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Setting The Standards For Sessional Staff: Quality Learning And Teaching

Marina Harvey PhD

Macquarie University, marina.harvey@mq.edu.au

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Setting The Standards For Sessional Staff: Quality Learning And Teaching

Abstract

Across the Australian Higher Education sector a focus on quality is driving a new paradigm for learning and teaching: quality standards. One challenge is to engage all academics with this progress towards systematic quality enhancement and assurance. Sessional staff, who provide most of the face-to-face teaching in Australian universities, remain at the periphery of learning and teaching. Any development of standards must therefore proactively address the role of sessional staff in attaining and achieving quality learning and teaching.

Building on seminal research on sessional staff, this paper argues the need for standards as a potential strategy for quality learning and teaching with sessional staff. The rationale for, and process of, developing national standards is outlined and the learning and teaching standards are introduced.

Keywords

quality learning and teaching, sessional staff, standards

Cover Page Footnote

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Introduction

Sessional staff are defined as teachers, including any higher education instructors, not in tenured or permanent positions, and employed on an hourly or honorary basis (Percy et al. 2008, p4). This includes lecturers, tutors, online course facilitators and moderators, markers and demonstrators (BLASST.edu.au). The majority of new academic staff are appointed as casuals (May 2011) or sessional staff; consequently, there has been an increase in the teaching undertaken by sessional staff (Bexley, James & Arkoudis 2011). Indeed, the majority of teaching in Australian universities is now provided by these sessional staff (May et al. 2011), and in individual departments this can rise to 80% and higher (Harvey, Fraser & Bowes 2005). This reliance on sessional staff is not unique to Australia: a similar pattern has developed in the United Kingdom (Bryson 2013) and America (Jaschik 2013). Indeed, a survey of provosts across the American sector reports a continuation of this reliance on sessional staff and an anticipation that it will increase (Jaschik 2013).

The Australian Government's response to a review of the higher education system, known as the Bradley Review (Bradley et al. 2009), included removing the cap on the number of public university places so that from 2012 universities could offer a place to all eligible students, with an aim that by 2025 "40 percent of all 24 to 34 year olds attain a bachelor level qualification or above" (p5). As universities adapt to projected increases in student enrolments, they will need to rely more heavily on sessional teaching staff to satisfy teaching demands in the transitional period, where student numbers will be unknown and/or fluctuating. Sessional staff are, and will be, the interface for learning and teaching in Australian higher education, yet research indicates that they are at the periphery (Kimber 2003) of learning and teaching plans.

Concurrently, a new paradigm is emerging for learning and teaching across the Higher Education sector: a focus on quality. The federal government has set the agenda for disciplines to:

own and take responsibility for implementing academic standards (working with professional bodies and other stakeholders where appropriate) within the academic traditions of collegiality, peer review, pre-eminence of disciplines and, importantly, academic autonomy. (Bradley 2009, p32)

While sessional staff are members of each disciplinary community, the risk is that as a cohort they are not recognised in terms of their role in attaining and realising proposed standards.

A Context of Quality

With the establishment of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) the Australian government has affirmed its commitment to "...ensuring that growth in the higher education system will be underpinned by a robust quality assurance and regulatory framework" (Evans 2010). This approach to quality builds upon and continues the recommendations by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). An early review of AUQA audits revealed a consistent and strong call across the sector for a need to introduce and "systematise" support for sessional staff (examples provided in Table 1); the majority of the 2008-2010 reports also referred to this need (Australian Universities Quality Agency 2010). There is a sector-wide need for quality-assurance processes for learning and teaching that recognise and support sessional staff.

Table 1: Examples of Indicative Feedback from Australian Universities Quality Agency Audits of Australian Universities – Quality Assurance, Planning and Sessional Staff (emphasis added)

Casual staff are not incorporated into many aspects of the University's overall system of quality assurance...yet these are the systems that the University places reliance upon...to ensure teaching standards.

(Australian Universities Quality Agency 2004, p19).

Good practice in quality assurance for casual staff certainly exists within the University; *the challenge is to systematise it.*

(Australian Universities Quality Agency 2003a, p55).

The Audit Panel concluded that it would be highly desirable for [the University] to develop a more *coherent whole-of-university approach* to the recruitment of sessional staff and their integration into mainstream academic activities.

(Australian Universities Quality Agency 2007, p41).

...there is a high level of awareness of the crucial role played by casual and adjunct staff in contributing to practice-based education but that the *support and integration of these staff varies across faculties.*

(Australian Universities Quality Agency 2006a, p21).

...the needs of sessional staff will have to be incorporated better into the *planning of teaching and the initiatives offered to support staff* in improving their teaching.... AUQA recommends that the University *develop a strategy to better support sessional teaching staff* and monitor the effectiveness of this strategy in order to improve the overall student learning experience.

