide the subject coordinator or programme director with feedback.
Professional Development	**Teaching @ UNISA**	After the first contract, the Teaching @ UNISA course is both mandatory and paid for sessional teachers (see Links and Resource). This Program articulates into the Graduate Certificate of Education (University Teaching) which is required for all new academic continuing appointments A to C.
	At the division level	In the Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences, the locally delivered professional development sessions are a compulsory part of the induction process for sessional teachers.
Reward and Recognition	**Involvement in Decision Making**	Sessional teachers are invited to school board meetings and a range of other working parties. This is usually paid.
	Awards	The University of South Australia does give sessional teachers Excellence in Teaching Awards.

Critical Success Factors

The leadership of the working party.

The membership of the working party evolves depending on the focus of the group.

Review and Improvement

Continual review of the administration of sessional staff contracts.

Pilot study of centralising sessional contract administration to Divisional HR teams to ensure compliance.

Challenges

To ensure the sessional staff teaching experience is rewarding and provides a stepping stone to an academic career if required.

Local practice matching institutional commitment.

Links and Resources

Sessional Academic Staff Employment Register
www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/sessionalAcademic/index.asp

UNISA Quick Guide for Academic Sessional Staff
www.unisa.edu.au/staffdev/guides/sessional_academic_staff.pdf

Performance Management Plan - Academic Casual Staff
www.unisa.edu.au/hrm/employment/

Teaching @ UNISA
www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/learningconnection/staff/

Professional Development Resources for Sessional Staff
www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/learningconnection/staff/information/sessional.asp

Sessional Staff Homepage: Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences, Teaching, Learning and International
www.unisa.edu.au/easdeanteaching/sessional/default.asp

4

A Multi-layered Approach to a University Tutor Training Program

UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Contributed by:
Dr Kerry Howells and Ms Colina Mason
Education Development Unit
Australian School of Business**

Contact:
Colina Mason [cm.mason@unsw.edu.au]

* In 2007 the Faculty of Commerce and Economics (FCE) amalgamated with the Australian Graduate School of Management (AGSM) to become the Australian School of Business (ASB).

Abstract

This case study describes a three-module program, Principles of Tutoring, designed for new tutors in the Australian School of Business at UNSW. Input from students, new tutors, experienced tutors, lecturers in charge and course coordinators was strongly encouraged during the program's initial and ongoing development. The learning outcomes, structure and content of the program draw on current higher education scholarship as well as adult education literature and theory.

The evolution of the program over the past three years has resulted in a holistic approach that focuses not only on good teaching practice but also on self-management and critical reflection skills. This case study provides background to the program and highlights some of the features that more fully enable participants to balance the demands of their tutoring role with family, work and postgraduate study commitments.

Context

The Australian School of Business (ASB) at UNSW consists of nine schools with over 8000 students and approximately 220 academic staff. Tutors teach in one or more of the Faculty's nine schools and teach at either undergraduate or postgraduate level.

Most of them are either undertaking postgraduate research work in the Faculty or are in the third or fourth years of their undergraduate degrees. Some of them have had prior teaching experience or have been leaders in the Faculty's Peer Assisted Support Scheme (PASS).

Aims

The Principles of Tutoring program was developed in response to a growing awareness that tutors needed more support; tutor training was identified as a priority in the Strategic Plan of the Faculty's Education Development Unit (EDU); lecturers identified that many new tutors lack skills; and tutors themselves identified gaps in the skills required to meet the learning and teaching objectives of their schools.

Outcomes

The establishment of an ongoing peer network for participants.

Opportunities for sharing classroom ideas and strategies.

A safe environment for role-playing classroom scenarios.

Opportunities for modelling good practice in a small-group setting.

What was done?

While mentoring was considered as an option, the size of the Faculty made such an approach impractical. Instead, a training program was seen as the most effective way of preparing tutors for their role. Consultation was conducted with Heads of School, lecturers and tutors across the Faculty.

The Priciples of Tutoring program broadly aims to lay solid foundations for good teaching practice by:

introducing participants to certain principles that underlie effective facilitation of classes (wherever possible, these are embedded in the specific context of the participants' classes) and increasing their effectiveness in this area;

developing participants' confidence in and enjoyment of their tutoring role;

emphasising the importance of critical reflection; and

fostering growth in interpersonal skills and self-management.

It is the faculty's expectation that all new tutors will attend the entire program; indeed, they are paid to do so. In session 1 each year, as many as 60 new tutors enrol.

Module 1 - Preparing to tutor

This module is offered in the first week of session. Because most tutorials start in the second week, this module focuses on providing participants with strategies for their very first classes. The importance of the first class is emphasised for setting the tone and structure for the remainder of the session.

The module's topics include:

understanding the importance of the tutor's role;

establishing a relationship with your students;

captivating the attention of your students;

developing teaching techniques;

structuring a learner-centred class; and

planning your tutorial.

Module 2 - Facilitating interaction

This module is held at the end of the second week of session, after participants have taught their first classes.

The module's topics include:

understanding learning preferences;

responding to diverse needs and abilities;

asking and answering questions effectively;

encouraging active learning;

achieving participation through awareness of cross-cultural backgrounds; and

assessing class participation.

4

Module 3- Self-managing

This module is taught in week 4 or 5, and it is typically a time when participants are starting to struggle with balancing other demands, most typically associated with their postgraduate study, family and other work commitments. Because this is the final module in the program, the emphasis is on gaining student feedback, reflection and ongoing professional development.

The module's topics include:

- building confidence;
- balancing your workload;
- dealing with difficult situations;
- reflecting on feedback; and
- ensuring continuous development.

Throughout the whole program, the participants are introduced to certain principles that underlie effective facilitation of classes. These principles also underpin the development and implementation of this course, which is described below. Broadly speaking, the principles are:

- a student-centred approach to learning and teaching is likely to foster deep student learning;
- students learn in different ways and their learning can be better supported by the use of multiple teaching methods and modes of instruction (UNSW Guideline 9);
- effective student learning is supported when students are actively engaged in the learning process (UNSW Guideline 1);
- the educational experiences of all students are enhanced when the diversity of their experiences is acknowledged, valued, and drawn on in learning and teaching approaches and activities (UNSW Guideline 8);
- structured occasions for reflection allow students to explore their experiences, challenge current beliefs, and develop new practices and understandings (UNSW Guideline 4); and
- external factors, such as inability to manage time and stress, impact on the quality of learning and teaching that participants provide.

Resources

Participants are provided with a resource folder that is updated and revised each session. This folder contains the relevant materials for the tutor training classes, valuable supplementary exercises and suggestions, and readings that elaborate on the theoretical foundations of some of the program's principles.

