Good Practice Guide for the Management, Support and Development of Sessional Staff

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<tr>
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This document provides guidance on support and development of sessional staff at the University and should be applied commensurate with the sessional staff member’s contract and/or relationship with the University. The Guide should be read in conjunction with the University Policy on Casual Employment (Academic) UP07/184 which mandates the University’s approach to management, particularly engagement and payment, of sessional staff.

Preamble
The University recognises that sessional staff may be engaged in schools/faculties for various lengths of teaching contracts. They make a key contribution to the quality of teaching, learning and the student experience and, hence, are highly valued by the University. Sessional staff should be supported to ensure that they are able to carry out their duties to standards appropriate for a world class university.

This Good Practice Guide outlines, amongst other things, strategies to support, manage and develop the skills and expertise of sessional staff to enable them to effectively contribute to, and become part of, the University teaching community.

1 Employment conditions
Sessional staff should:

a) be employed for sufficient time to enable them to conduct their teaching duties for the entire teaching period (including exam marking and board of examiners meetings);

b) participate in regular meetings during the relevant teaching periods for advice, support and feedback with regard to classroom teaching, marking and moderation of assessments;

c) participate in learning activities as part of professional development; and

d) be treated in an inclusive manner with regard to all University, faculty and school level academic and social activities/events.

2 Support strategies made available to sessional staff
Every school/faculty should have a designated co-ordinator of sessional staff. Where relevant, school/faculty coordinators and/or the Centre for Education Futures should provide the following support strategies to enable sessional staff to undertake their duties to a high standard:

2.1 Facilities
School/faculty coordinators are responsible for providing the following facilities:

a) a hot desk office space including computer, printing, photocopying and telephone facilities; and

b) access to appropriate private space for consultation with students.

2.2 Management and support services
School/faculty coordinators should maintain communication lines with sessional staff and provide the following management related support and resources:

a) induction to the school/faculty on initial employment including information on administration, safety procedures and academic procedures;
b) all resources needed for their teaching duties. This may include access to LMS, email, internet, teaching materials, marking guidelines/rubrics, feedback guidelines and moderation processes; and

c) a formal academic mentor/supervisor responsible for monitoring, evaluating and providing feedback on their teaching.

2.3 Professional development
The Centre for Education Futures is responsible for providing the following to sessional staff:

a) online, interactive induction and training modules;
b) biannual, face-to-face development days;
c) access to networking mediums (e.g. Facebook page) to enable establishment of academic links within the University;
d) access to all professional learning activities;
e) support for Teaching Award(s) applications; and
f) development of education programs (e.g. Graduate Certificate program)

3 Retention and recognition of high quality sessional staff
It is important for the University, through the schools, to identify and retain high quality sessional staff through an equitable recruitment process. To this end, school/faculty coordinators should:

a) develop strategies to proactively identify the contribution that sessional staff make to the school, faculty and the University; and
b) retain and recognise high quality sessional staff through relevant Teaching Awards referred to in 2.3 (e).

4 Risk management
School/faculty coordinators should undertake a systematic review of the school/faculty’s reliance on sessional staff with a view to mitigating any potential risks to the University.