(Australian Universities Quality Agency 2006b, p10).

...the University will require *a comprehensive plan* to address the needs of sessional staff including retention, contract management and professional development.

(Australian Universities Quality Agency 2008a, p10).

some colleges have instituted positive mechanisms that enable sessional staff to feel fully part of the college and to contribute to the academic development of the college. Some *sharing of these mechanisms*...would assist the University to identify the development needs of sessional staff and possible strategies for responding to them.

(Australian Universities Quality Agency 2003b, p45).

There is a need to strengthen staff development activities and mechanisms that would allow sessional staff with excellent teaching reputations to *share best practice*. Given the positive contribution so many sessional staff are making, this should include the embracing of the sessional staff as an integral part of the...teaching community'

(Australian Universities Quality Agency 2008b, p18).

...the University needs to give urgent attention to addressing *key workforce planning issues* including the renewal of workforce, addressing the age profile and finding the optimal balance of permanent and sessional staff.

(Australian Universities Quality Agency 2008c, p2).

Sessional staff...did not seem to be part of the rigorous *performance management and development scheme* which is of benefit both to individuals in terms of career development and to the institution in order to secure the best possible outcomes in teaching and learning.

(Australian Universities Quality Agency 2009, p26).

Standards are currently assured through both the Australian Qualifications Framework (2007, 2010) and the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards), the latter of which is evaluated by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). These standards acknowledge that sessional staff play a role in ensuring that "teaching and learning are of higher quality" (Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education 2011, p16). However, compliance needs to systematically encompass sessional staff to ensure their role in quality learning and teaching and assure adherence to these standards. There is a need to proactively bridge quality-assurance processes and targeted sessional staff standards. The capacity to lead such a process depends upon a systemic and sector- wide approach.

The National Teaching Quality Indicators Project developed a Teaching Quality Framework for assuring standards. These standards are applied at four levels and across four dimensions: institutional climate and systems; diversity; assessment and engagement; and learning community (Chalmers & Thomson 2009). The framework has been applauded for overtly highlighting standards for sessional staff under the dimension of institutional climate and systems (in other words, institutional culture). These are categorised in terms of inputs, outputs, processes and outcomes; for example, quality indicators developed include sessional teacher management (an input); provision of support and training for sessional teachers and their supervisors (a process); numbers of staff, including sessional teachers participating in training by program/unit (an output); and mentor and monitor sessional/tutorial staff in programs/units under teacher responsibility (an outcome). Unfortunately, the potential to focus on sessional staff was not realised through the pilot process, with no reference to sessional staff in the final reports presented by the participating universities (Flowers 2008; Kosman 2008; Lang 2009; Terry & Gilmore 2009).

Basic principles that underpin Commonwealth funding for higher education (DEEWR & DIISR, 2011) include those of teaching and learning quality, world-class teaching and learning that advances the international standing of Australian education and a sustainable higher-education sector. Mission-based compacts fail to acknowledge the significance of sessional staff to quality learning and teaching and, indeed, the central role sessionals play across all learning and teaching developments. Enabling sustainability requires the sector to seriously undertake an active leadership role to ensure quality learning and teaching with sessional staff.

The need for sessional staff standards

There is a clear trend towards systematising frameworks to assure and enhance the quality of higher education in Australia. With sessional staff responsible for a significant proportion of learning and teaching, any quality-assurance and regulatory framework can only be robust if it acknowledges, recognises and specifically addresses this role of sessional staff in higher education. The weakness of all recent and current frameworks and projects is that sessional staff are currently either missing from their agendas or, at best, addressed in a minimalist way. "Wholesale improvements across the sector will require better means of recognising and quality assuring the contribution of sessional teachers at the individual university and sector level" (Percy et al. 2008, p15).

The Australian higher education sector consistently identified that quality standards are needed and that this need extends to learning and teaching standards for sessional staff. This need was specifically identified by the then-Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC), following their review of leadership programs where "...few tackled big systemic issues...Some currently topical opportunities are being missed, for example, sessional staff

issues" (ALTC 2010). The current scenario of "the general lack of performance management of sessional teachers presents a high risk factor for universities" (Percy et al. 2008, 14). There is a need to lead the quality assurance and enhancement of learning and teaching by sessional staff within institutions and across the higher education sector. Standards need to be established by which we can measure ourselves and benchmark across the sector. The establishment of sessional staff standards can act as both a tool and a strategy for risk-identification and minimisation.

Developing the standards

Background

The Sessional Staff Standards Framework had its genesis at one large metropolitan university, and was supported by internal learning and teaching funding. The timing of the initial research period (2005-2008) was serendipitous, as it allowed the organisation to simultaneously participate in the seminal nationwide *RED Report* project (Percy et al. 2008) as a linked university. This project (which takes its name from its focus on the Recognition, Enhancement and Development of sessional teachers) provided a national focus on the contribution of sessional teachers, shared good practice and presented recommendations for quality enhancement for sessional teaching.