The resource folder also contains useful information about the practical aspects of the Australian School of Business especially in relationship to human resources, equity, occupational health and safety and university policy.

Certification

If participants have completed all of the program's requirements, they are presented with a certificate of completion by the Dean at the end of the year. This is a valuable document for participants to include in their teaching portfolios.

Critical Success Factors

The process of planning and setting objectives for a tutor training program involves input from several different parties.

The effectiveness of changes is carefully monitored from many perspectives.

The program takes an holistic approach caring for tutors' whole beings, not just their teaching practice.

Participants respond well to opportunities for sharing with other participants their challenges, resources and ideas.

The involvement of lecturers-in-charge makes or breaks a tutor training program.

Review and Improvement

All aspects of the Program are evaluated on a regular basis using student feedback, staff satisfaction surveys, and consultation with faculty staff at all levels.

One of the key factors that impacts on participants' capacity to implement the principles taught in the program is the culture of the school in which they are working.

It is clearly important that participants receive consistent messages about learning and teaching from lecturers-in-charge and the EDU staff who are facilitating the program.

This requires effective communication between the two parties. It has become essential for the program to be flexible enough to accommodate and support a culture that places more emphasis on content delivery and less on student interaction. It is also necessary to continue to seek feedback from lecturers-in-charge about the relevance of the program to their tutors' contexts.

These considerations have shaped the program's continual improvement cycle, along with feedback gained from the evaluation activities above. The program has now become more contextualised, and we have:

- increased the time given to reflection, group sharing, self-management and discussion of diversity;
- included panels in which experienced tutors share their experiences;
- reduced the focus on conceptual and abstract material such as experiential learning; and
- included more opportunities for reflection on the relevance and value of material to individual circumstances.

Challenges

Encouraging Faculty staff to become more involved in the program.

Ensuring a continuous feedback loop between students, tutors, course coordinators and learning and teaching staff.

Links and Resources

A full version of this case study can be found on pp. 31-52 of the *UNSW Compendium of Good Practice*.
www.ltu.unsw.edu.au/content/userDocs/Compendium_Issue4_Feb07.pdf

5

A Systems Approach to Supporting Sessional Staff at the School Level

FACULTY OF HEALTH, GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

Contributed by:
Associate Professor Keithia Wilson
Tutor Development Co-ordinator

Associate Professor Alf Lizzio
Head of School
School of Psychology

Contact:
Keithia Wilson [k.l.wilson@griffith.edu.au]

Abstract

This case provides an overview of a comprehensive school level framework for supporting sessional teaching staff. The framework includes formalised procedures, clear roles and responsibilities, well-developed resources, and thorough recruitment, induction, evaluation and development processes.

Context

The school employs 40–50 sessional staff as tutors each year, most of whom are postgraduate students.

Sessional staff conduct tutorials, laboratory classes and workshops in a wide range of skill-based, disciplinary knowledge-based and methodological courses in the undergraduate and honours degree programs.

Aims

To implement a school-level systems-based strategy for assuring the teaching effectiveness of sessional staff and the quality of school management and support processes.

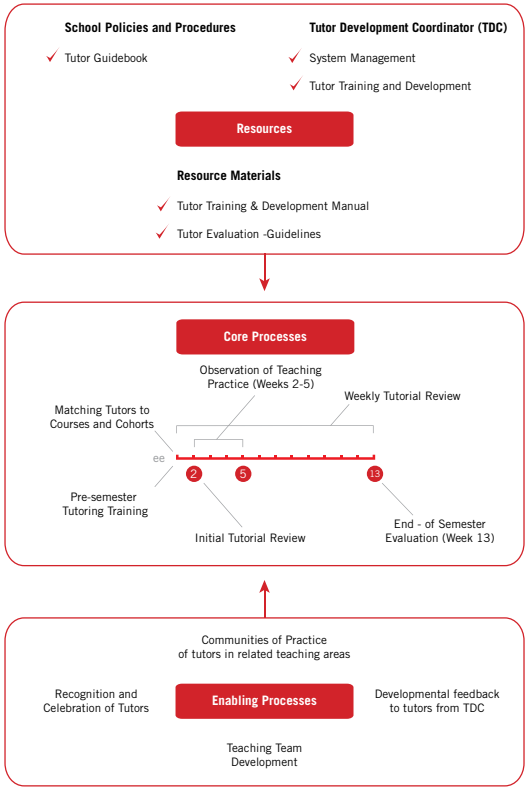
Outcomes

The implementation of this system has resulted in a related set of outcomes:

- a sustainable and effective approach to the development of sessional staff;
- improvement in the quality of tutorial teaching and engagement of sessional staff in the quality improvement process;
- a transparent, fair and predictable management process for the management of sessional staff in the School;
- explicit recognition and reward of excellence in sessional teaching practice; and
- increased satisfaction of students, sessional and academic staff.

What was done?

The systems-oriented approach to the development and support of tutors involves clear sets of roles and responsibilities within the school to manage the development and evaluation of activities and resources.



Roles

The Tutor Development Coordinator (TDC) is an academic staff member who manages the tutor system which involves: the training and development of all new sessional staff; providing peer feedback and review of all first year tutors in their practice; updating the system to support tutors in their practice, for example, offering more support and intensive training of first year staff given the University focus on orientation, engagement and retention; and creating and updating the tutor support resources.

The Sessional Coordinator recruits tutors and manages the allocation process to courses in collaboration with the Tutor Development Coordinator; draws up the contracts for tutors; organises the payment of tutors; and is involved in the tutor training program as a co-trainer.

The Head Tutor is an experienced tutor who takes a leadership role in large 1st year courses by coordinating and supporting the tutors in their course.

Resources

The *Tutors Guidebook* outlines roles for tutors and convenors including rights and responsibilities which have been negotiated with academic staff and tutors. This guidebook is updated and distributed at the beginning of each year. This booklet also contains a grievance process for tutors to settle disputes or conflicts with convenors.

The *Tutor Training and Development Manual* provides information and guidelines for effective learning, teaching and assessment practice. This includes detailed guidelines for the first tutorial to establish an effective working relationship between students, and between staff and students.

The *Tutor Evaluation – Guidelines for Effective Practice* booklet outlines: a formal School policy for sessional staff to review their practice; guidelines for mandatory formative and summative reviews; and formative and summative instruments for sessional staff to evaluate their practice each semester.

Core Processes

Matching Tutors to Courses and Cohorts

There is a culture and formal policy to employ and support postgraduate students as sessional staff as a way of maintaining postgraduate students by offering them paid employment.