The next funding period (2009-2011) specifically responded to a statement by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) that while "[g]ood practice in quality assurance for casual staff certainly exists within the University; the challenge is to systematise it" (Australian Universities Quality Agency 2003a, p54). One of the main outcomes of this two-year project was the development of a draft Sessional Staff Standards Framework. The *RED Report* was influential in shaping the draft framework's principles, criteria and standard descriptors. Specifically, many of the *RED Report's* recommendations were addressed by the developing framework (as mapped in Table 2).

Table 2: *RED Report* recommendations by domain and alignment with the draft criteria of the Sessional Staff Standards Framework

RED Report Recommendation	Sessional Staff Standards Framework
Domain 1	
Systemic and Sustainable Policy and Practice	
Taking a 'whole of university' approach to the quality enhancement of sessional teaching as recommended by the AUTC 2003 project	The Sessional Staff Standards Framework positions the organisation's approach to sessional staff within the institutional policy framework.
Improving communication channels with sessional teachers, so the university can review its relationship with them and systematically address their developmental needs	<p>2.1c The university communicates clear expectations to sessional staff about their rights, responsibilities and entitlements as staff members.</p> <p>2.2a A faculty system for communication with sessional staff is in place.</p> <p>2.3a Departments have a system for communicating with sessional staff.</p>
Developing responses that are appropriate to the context and to the specific needs of sessional	3.1b Sessional staff interests are considered and incorporated into appropriate decision-

teachers	making processes.
Formalising good practice in policy and embedding procedures in operational plans with targets to ensure that it is both systemic and sustainable	3.3b Departments systematically review their reliance on sessional staff as a risk-management measure.
Attending to the professional needs of sessional teachers within all quality-enhancement initiatives	3.1b Sessional staff interests are considered and incorporated into appropriate decision-making processes.
Domain 2	
Employment and Administrative Support	
Reviewing central recruitment and employment policies for their relevance to sessional teachers	2.1b Formalised employment and recruitment procedures are in place for sessional staff across the university.
Developing specific faculty or school procedures in relation to the employment of sessional teachers	The Sessional Staff Standards Framework allows enough flexibility to support department or faculty-level responses to context-specific issues.
Communicating the administrative support available to sessional teachers	2.1c The university communicates clear expectations to sessional staff about their rights, responsibilities and entitlements as staff members.
Providing mechanisms for the negotiation of pay and other benefits such as salary sacrifice	2.1e There is a centralised, university-wide payroll system that includes sessional staff.
Domain 3	
Induction and Academic Management	
Improving the relevance and accessibility of induction for sessional teachers	2.2b New sessional staff receive an orientation to the workplace (e.g. administration, HR, OHS). 1.2a Sessional staff receive an induction related to learning and teaching.
Including relevant teaching and learning components in induction processes	1.2a Sessional staff receive an induction related to learning and teaching. 1.2b Sessional staff are informed and updated about standards, procedures and policies affecting learning and teaching.
Articulating clear lines of management and sets of responsibilities for the supervisors of sessional teachers	2.3c Supervisors have the skills to manage sessional staff.

Providing professional development and support networks for the supervisors of sessional teachers	2.3c Supervisors have the skills to manage sessional staff.
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Developing better communication channels between sessional teachers, their teaching team and the school/faculty/university	1.3e Sessional staff are members of teaching teams. 1.3b Departments provide professional academic supervision and mentoring to sessional staff.
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Domain 4

Professional and Career Development

Developing contextualised, accessible, mandatory and paid approaches to the professional development of sessional teachers	1.1a The institution provides and supports professional development for sessional staff in learning and teaching.
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Including professional development in overall performance-management systems for sessional teachers	1.3b Departments provide professional academic supervision and mentoring to sessional staff. 1.3d Sessional staff performance is evaluated.
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Domain 5

Reward and Recognition

Developing improved means of rewarding and recognising the contribution of sessional teachers	3.1a Teaching excellence by sessional staff is recognised and rewarded.
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Developing mechanisms for sessional teachers to provide feedback on their engagement at the faculty and university level	3.1b Sessional staff interests are considered and incorporated into appropriate decision-making processes.
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The project then expanded through collaboration with three additional partner universities and support from national funding, to become the Benchmarking Leadership and Advancement of Standards for Sessional Staff (BLASST) project.

Method and Approach

In this project, each stage of developing sessional staff standards was framed within a Participatory Action Research methodology (after Kemmis & McTaggart 1988) and enacted as monitoring, evaluation, research and improvement (MERI) (Wadsworth 2011a), wherein the focus is on "action that is evaluated and researched with a view to identifying both where it has 'worked' and what to do if it can be improved by those who are parties to that action" (p16). Participatory Action Research starts with identifying that improvement (McNiff & Whitehead 2011), or change, is desirable (McTaggart 1997). A need for change and improvement had been identified for sessional staff. This model offers the benefits of an

emphasis upon collaboration, essential to multi-dimensional, interdisciplinary projects and an ideological fit with the collegial culture of the academy (Rytmeister 2009).

The great strength of the model is its inherent flexibility which supports successful project outcomes. This is achieved as the action research cycle (of plan, act, observe and reflect) is enacted and the project adapts in response to ongoing evaluation of each step and stage. Such flexibility was necessary to respond to contextual variations as participants led the development and piloting of the framework at multi levels (individual, departmental, faculty and organisational) and across institutions.

The project parties included the project partner universities, rolling out to users representing all Australian higher education institutions, and potentially beyond. Action and reflection were inherent in every stage of the project. Action research provides a holistic approach (Wadsworth 2011b) that acknowledges all project members as participants.

A Distributed Leadership approach (Jones, Lefoe, Harvey & Ryland 2012) provided the project framework. Distributed Leadership shares with Participatory Action Research an emphasis on collaboration at multi- and cross-functional levels. Each participant contributes individual strengths to the research project whilst providing the opportunity to develop their own leadership capability in learning and teaching and collectively build the leadership capacity of the organisation as they engage with the Sessional Staff Standards Framework. This approach to leadership does not follow, but acknowledges, a traditional hierarchical model while supporting the collegiality inherent in Participatory Action Research.

Developing the Framework

The BLASST framework (refer to Appendix) was developed through a series of four main action research cycles:

1. Identifying the issues
2. Developing a framework
3. Piloting the framework at a number of institutions
4. Developing an accessible, online version of the framework

Action research cycle 1: Identifying the issues

The first research cycle was based at one university over a three-year period. Starting with an intense immersion approach in one department for one year, the project then expanded to an additional two departments. Data was collected on sessional staff learning and teaching issues through focus groups (Harvey, Fraser & Bowes 2005); this data informed the design of a university-wide survey, which revealed a lack of consistent quality in terms of:

- Recruitment of sessional staff (affected by the student and tutorial enrolment process)
- Orientation and induction of sessional staff
- Professional development of sessional staff
- Attrition rates of sessional staff
- A "sense of belonging"
- Payment of sessional staff.

As the project participants were "engaging themselves with the literatures" (McNiff & Whitehead 2011), the issues identified locally were confirmed more broadly. Departments worked towards developing a range of department-specific strategies to address these issues. Strategies included one-day paid orientation and teaching induction sessions for sessional staff; resource folders of practice strategies to support both subject co-ordinators and administrators of sessional staff; and new ways of administering sessional staff, including underpinning processes with new departmental policies or procedures.

Action research cycle 2: Developing a framework

The second cycle started with an aim to develop a new policy to ensure consistency in quality for learning and teaching with sessional staff. A strategic reference group, consisting of cross-disciplinary and multi-level participants from the earlier project and research cycle, represented all faculties of the university as well as the Human Resources department. The first step in the process was the debate and declaration of a set of guiding principles for the policy. It was recognised that the policy should position the organisation's approach to sessional staff within the institutional policy and quality framework, while allowing enough flexibility to encompass departmental or faculty-level responses to context-specific issues. Consideration had to be given to existing policy and process documents, as well as current processes such as workload modelling and enterprise bargaining (led by Human Resources) to ensure alignment across each area.

Following debate, discussion, research and reflection, the outcome of this process was, in terms of action research, a joint statement to a claim of knowledge (McNiff & Whitehead 2011) in the form of a declaration of three principles to underpin the collective mission:

1. Assuring and Enhancing the Quality of Learning and Teaching
2. Support for Sessional Staff
3. Sustainability

An elaboration of each of the three principles is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: The three principles underpinning the BLASST framework (extract from the BLASST Sessional Staff Framework, presented in full in the appendix).

<i>Principle One: Quality Learning and Teaching</i>
The University is committed to consistently high quality learning and teaching for all students, regardless of the employment status of the staff member teaching them. It aims to ensure that the learning and teaching approaches adopted across the University match or exceed good practice; that learning and teaching values, principles and priorities are applied to sessional staff; and that sessional staff are included in University communities of practice. In order to ensure sessional staff have the ability to attain Quality Teaching Standards, the University also recognises that appropriate professional development must be provided for sessional staff. The University is committed to consistently high quality learning and teaching for all students.
<i>Principle Two: Support for Sessional Staff</i>
As an institution, the University is committed to achieving quality management standards in recruitment, employment, administration and academic support, in order to ensure consistent and appropriate support for sessional staff. The University also recognises that sessional staff require basic infrastructure and provisions in order to undertake their roles effectively and professionally.
<i>Principle Three: Sustainability</i>
The nature of casual employment means there are limits on the level to which the University can plan for, provide for and develop sessional staff as individuals. However, the University recognises that long-term sustainability of quality learning and teaching requires retaining good quality sessional staff, reducing turnover of sessional staff, and encouraging them in the

pursuit and development of academic teaching careers. This can be achieved in part by recognising and rewarding sessional staff for the contribution they make to the University.