Tutors are expected to be well prepared and capable, with both academic and interpersonal skills.

The Sessional Coordinator organises the matching and allocation of tutors to courses.

Pre-semester Training

New tutors are offered an annual training program conducted at the beginning of the year and are paid for their participation. 1st year tutors receive additional intensive training on tutorial teaching, and receive an intensive intervention for at-risk first year students with their first assessment item in semesters 1 and 2 and are paid for this training.

Peer Review

The Tutor Development Coordinator peer reviews the practice of all first year tutors in first semester by participating in tutorials and providing comprehensive feedback to individual tutors to assist the development of their learning and teaching practice.

Evaluation of Teaching

Sessional staff are required to evaluate their practice.

In 2007 the School implemented a formal policy including guidelines and review instruments for sessional staff to evaluate their practice each semester.

Using the *Tutor Evaluation – Guidelines for Effective Practice*, all new tutors and first year tutors are required to engage in formative evaluation of their first tutorials and to provide copies of these evaluations to the Tutor Development Coordinator.
The Coordinator also provides feedback to tutors and follows up on any negative feedback using a developmental approach.

All tutors are required to engage in independent, summative, end of semester evaluation of their teaching effectiveness, which is monitored by the Head of School and the Tutor Development Coordinator.

A Community of Practice

CoPs for the tutors have evolved out of challenging systems issues such as the first year experience, and Research Methods and Statistics which is often the most difficult stream for psychology students. There is now a First Year COP and an emerging Research Methods COP within the School. Tutors are paid for meetings which are facilitated by senior staff in the School.

Recognition and Reward

A "sessional teacher of the year" award based on student votes, is made each year in the School.

Critical Success Factors

The Dedicated Position of the Tutor Development Coordinator

The roles and activities of the Tutor Development Coordinator have ensured the sustainability of the system by: defining roles, rights and responsibilities for tutors and convenors; training tutors in effective learning and teaching, and assessment practice; providing quality assurance through formative and summative evaluation of practice; and providing leadership for improvements policy, procedure and process.

Sponsorship by School Leadership

While there is central tutor training offered in the University, all Heads of School of Psychology have supported School based training.Senior staff in the School, including Heads of School, have participated regularly as trainers in the annual Tutor Training program since 2001.

This support from senior staff in the School ensures the ongoing sustainability of the system for developing and training tutors.

Review and Improvement

In 2006, the Tutor Development Coordinator negotiated a School policy on tutor formative evaluation of all first tutorials for new tutors and first year tutors, and summative evaluation at the end of semester for all tutors, with the aim of providing a quality assurance mechanism for the School.

This policy was negotiated collaboratively with the School leadership (Head and Deputy Heads of School and Undergraduate Program Convenors).

This is documented in the Tutor Evaluation Guidelines and is sustainable without the Tutor Development Coordinator, as the School has agreed to the implementation of this policy within the School from 2007 onwards.

The effectiveness of this process in terms of providing evidence of teaching quality this year has added to the sustainability of the evaluation practices.

Evidence Base for Success

The **success** of this strategy is indicated in a number of ways:

Evaluation of Tutor Training

"The training was so practical and useful. I loved that you gave us a model for the first tutorial, and detailed guidelines for giving feedback on assignments - these were the most difficult things for me as a tutor." (Tutor quote, 2007)

"The School has appropriate policies in place with regard to tutors' roles and responsibilities" (means = 6.0, 6.2 and 6.4/7 for 2006, 2007 and 2008 respectively)

"The School is providing an appropriate level of practical support for tutors" (means = 6.1, 6.3 and 6.4/7 for 2006, 2007 and 2008 respectively)

*Formative Tutor Evaluation**

"Tutors establish a good working relationship with students" (mean = 6.01/7, range of 5.6-6.5)

"Tutors are clear about goals and processes for subsequent sessions" (mean = 5.9, range 5.7-6.3)

* Initial Tutorial Review student ratings in 2007 (N = 301) for tutors (N = 6).

*Summative Tutor Evaluations**

"Staff explain relevance of material" 84% (up from 66% in 2006)

"Staff interested & enthusiastic about their teaching" 86% (up from 81% in 2006)

"Staff actively check whether students understand what is being taught" 67% (up from 38% in 2006)

"Staff make it clear right from the start what they expect of students" 77% (up from 61% in 2006)

"It is hard to know what is expected of me in this program" 20% (down from 36% in 2006)

"I have a clear idea of where I am going & what is expected of me" 73% (up from 46% in 2006)

"I know the names of key staff in my program" 88% (up from 52% in 2006)

End of semester Student Evaluation of Teaching for tutors for 2007 were also high (mean = 5.8, range 5.5 - 6.2/7)

* Student data from the 2007 Starting@Griffith Survey of first year students in week 7 of the first semester.

Institutional Recognition

In 2007, one of our tutors won the Griffith Sessional Award for Excellence in Teaching.

The value of this systems approach has been recognised through its dissemination to other elements within the University.

Challenges

The program will evolve in a positive direction if the School continues to position sessional staff as leaders and partners in the creation of the School's learning environment.

The content and process of the training and support system needs to be responsive and flexible in the face of changing demands and characteristics.

Links and Resources

Casual Staff @ Griffith
www.griffith.edu.au/hrm/for_you/casual.html

6

A Departmental Approach to Employing, Developing and Supporting Sessional Staff

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

Contributed by:
Louella Almeida
Department Manager

Steven Cassidy
Senior Lecturer in Computing
Department of Computing

Contact:
Louella Almeida [lalmeida@ics.mq.edu.au]

Abstract

This case outlines one department's approach to employing, developing and supporting sessional staff through careful attention to recruitment and employment processes, induction and development opportunities and regular teaching team meetings. The keys to the success and sustainability of this program are the allocated role of the Department Manager to manage all employment and timetabling processes and the financial commitment of the department to these quality practices.

Context

The department has approximately 250 undergraduate and postgraduate classes a week per semester taught by 50 sessional staff. The majority of these staff are postgraduate students with a small number of external applicants and 3rd year undergraduate students. Sessional staff are employed to teach tutorials and practical sessions and a select few lectures.

Aims

To ensure sessional teachers are proficient in their subject area, are reliable and effective teachers and relate to their students.

To provide sessional teachers with both teaching and administrative support and opportunities for development.

Outcomes

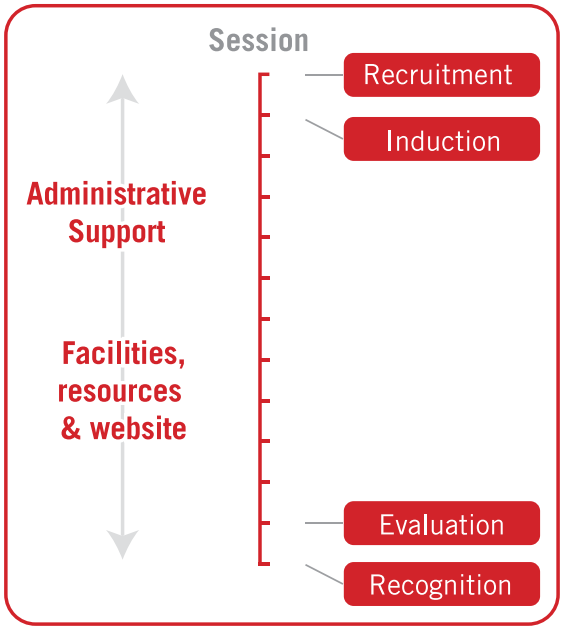
Timely, well-managed recruitment and employment procedures

Paid participation in induction and development programs

Quality practices at the teaching team level

Recognition of sessional teachers' contribution

What was done?



Recruitment Procedures

Recruitment is conducted twice per year, and the Department website is used to advertise positions.

The advertisement sets out the general selection criteria for tutors, markers, practical supervisors, unit specific selection criteria, an application form and instructions on how to apply.

A list of applicants with relevant details is compiled on a spreadsheet and sent to the Unit Convenors.

Selection is made by the Unit Convenor in collaboration with the Department Manager.

After all allocations are made, approval is obtained from the Head of Department.

Offers are then sent out via email within 15 days. The offer sets out the Terms and Conditions and a personal timetable of the classes being offered.

Administrative support

A database of applicants is maintained with contact details, employment history and comments on performance.

The Department Manager centrally controls hours, units, work allocation, pay claims and timesheets.

Timetabling is also managed centrally by the Department Manager for all teaching. Ongoing support with class management during the semester is also provided.

For each tutorial a tutor is expected to offer one hour of consultation time. A Help Desk is set up in the Computing Labs, one for each year, where Tutor Consultation Times are displayed. These are also listed on the web.

Induction and Development

A Development Day for sessional teachers in the Department is held at the beginning of each year. The program is developed and run in conjunction with the University's Centre for Professional Development. Sessional staff are paid to attend. The program covers staff expectations, support offered within the Department, and occupational health and safety.

A resource kit including The Casual Academic Staff Induction Booklet is distributed at the program.

The Department website supplements the university webpage for sessional staff with its own dedicated website (see Links and Resources).

Training in WebCT, which is used to input marks and attendance, is also provided.

Mentoring is provided by experienced sessional teachers.

Communication with groups of tutors is facilitated by the use of email aliases, eg. COMP115- tut@...

Large teaching teams meet 3-4 times during a semester. Attendance at meetings is paid for. Meeting discussions cover issues of tutorial content, practical exercises, assessment, assignments, marking, feedback strategies and student feedback.

Teacher Evaluation

Individual teaching evaluation is possible. This is initiated by the sessional teachers and the results are private and confidential. Sessional teachers are encouraged to have individual evaluations and some use these evaluations to build their employment portfolios.

Recognition

Individual tutors are emailed and congratulated on good work. (As an example click the following url for information on the 1st year Committee http://www.comp.mq.edu.au/undergrad/info/liaison/100-level/index.html)

Review and Improvement

The success of the Department's approach was acknowledged by the presentation of the Macquarie University Excellence in Education Award in April 2007 by the VC.

Evaluation of the Program

At the Department level, a Student/Staff Liaison Committee comprises student representatives for each unit and the Unit Convenors and Lecturers. There is a Committee for each level; 1st, 2nd and 3rd year. Each Committee meets at least twice a semester to take feedback from students on all aspects of their course from the quality of teaching, including tutors and prac supervisors, texts, reading materials, assessments, right through to hygiene factors such as the condition of the labs, study venues, printers etc.

Feedback from these Committees is passed on to the sessional staff when they have their regular meetings with their Unit Convenor.

The Department also has a 3 year rolling evaluation of each unit in the Program.

Evaluation of the Development Day

Student feedback is used to improve the Induction/ Development Program. For example, over a three year period, the program has shifted the focus of the learning and teaching component:

- in the first iteration, the teaching aspect of the Program focused on general teaching skills and small group learning. It was called 'Preparing to Teach'. There were opportunities for discussion and practice in a mock tutorial and practical session;
- in the second iteration, the focus was on 'Inclusive Practice in Tutorials and Pracs for a Diverse Student Body' given the fact that a large number of Computing students were international; and
- in the third iteration, the Department had learnt via student evaluations that students would appreciate better and more regular feedback on their progress. Thus strategies for giving feedback formed the focus for the third program which was called 'Feedback for Effective Learning within Computing'.

Critical Success Factors

The Department has built into its budget a provision for funds to support the development program.

The resource kit, the dedicated website and using email aliases has proven to be effective and efficient.

Assigning the Department Manager responsibility for timetabling and staffing for all postgraduate and undergraduate programs within the Department is a critical factor for the success of the program; for example, creating classes in the timetable necessitates recruitment to fill them. Another advantage is that offers of work are holistically considered and each successful applicant is assigned work across two units rather than piecemeal.

Challenges

It is difficult to find quality sessional teachers for some units. Not everyone has the required experience for the specialisation of the discipline.

Although the use of sessional teachers means flexibility, staff can resign suddenly which creates problems with staffing.

The Department Manager would like to see a computerised system for recruitment (submitting an application), work allocation (making class allocations) and remuneration (processing and approving pay claims), which would then feed back into the university's HR system.

Links and Resources

Supporting Sessional Staff at Macquarie University Website
www.mq.edu.au/staff/sessionalstaff/

Department of Computing Website, Casual Academic Staff
www.comp.mq.edu.au/casual_academics/

7

Tutor Training & Orientation CDRom

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

Contributed by:
Dr Anne Porter
Senior Lecturer

Dr Caz Sandison
Senior Lecturer
School of Mathematics and Applied Statistics
Faculty of Informatics

Contact:
Caz Sandison [sandison@uow.edu.au]

Abstract

A CDRom for casual Mathematics and Statistics tutors (teaching assistants) was developed with links to a tutor training and orientation package at the University of Wollongong. The CD was designed for tutors who do not have prior training as teachers, and who for logistical reasons may not be available for face-to-face induction programs. The highlight of the CD is the section called *In the Classroom* which contains video clips of tutorial demonstrations within the school, highlighting features of how to begin tutorials and facilitate learning in this particular environment.