The University also recognises that sustainability in the achievement of standards depends on the provision of appropriate resources to underpin processes, and the minimisation of the administrative load on all staff (including academic, administrative staff and Human Resources).

Following the project's review of 16 existing policies for sessional staff across Australian universities, three types of policy emerged: policies with a human-resources focus (e.g. recruitment and employment); policies with a management and administration focus (e.g. management arrangements, roles and responsibilities); and policies with a mixed focus (e.g. those that may include conditions of employment and other human-resources stipulations, but also some professional development, learning and teaching quality assurance, academic supervision or management and administration issues). The project team wanted to provide at minimum a mixed focus, but now questioned whether a policy could achieve this while providing the flexibility required by diverse departmental and faculty needs.

A suggestion was made for an alternative approach: translating the guiding principles into a national framework document. Each principle would have to be unpacked into a set of criteria. Action research iterative cycles of reflection, evaluation and refinement, informed by the research and literature, supported the identification of the criteria associated with each principle. A series of workshops then produced the standard descriptors for each of the criteria. Standards were described at three levels: *Good Practice*, which indicates that the criterion is being met or exceeded; *Minimum Standard*, which indicates that there has been an active attempt to address the criteria and that a basic standard has been achieved; and *Unsustainable*, which indicates that current practice fails to address the criterion. Good practice standards were informed by the empirical research in the area, with several shaped by the recommendations of the *RED Report* and AUQA recommendations. There was broad agreement by the working parties and project-team members about what constituted good practice.

Action research cycle 3: Multi-institutional piloting of the framework

The framework, informed by a wide body of national and international research, had been developed within the context of one metropolitan university. With the framework's potential to contribute to sector-wide good practice it was necessary to test its transferability and validity, its criteria and its associated standard descriptors across additional higher education institutions.

A standards framework could be used as a benchmarking tool. Benchmarking provides a process by which organisations can evaluate current practice against previously referenced points (Cameron, Harvey & Solomonides 2010). The points of reference for the BLASST framework were the examples of good practice. A companion paper by Luzia, Harvey, Brown, McCormack, Parker and McKenzie (2013) contains a detailed discussion of the processes that made up the piloting and benchmarking action research cycle. .

Following the pilot process, the project team continued to reflect on the feedback and incorporate it into the ongoing refinement of the framework. Additional feedback was received at the BLASST national summit, where leaders from 40 higher education institutions had the opportunity to test the online tool. This framework establishes "standards, and criteria, by which we measure the quality of performance and outcomes in learning and

teaching, in management and administrative policy, procedures and practices affecting sessional staff" (<http://blasst.edu.au/framework.html>).

Action research cycle 4: Developing an accessible, online version of the framework

The piloting of the BLASST framework had used a prototype version embedded in commercial software. This had presented some challenges, and a more robust platform was therefore required for the online interactive tool to enable it to sustain hundreds of concurrent users. An online version of the BLASST framework was developed and launched as the BLASST Benchmarking Interactive Tool, or B-BIT (BLASST.edu.au). As it offers a self-enrolment login, users can engage in confidentiality and receive a computer-generated summary report at the end of the process. B-BIT provides a user-friendly interface and brings efficiency to the benchmarking process.

Discussion

As sessional staff provide the majority of teaching in our universities, they need to be supported and managed by their institutions to ensure quality learning and teaching (Ryan et al. 2011). This quality needs to be assured through sustainable practices (Durur & Gilmore 2013). The BLASST framework synthesises wide-ranging recommendations concerning sessional staff, which have consistently emerged for the sector, into a tool that presents the standards for use in benchmarking.

With criteria categorised at different levels of engagement, the framework has the strength of allowing participants to lead, and self-assess or benchmark, at the individual, departmental, faculty or organisational levels. Benchmarking is a process by which organisations evaluate current practice against previously determined reference points or criteria. The criterion reference approach (McKinnon, Walker & Davis 2000), adopted by the framework, defines the attributes of good practice in an area and may be used for quality assurance or enhancement. Cross-institutional benchmarking using the framework enables leadership development at the sector level, while also acting as an educative tool to inform the sector about good practice; this supports quality learning and teaching.

Whichever way it is used, the BLASST framework can also perform an educative function, providing insight into sector minimum standards (consistent with the Higher Education Standards Framework), and provides the descriptors on aspirational standards and good practice. Repeated engagement and use of the tool makes it possible to measure enhancements over time. The development of an online interactive tool provides the sector with a user-friendly interface that generates a summary report at the click of a button. An advantage of the BLASST framework is that it supports sector-wide awareness of sessional staff issues. The framework engages participants in leadership by focussing on national standards with the potential to achieve "wholesale improvements" by developing, disseminating and embedding good individual and institutional practice in learning and teaching for sessional staff in Australian higher education. The next step requires a sector-wide commitment to, and engagement with, the standards to realise their potential for quality learning and teaching.

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Appendix. BLASST Sessional Staff Standards Framework



THE SESSIONAL STAFF STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

Sess•ion•al Staff /sessional stæf/ noun. Any teachers in higher education employed on a casual or contract or sessional basis. This includes lecturers, tutors, online course facilitators and moderators, markers and demonstrators.

The Sessional Staff Standards Framework sets in place criteria and standards by which we measure the quality of performance and outcomes in learning and teaching, and in management and administrative policy, procedure and practices around sessional staff.

The Sessional Staff Standards Framework positions the Institution's approach to sessional staff within the institutional policy framework, while allowing enough flexibility to include and support Individual sessional staff members; as well as Department (Unit Convenor/ Coordinator/ Subject Coordinator / Subject Leader); and Faculty (School / Division) -level responses to sessional staff issues.

These standards should be read together with existing policy and process documents, including the current Enterprise Agreement, and it should be acknowledged that while the framework focuses on sessional staff, it may have resource and workload implications for all university staff.

Principles

There are three guiding principles that underpin the Sessional Staff Standards Framework.

1. Quality Learning and Teaching
2. Sessional Staff Support
3. Sustainability

Criteria

Within each principle there are three different standards of achievement in relation to the listed criteria:

- *Unsustainable* indicates that current practice fails to address the criterion
- *Minimum Standard* indicates that there has been an active attempt to address the criteria and that a basic standard has been achieved
- *Good Practice* indicates that the criterion is being met or exceeded

Criteria are grouped into the three principles but are interdependent and some overlap is inevitable and intentional.

Principle One: Quality Learning and Teaching

The University is committed to consistently high quality learning and teaching for all students, regardless of the employment status of the staff member teaching them. It aims to ensure that the learning and teaching approaches adopted across the University match or exceed good practice; that learning and teaching values, principles and priorities are applied to sessional staff; and that sessional staff are included in University communities of practice.

In order to ensure sessional staff have the ability to attain Quality Teaching Standards¹, the University also recognises that appropriate professional development must be provided for sessional staff.

Principle 1: Quality Learning and Teaching	Standards			Suggested sources of evidence
	Good Practice	Minimum Standard	Unsustainable	
1.1 Institution level criteria				
1.1a The institution articulates the employment and educational skills required from a sessional staff member.	<p>A statement from the institution about skills required is included in the Enterprise Agreement.</p> <p>A generic job description is in place which lists skills required, including teaching expertise, qualifications, and/or experience.</p> <p>Guidelines are provided for what should be included in job advertisements, including on the university website, and includes a statement about skills</p>	<p>Minimum qualifications are detailed, i.e., Bachelor’s degree as minimum for teaching in undergraduate courses; Master’s degree as minimum for teaching in postgraduate courses.</p>	<p>The institution does not articulate the minimum skills or qualifications required by sessional staff.</p> <p>The recruitment process does not consider qualifications of sessional staff.</p> <p>Sessional staff articulation of employment and educational skills proceeds on an ad-hoc, informal basis and is variable across the institution.</p>	<p>Enterprise Agreement</p> <p>Applicants’ resumes</p> <p>Internal and external job advertisements that include minimum list of skills and qualifications required by sessional staff applicants</p>

¹ As articulated in the Higher Educations Standards Framework (TEQSA 2011)