Context

When teaching large subjects (100-600 students) high quality teaching is imperative but often extremely difficult in technical disciplines such as Mathematics and Statistics. Subjects with large numbers within the School of Mathematics and Applied Statistics typically adopt a pattern of 2-4 lectures per week supplemented by 1-2 hour laboratory and/or tutorial classes. Laboratory and tutorial classes may be taken either by experienced tutors or inexperienced honours and postgraduate students. Some rudimentary training/orientation is essential for the novice tutor if there are to be quality teaching and learning outcomes.

Provision of training and orientation for these tutors is difficult. Staff coordinating and teaching large classes are often too overwhelmed to have adequate time for such training.

There is no funding for tutors to attend training and there is a turnover of casuals each academic year /semester. A second challenge for subject coordinators is to develop comparable/ equitable teaching standards across all tutorials/laboratory classes.

Aims

The initial aim of this project was to develop a CDRom that could provide tutors and part-time Statistics and Mathematics staff with an insight into how a good classroom learning environment can be structured. A second aim was to brief tutors as to policies and processes that were followed in the School of Mathematics and Applied Statistics. As stakeholders were consulted, these aims were extended to include a synopsis and link to University policies and introduction to the legal obligations of staff.

Outcomes

The outcome of this project has been the production of a CDRom `Tutor Training and Orientation CDRom`. This is provided to tutors by coordinators.

The CDRom has also been used by coordinators to demonstrate to tutors how classes should be taught.

Feedback from both tutors and coordinators shows they have found this to be a useful resource.

What was done?

Successful application for a University Educational Strategies Development Fund grant.

Identification of the issues that current tutors feel they need to deal with in the classroom.

Identification of the issues the lecturers want dealt with (e.g. encouraging critical thinking or learning to learn rather than rote learning).

Identification of the issues the Dean felt necessary for inclusion.
Collection of video footage of excellent tutors in Mathematics and Statistics.

Edited footage to exemplify good educational practice and strategies in a variety of settings (blackboard room, tutorials and laboratories) and in relation to the issues identified by the tutors.

Development of the html files.

Trial and evaluation of the CDRom with casual tutors in Spring session.

School seminar for final review and discussion.

Refinement and dissemination for use.

The Part-time Tutor Package

addresses the administrative requirements of the school;

summarises the legal and ethical issues tutors may encounter when teaching, with directions to appropriate University policy; and

includes video clips demonstrating effective teaching strategies in different types of classrooms (demonstrations, blackboard tutorials, traditional tutorials and laboratories) for different teaching issues e.g. establishing rapport, generating interaction and teamwork, getting students to respond, asking questions, reviewing material, clarifying student thinking, demonstrating solutions.

Critical Success Factors

Discussion of the project with other stakeholders has ensured that different perspectives have been included. The originators were primarily concerned with assisting tutors in the classroom context, letting them see good practice and dealing with localised issues such as where to access resources and how to get paid. Wider discussions with stakeholders led to the more thorough coverage of Legal Obligations and University Policy.

The teamwork and communication between the creators was also essential, as one picked up and carried on when the other tired. Each took turns in leading the project to completion.

Review and Improvement

Links are updated each year to direct staff to current policy.

Individual co-ordinators have the capability of adding the documents for their subjects to the CDRom.

8

An Online Professional Development Model for Clinical Educators

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

Contributed by:
Professor Helen Chenery
Director of Studies
Faculty of Health Sciences

Contact:
Helen Chenery [h.chenery@admin.uq.edu.au]

Abstract

The Faculty of Health Sciences online modularised education program for clinical educators was developed by the Centre for Health Innovation and Solutions and is supported by QLD Health. It consists of a 20 hour online program covering a broad range of teaching and discipline-specific principles that relate to clinical educators involved in the clinical learning of Health Sciences students. The program is part of QLD Health's Professional Development program for staff and offers the opportunity for accreditation and articulation into a Graduate Certificate in Health Sciences (Clinical Education) offered by The University of Queensland.

Context

The Faculty of Health Sciences at The University of Queensland has seven schools. Across the schools, there are 4600 equivalent full-time students and 986 full-time equivalent staff members, with 61% of these academic teaching staff citing their location of employment as a hospital or health centre. The focus of this case study is on the complex challenge of providing clinical educators that typically are employed full-time by a hospital or other health agency with training and development.

Aim

To implement a flexible professional education program for a dispersed community of clinical practitioners.

Outcomes

10 flexibly delivered online modules, each of two hours' duration, which focus on clinical education

900 participants have already completed the program

Contract with Queensland Health to train clinical educators

What was done?

Development of online training modules and community of practice

10 flexibly delivered online modules were developed for clinical educators employed both within and external to the university. Participants can enrol at any time, and form part of an online learning community. There is a paid online facilitator.

Program

The 'Introduction to Clinical Education: Principles and Practice' course has been designed by, and is presented by, experienced and respected educators from a range of backgrounds.

Their main goal in coming together is to assist clinicians from all backgrounds to extend their knowledge and skills and become more effective educators.

Introduction to Clinical Education: Principles and Practice

Topics covered

the characteristics of adult learners, the principles of adult learning and different learning styles;

the clinical setting, as a learning environment; how it impacts the clinical educator, the learner and the patient;

core teaching and planning skills, and behaviours, that promote student learning;

who is the learner - the effect of cognitive, motivational, developmental, social and generational differences;

developing learning goals, learning plans and strategies to evaluate student progress;

effective communication;

different teaching approaches suitable for the clinical setting;

giving effective feedback;

strategies to enhance student learning and manage challenging situations; and

assessment tools used in clinical education.

Each module takes about 2 hours to complete.

The content is presented in an audiovisual format (slides and audio), interspersed with interactive quizzes, polls, discussions and case studies to reinforce and apply learning.

The participants can opt to be assessed with a series of multiple choice questions and a reflective essay.

Successful completion can be credited towards the Graduate Certificate in Health Sciences (Clinical Education).

Educational link with Queensland Health

The University secured a contract with Queensland Health to offer the professional development module to a large number of its employees involved in student clinical education.

Additional/ alternative support

In addition to this course, each school in the faculty has its own discipline-specific support and educational processes for clinical educators.

Typically, clinical educators are trained in the assessment protocols that comprise the formal evaluation of a student's attendance at a clinic.

These assessments are sent to the academic attached to the School who is coordinating the course.

Other assessments that contribute to the evaluation of a student in their clinical practicum are marked by staff employed by the School.