	required.			
1.1b The institution provides and supports professional development for sessional staff in learning and teaching.	<p>All sessional staff are paid to attend relevant professional development in learning and teaching.</p> <p>A structured, systematic and accessible professional development program is in place for all sessional staff.</p>	<p>There is a structured professional development program for sessional staff.</p> <p>Sessional staff are provided with paid professional development opportunities in learning and teaching.</p> <p>Sessional staff can access professional development programs in learning and teaching.</p> <p>Sessional staff are informed about available professional development opportunities.</p>	<p>Professional development for sessional staff in learning and teaching is unpaid.</p> <p>Professional development for sessional staff in learning and teaching is delivered on an ad hoc basis.</p> <p>There is no professional development for sessional staff in learning and teaching.</p>	<p>Enrolments in professional development programs, including Foundations in Teaching programs</p> <p>Institutional funding model that includes funding for Professional Development for sessional staff in Learning & Teaching</p>
1.1c An institutional system is in place for communication with sessional staff.	The institution has a multi-layered communication strategy that reaches all staff including all sessional staff.	The institution has a communication strategy that reaches most staff.	<p>The communication strategy does not reach a majority of sessional staff.</p> <p>No communication strategy for communicating with all staff exists.</p>	
1.2 Faculty level criteria	Good Practice	Minimum Standard	Unsustainable	Evidence
1.2a Sessional staff are provided with an induction to learning and teaching.	<p>Paid induction to learning and teaching is provided to all sessional staff.</p> <p>There is a range of strategies to support sessional staff in learning and teaching (face to face and/or online).</p> <p>Induction is monitored</p>	<p>Induction is provided and includes the basics of learning and teaching, and use of IT tools such as Blackboard, Moodle.</p> <p>Resources for induction to learning and teaching are provided to all sessional staff.</p>	<p>Induction to learning and teaching is not part of the Faculty's strategic or operational planning or practice.</p> <p>Induction only focuses on administrative matters.</p> <p>Induction is not provided.</p>	<p>Induction resources e.g. booklets and packs</p> <p>Induction website</p> <p>Induction Schedule is flexible (offered multiple times throughout the year)</p> <p>Foundations or</p>

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	periodically, and is ongoing. Induction is updated periodically.			introductory courses in learning and teaching, learning management system e.g. Blackboard or Moodle, induction day) Induction days/ sessions
1.2b Sessional staff are kept updated about standards, procedures and policies affecting learning and teaching.	The induction process updates sessional staff about standards, procedures and policies affecting learning and teaching. Faculty distributes policies with an explanation of their relevance to sessional staff. Sessional staff demonstrable knowledge on relevant policies.	Sessional staff receive teaching and learning resources, and have awareness of and access to central learning and teaching policy and procedures repositories.	Sessional staff are not informed or aware of learning and teaching procedures and policies affecting learning and teaching. The Faculty does not communicate with sessional staff systematically or regularly regarding updated standards, policies and procedures.	Sessional staff contacts database Sessional staff website Faculty communication includes information on changes to (or reminder about) L&T standards, policies and practices
1.3 Department level criteria	Good Practice	Minimum Standard	Unsustainable	Evidence
1.3a Sessional and ongoing academic staff share good learning and teaching practice.	Systematic processes for sessional staff to share learning and teaching practice are in place. Sessional staff representatives are invited and paid to attend departmental meetings, learning and teaching meetings.	Sessional staff representatives are invited to learning and teaching meetings at departmental or unit level. Department offers induction sessions on “preparing to teach” (when not offered at Faculty level). Personal communication between unit convenors and sessional staff is facilitated via regular, paid meetings or	Sessional and ongoing staff have few or no opportunities to share good practice. Sessional staff are excluded from departmental meetings. Meetings between unit convenors and sessional staff are not paid. There is no regular communication between unit convenors and sessional staff.	Department Learning & Teaching meetings, forums or seminars

		similar.		
1.3b Sessional staff engage in decision-making on learning and teaching issues.	<p>Sessional staff input is actively sought when making learning and teaching decisions.</p> <p>Sessional staff are paid for all of their learning and teaching contributions.</p>	<p>Sessional staff input may be invited towards learning and teaching decisions.</p> <p>Sessional staff are paid for some of their learning and teaching contributions.</p>	<p>Sessional staff are not invited to contribute to learning and teaching decisions</p> <p>And/or</p> <p>Sessional staff are not paid for their contributions.</p>	Timesheets
1.3c Sessional staff are involved in teaching teams.	<p>Regular teaching team meetings that allow debriefing, planning, sharing of good practice, collaborative development of learning and teaching strategies as well as mentoring and team building opportunities.</p> <p>Frequent and timely communication about teaching roles and responsibilities.</p>	<p>Sessional staff know what is expected of them, in their teaching roles, on a weekly (or as appropriate) basis throughout the teaching period.</p> <p>Sessional staff are adequately prepared and briefed about what they are expected to do for each teaching session.</p> <p>There are ad hoc and/or mostly one way (information-giving) meetings.</p>	<p>There is only one meeting held at the start of the unit/course/subject.</p> <p>There is no regular communication with sessional staff throughout the unit/course/subject.</p>	<p>Meeting schedules</p> <p>Tutorial plans, learning and detaching activities</p> <p>Tutor manuals</p>
1.3d Sessional staff receive professional academic supervision and mentoring.	<p>Academic supervision is provided to all sessional staff.</p> <p>Mentors are assigned to all sessional staff.</p> <p>A staff member is assigned to act as the co-ordinator for sessional staff.</p>	<p>Some academic supervision and advice for some sessional staff is provided e.g. by unit/course convenors.</p>	<p>Sessional staff do not receive adequate supervision or mentoring.</p> <p>Sessional staff receive ad hoc supervision or mentoring.</p> <p>Sessional staff receive no supervision or mentoring.</p>	<p>Mentor scheme</p> <p>Unit convenor training sessions</p> <p>Regular meetings and communication;</p> <p>unit convenor's role description and workload recognise supervising sessional staff</p>