Review and improvement

The faculty initially developed a website for sessional staff to provide a blanket educational and relationship-building exercise. Although it was of good quality, it was not taken up by clinical educators. This online program was intended to improve access and interest. The development of an online learning community has had a positive effect on participation and satisfaction.

A comprehensive evaluation strategy is in place for this online module comprising pre and post module student survey tools and evaluation of the educational outcomes through analysis of assessment data. General demographic data has also been collected to allow analysis of what factors might predict best outcomes.

Critical Success Factors

The program is sustainable given the ongoing market with Queensland Health and other employer groups. There is always an ethical and professional obligation in the health industry to train future generations.

Challenges

There are not as many formal opportunities for sessional staff to feed back into the course as there could be.

Links and Resources

The University of Queensland Health Insitu portal
www.healthinsitu.uq.edu.au

9

Academic Management of a Multi-location Teaching Team

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

Contributed by:
Dr Jeannette Stirling
Subject Coordinator
Faculty of Arts

Contact:
Jeannette Stirling [jstirl@uow.edu.au]

Abstract

This case study illustrates one example of how the coordinator for a subject delivered to multiple campuses and involving a distributed team of teachers meets the challenge of facilitating clear, consistent and effective communication; professional learning opportunities; collegial reciprocity; and cohesive teaching across all sites. Over and above the induction process already available through the faculty, the academic management of this teaching team includes a reference package, an online resource called 'The Tutors' Lounge' to facilitate quality assurance as well as ongoing professional development through shared collegial practice, marking standards processes and a final teaching team meeting.

Context

ARTS112: People and Place is a first semester, first year Humanities subject that is currently the only core/compulsory subject for the Bachelor of Arts: Community, Culture and Environment designed specifically for the regional campus network.

It is delivered using a range of methods which include face-to-face teaching, online learning/teaching and videoconferencing. The subject design has an embedded sequence of exercises to facilitate the learning of academic and multiple media skills. Subject content introduces students to multiple – and sometimes conflicting – ideas about nation and national identity.

Because the theory is complex, classes demographically diverse, and skills levels widely varied, the subject poses distinct challenges for tutors. Over and above the actual teaching, they have to manage the student stresses that can sometimes arise from trying to find a way into new and challenging ideas.

Each semester there are five to seven tutors teaching the subjects across four campuses. The most geographically distant of these campuses is located in a rural community some 400 kilometres from the central institution, the most urban, 86 kilometres.

Aims

To develop processes that assure quality teaching in the subject

To build a sense of community among the multi-location teaching team

To support professional development of casual teaching staff to enhance student learning.

Outcomes

A connected and engaged teaching team

A community of practice characterised by reciprocity and trust

Iterative improvements to the subject design and delivery based on tutor feedback

Effective workload management for the teaching team

Professional development through dialogue with peers

What was done?

Induction

The Faculty of Arts provides a formal induction for all sessional staff at the beginning of each year. During this induction, teaching team meetings are scheduled with the subject coordinator.

This initial meeting is used to:

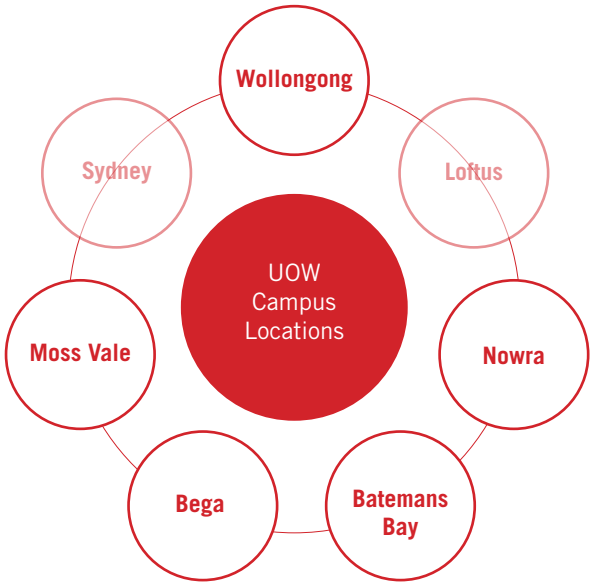
- introduce new teaching team members to the rest of the team;
- brief the teaching staff on the aims of the subject, its objectives and assessment and other requirements;
- work through the subject outline and assessment tasks; and
- reflect on the delivery of the subject in the previous year.

Course materials and tutorial guides

Tutors are provided with a package which includes the subject outline, the students' subject workbook and the Tutor Notes Booklet.

Tutor Notes Booklet: this is a teaching and reference resource for the delivery of the subject. It includes:

- A Welcome from the subject coordinator that acknowledges each member of the team and establishes context for the community of teaching practice;
- 'Team duties and Responsibilities': a section that explicitly outlines the duties and responsibilities of the subject coordinator and the tutors;
- 'The Subject': provides an outline of the pedagogical design and teaching requirements for the subject;
- 'WebCT Discussion': provides details of how this component links with in-class discussion topics;
- Description of assessment tasks and pedagogical frameworks;
- Suggested weekly tutorial plans and activities; tips for managing small group work in tutorials.



The Tutors' Lounge

'The Tutors' Lounge' originated as an online communication device specific to the subject. It is located on the subject online site and accessible only to the teaching staff.

From the subject coordinator's perspective, the Lounge is for sharing good practice, providing professional support, and quality assuring subject delivery and grade standards across all sites.

Research into tutors' use of the Lounge indicates they prefer:

- dropping in to see what people were saying and thinking (in particular how the experienced tutors were handling things);
- using the discussion space as a sounding board; sharing suggestions on tutorial plans;
- sharing current and past experiences;
- reporting in on the state of their class and students' progress and responses to activities;
- using it as a source of enrichment and ideas on strategies and resources; and
- using it as a source of information, particularly if there is a problem; and using it as a support network.

Marking equity process

A random double marking model is used in this subject for selected assessment tasks. 'The Tutors' Lounge' is used to organise this process. The process works as follows:

- for each assessment, each tutor is allocated a marking partner to whom they will pass on four selected graded assignments (one from each grade category, eg. Pass, Credit, Distinction, High Distinction);
- the person they receive extra marking from and the person they pass their assessments onto will not be the same person;
- for each assignment, all Fails are discussed with the marking team and the subject coordinator (normally inside the Tutors' Lounge); and
- any disagreements between marking partners about an assigned grade is discussed by the team in 'The Tutors' Lounge'.

All additional marking is factored into the tutors' marking pay scale.

Final marks meeting and lunch

At the end of semester, the whole team meets to discuss borderline cases, a selection of high distinctions and all fails.

The team then has lunch where they discuss issues that have arisen within the subject over the semester, and possible changes for the next iteration.

Critical success factors

The initial face-to-face meeting, either in person or via videoconference, is crucial to engaging team members at an individual level and establishing team collegiality from the outset.

The distribution of integrated materials, including the Tutors' Notes Booklet, and that initial pre-semester team discussion allows the team to prepare approaches to content and workload schedules.

'The Tutors' Lounge' consolidates a team approach to teaching and facilitates continued engagement throughout semester. Research into the Tutors' Lounge indicates that it can be a powerful micro-practice that can build a strong sense of community and team engagement with the subject. The data collected identified as critical success factors: an egalitarian style of leadership; professional respect; a sense of trust such that teaching problems can be openly discussed; and peer engagement with teaching practices.

Review and improvement

The end of semester team meeting is used to review the subject and collect feedback from all members about what aspects might be restructured. The timing of this subject review is crucial to allow for feedback to be factored into the next iteration.

The meeting is also used to identify any unmet teaching support needs and collect ideas for how this might be addressed in the following semesters.

Challenges

Having tutors' engagement with 'The Tutors' Lounge' recognised as a legitimate professional development and quality enhancement practice that should be recognised within their workloads.

Links and Resources

Valuing Casual Academic Staff, Faculty of Arts - UOW Good Practice Case Study
www.teaching.uow.edu.au/tlgp

10

Developing Teaching Communities at the Program Level

Contributed by:
Professor Ian Macdonald
Director
Teaching and Learning Centre
University of New England

Dr Tom Edwards
Education Development Coordinator
Faculty of Engineering and Industrial Sciences
Swinburne University of Technology

Contact:
Ian Macdonald [Ian.Macdonald@une.edu.au]

Abstract

In a three year project sessional staff were inducted in an introductory workshop with ongoing academic staff, and met fortnightly in carefully structured reflective practice groups known as Teaching Communities. Sessional staff not only improved their teaching and students' outcomes but became more engaged and satisfied with their experience.

Context

At the time of the project there were large class sizes in the first year of both degrees, with practical classes and tutorial classes limited to 25 students.

Many sessional staff were required to take the multiple classes, with a high proportion of the programming tutors either new to tutoring, very young, or both.
Both programs were suffering from poor student evaluations and had high attrition rates.

A large Federal Government staff development grant allowed a research assistant to be hired to provide observational data that could be fed back into the project.

Aims

To have all sessional staff attend a training course and attend fortnightly planning meetings as part of a structure known as "Teaching Communities".

To improve the learning experience of the students, and reverse high attrition in Engineering and Computing.

To make sessional teaching more attractive and satisfying was an important element of this goal.

Outcomes

The goals of the project were met, but it was successful in unexpected ways.

There were clear improvements in the learning outcomes of the students; student satisfaction rose strongly in university evaluations; and the number of students who reported working in a learning community increased dramatically.

The teaching approaches used in tutorials became much more student-centred and interactive.

Both sessional and permanent staff participating in the Teaching Communities reported greater satisfaction and enjoyment with their teaching.

Participation was high, with the Teaching Community meetings considered high quality preparation time worth attending.

Many of the sessional staff worked specifically to receive the Certificate of Undergraduate Teaching.

What was done?

Tutor Training Workshop

Prior to semester start a 2 day tutor training workshop was run for all the staff involved in each program.

The workshop ran for 4 two hour sessions over two days, and was run by the project leader who had an education background.

Participants were paid to attend the workshop, but the meetings were considered "preparation time".

An hour of teaching was associated with one hour preparation and one hour marking when the pay rate was determined.

Full-time and on-going staff were also encouraged to attend as mentors of the sessional tutors. Interestingly some of the full-time staff came back each year to participate as they found the workshops enjoyable.

Fortnightly Teaching Community Meetings

Each fortnight a Teaching Community meeting was held for each unit involved in the program.

In this 90 minute meeting a three point agenda was followed:

1. Share experiences from recent teaching:
   - raise awareness of any student problems in concept construction/learning;
   - hear about the practice of others, and the way they solve problems;
   - gain reassurance that even the best have failures and it is OK to do so; and
   - debrief own practice, with peer support and encouragement.

2. Discuss the "big ideas" to be taught in upcoming teaching:
   - identify the critical concepts, and possible misconceptions;
   - share knowledge and interpretations of the theory and ways of representing it; and
   - identify alternative pathways to understanding for students, and likely barriers.

3. Collaborate in planning the teaching method:
   - build on the exposed knowledge of current student learning;
   - use the combined knowledge and ideas of many experts;
   - encourage creativity and risk taking; and
   - create a balanced learning situation for learning both concept and procedure.

The Teaching Community meetings were generally chaired by the project leader, with an emphasis on reflective practice leading to student learning.

During the project an extra grant was received to employ two Teaching Fellows: active year 12 teachers with appropriate discipline knowledge who were seconded for a year to be tutors. They brought understanding of the school learning context from which the first years students were moving, and expertise in teaching to contribute to the Teaching Communities. They were used to created new teaching resources as well as teach directly.

A Certificate of Undergraduate Teaching was offered to sessional staff that had participated in the tutor workshop and then completed two successful semesters of tutoring. Success was defined as having been recommended by the unit coordinator. Although not an academic certificate, it was valued as a sign of developing skills and useful for a c.v.

Critical Success Factors

The Tutor training workshop was vital, as it established a shared understanding of key concepts about good learning, and the objectives of the project. Having the unit coordinators and other ongoing staff participate also built a team relationship before the teaching actually started. The final session of the workshop planned the first two weeks of teaching in detail. Regular meetings ensured that everyone was part of a coherent team. Most of the learning about being a good teacher happened in the meetings, not the workshop. The workshop provided the framework and language to converse about student learning, but the meetings allowed staff to share experiences, experiment with ideas and learn from each other.

Education expert input was essential both in the workshop, to establish the appropriate frameworks and language, and in the meetings, where experiences needed to be "unpacked" against the frameworks developed in the workshop. New teaching approaches and techniques were also introduced when relevant.

Feedback data provided by observations from a research assistant helped the teaching team to recognise their own development and provide a sense of progress that contributed to the general motivation.

Review and Improvement

The Teaching Fellows provided a source of expertise within the group that clearly improved the culture of the groups they participated in. Other units in other disciplines were noticeably less skilful without this input.

Having grant money available to collect data from tutorials allowed the project group to get direct feedback, demonstrating clear improvements in teaching approach and allowing numerous papers to be published on the project based on hard data – building credibility.

The winning of a large competitive grant, and two other smaller internal grants, established credibility amongst the ongoing academic staff and the wider university community.

Main barriers to the project were the entrenched behaviours and beliefs of some ongoing academic staff who scorned "teaching" students and actively disrupted meetings with contrary assertions. When structured to be a minority in a teaching team, where their views did not get automatic support, they were caused to make some adjustments.

In some instances observational data showed genuine change in their teaching practice.

The preliminary training was essential, and could not be allowed to be degraded or skipped. Regular meetings were required but hard to timetable.

A 90 minute meeting once a fortnight proved the best balance.

Challenges

The project was supported by some grants, but these did not directly pay participants.

No extra funding is required to support the model.

Future goals are to build Teaching Communities into standard practice, not just for supporting sessional staff, but for the dramatic effect they have on the learning outcomes of the students.

Reference Material

Macdonald, I. D. H. (2001) The teaching community: Recreating university teaching. Teaching in Higher Education.6(2). p.153-167

Macdonald, I. D. H. & Walsh, M. E. (2001) Educating engineering academics in the work place through teaching communities. Proceeding of the International Conference on Engineering Education August 6 – 10, 2001 Oslo, Norway.

Macdonald, I. D. H. & Arnott, N. J. (1998). Building teaching communities in first year engineering. Paper presented at AAEE98 - the 10th Annual Australasian Conference on Engineering Education, Gladstone, September, 1998.

Macdonald, I. D. H. & Arnott, N. J. (1999). Redesigning first year engineering: A teaching community approach. Proceedings of AAEE99 - the 11th Annual Australasian Conference on Engineering Education, Adelaide, September 1999.

A snapshot of the Colloquium

On November 28, 2007, the National Colloquium on Sessional Teaching in Higher Education was held at the Australian National University. The Colloquium was the main dissemination event for the project, presenting the findings to date and stimulating further discussion. The following quotes provide a snapshot of the various themes that emerged during the presentations. The program, presentations and transcripts can be found on the RED Website.

Rob Castle
Deputy Vice Chancellor
Academic and International
University of Wollongong

'Teaching in a university, in my view, has to be made more professional. Working out where sessional staff fit into that is a real challenge. These things have obvious budget implications and university budgets are not a magic pudding. But if we are to provide a quality education for our students, we are compelled to look at all of the people who teach in universities, not just the permanent teaching and research elite.'

Sharon Parry
Project Leader
Director, Teaching & Learning Centre
Southern Cross University

'[sessional teachers] are the mainstream deliverers of our undergraduate education in higher education... I still believe that these are the people who are carrying most of the weight for delivering all the forms of learning support that make up teaching in higher education.'

Michele Scoufis
Project Leader
Director of Learning and Teaching
University of New South Wales

How far along is your university in the whole of institution approach to the recruitment, induction, professional development support, recognition and valuing and the embedding of sessional staff within your whole teaching body?'

Lynn Sheridan
Project Manager
University of New South Wales

'We found some brilliant examples, but they were ad hoc, a lot of them were really done on the basis of individuals' passion and energy in terms of supporting sessional staff. The ones that we tried to label as good practice were the ones that we felt were a bit more sustainable...'

Alisa Percy
Coordinator of the UOW Sessional Teaching Project
University of Wollongong

'Something that emerged in our project was the leadership role of the subject coordinators, which isn't talked about very often, but in fact the subject coordinators often have full responsibility for recruitment, employment, management, evaluation, feedback and recognition. The subject coordinator's role is an important leadership role and they are not very well supported at all.'

Margaret Hicks
Associate Director,
Flexible Learning Centre -
Teaching and Learning
University of South Australia

'In terms of very specific HR practices, people were pointing to the need for centralised and timely practices - contracts should include paid time for all associated activities, and contracts should begin before the teaching actually starts.'

Shard Lorenzo
Human resources Director
University of South Australia

We're very fortunate that every time we've run our staff attitude survey a high proportion of our sessional staff in particular respond. They tell us and they give us a lot of valuable information. But the other people that generate very valuable information are the deans of teaching and learning across our four academic divisions and the HR managers across the four academic divisions. Both of those roles play a very pivotal part in the things that I'm about to talk about.'

Ian Macdonald
Director, Teaching & Learning Centre
University of New England

'We found that the sessional teachers were quite outstanding – when they were supported properly... they were quite terrible when they weren't supported properly. The difference was quite significant. We have these things called teaching communities.'

Sandra Wills
Director, Centre for Educational Development & Interactive Resources
University of Wollongong

'It isn't just a problem with the satellite campuses. It's not just a matter of physical distance... It's a matter of cultural distance and emotional distance for all sessional tutors no matter what campus they're on. The problem is not an individual issue... It is an institutional issue and it is a cultural issue.'

The National Colloquium Program with presentations and transcripts is available on the RED Website.

References

Australian Universities Teaching Committee (2003b). *Guidelines for Training, Managing and Supporting Sessional Teachers.* Teaching and Educational Development Institute (TEDI), University of Queensland. Retrieved January 28, 2007 from http://www.tedi.uq.edu.au/sessionalteaching/guidelines/ST_Guidelines.pdf

Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (2007). *What is Happening in Leadership?* Retrieved December 6, 2007 from http://www.altc.edu.au/carrick/webdav/site/carricksite/users/siteadmin/public/grants_leadership_report_whatshappening_dec07.pdf

Chalmers, D. (2007). *A Review of Australian and International Quality Systems and Indicators of Learning and Teaching.* Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, Australia. August, 2007. Retrieved February 15, 2008 from http://www.altc.edu.au/carrick/webdav/site/carricksite/users/siteadmin/public/t&lindicators_%20report_1.2_aug07.pdf

Department of Education Science and Training (2006). *Staff 2006: Selected Higher Education Statistics.* Appendix 1. Actual Staff Full-time Equivalence. Retrieved December 3, 2007 from http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/statistics/publications_higher_education_statistics_collections.htm

Rix, A. et al. (2007). *Report of the Working Party on the Diversity of Academic Roles.* University of Queensland March 2007. Retrieved December 3, 2007. http://www.uq.edu.au/shared/resources/personnel/appraisalAcad/DiversityofAcademicRolesReportApr07.doc

A full list of references can be found in the Literature Review on the RED Website.

www.cadad.edu.au/sessional/RED

"...if we are to provide a quality education for our students,
we are compelled to look at all of the people who teach in universities,
not just the permanent teaching and research elite."

Professor Rob Castle
Deputy Vice Chancellor
(Academic and International)

University of Wollongong