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<p>1.3e Sessional staff are adequately supported and engaged in assessment processes to assure quality.</p>	<p>Sessional staff receive appropriate marking criteria, rubrics and feedback guidelines.</p> <p>Sessional staff are paid to participate in the moderation process.</p> <p>Sessional staff have knowledge of, and access to, professional development opportunities that support good assessment practice.</p>	<p>Sessional staff receive some guidance about marking and providing feedback to students.</p> <p>Sessional staff receive marking criteria.</p> <p>Sessional staff participate in the moderation process.</p>	<p>Little or insufficient guidance is provided about marking and feedback.</p> <p>Sessional staff do not receive marking criteria.</p>	<p>Assessment criteria</p> <p>Assessment rubrics</p> <p>Feedback guidelines</p> <p>Moderation meetings</p> <p>Assessment and feedback workshops, seminars</p> <p>Use and application of feedback to students by sessional staff</p>
<p>1.3f Sessional staff teaching performance is monitored and evaluated.</p>	<p>Sessional staff are regularly evaluated and receive comprehensive and systematic feedback.</p> <p>Department outlines expectations of performance.</p> <p>Department negotiates a performance development plan with sessional staff.</p> <p>Sessional staff receive individualised feedback.</p> <p>Sessional staff are encouraged to reflect on their performance.</p>	<p>Sessional staff receive some feedback on their performance.</p> <p>Sessional staff are aware that they can use student evaluations.</p> <p>Sessional staff are aware that they can receive a copy of student evaluative feedback (reports).</p>	<p>Sessional staff receive little or ad hoc feedback on their teaching performance.</p> <p>Sessional staff receive no feedback on their teaching performance.</p> <p>No teaching evaluation is undertaken.</p>	<p>Examples of sources of potential triangulated feedback</p> <p>Formal student Evaluations</p> <p>Informal student evaluations</p> <p>Written feedback provided to tutors</p> <p>Performance development plan</p> <p>Peer review process</p> <p>Unit and course convenors' workloads recognise the need to provide feedback to sessional staff</p>

1.4 Individual level criteria	Good Practice	Minimum Standard	Unsustainable	Evidence
<p>1.4a As a sessional staff member I actively engage with ongoing professional development in learning and teaching.</p>	<p>As a sessional staff member I identify my own professional development needs.</p> <p>As a sessional staff member I seek out and engage with professional development opportunities offered.</p>	<p>As a sessional staff member I attend professional development sessions as available.</p>	<p>As a sessional staff member I do not undertake professional development where it is offered and/or available.</p>	<p>Documentation from Professional Development sessions for sessional staff</p> <p>Professional Development attendance lists, workshop or conference attendance lists</p> <p>Attendance certificates, membership of professional associations,, invitation from foundations, etc., groups to attend sessions</p>
<p>1.4b As a sessional staff member I maintain my professional role as a teacher and a disciplinary expert.</p>	<p>As a sessional staff member I participate in learning and teaching activities, keep up to date with new policies, resources research and other developments in my field as part of my professional development.</p>	<p>As a sessional staff member I adopt the roles and responsibilities as outlined in my position description or contract.</p> <p>As a sessional staff member I comply with the University's Code of Conduct (Staff).</p> <p>As a sessional staff member I comply with learning and teaching policies and practices.</p> <p>As a sessional staff member I maintain awareness of policies and practices that affect students.</p>	<p>As a sessional staff member I am not aware of the Code of Conduct (Staff) and/or my responsibilities as a staff member.</p> <p>As a staff member I am not aware of key policies that affect my learning and teaching.</p> <p>As a sessional staff member I have not received a position description.</p> <p>As a sessional staff member I undertake my role in isolation rather than as a member of the University community.</p>	<p>Code of Conduct</p> <p>Position description</p> <p>Publications</p> <p>Ethics applications for projects in L&T</p> <p>Membership of professional associations</p> <p>Contract</p>

Principle Two: Support for Sessional Staff

As an institution, the University is committed to achieving quality management standards in recruitment, employment, administration and academic support, in order to ensure consistent and appropriate support for sessional staff.

The University also recognises that sessional staff require basic infrastructure and provisions in order to undertake their roles effectively and professionally.

Principle 2: Support for sessional staff	Standards			Suggested sources of evidence
	Good Practice	Minimum Standard	Unsustainable	
2.1 Institution level criteria				
2.1a The Institution has a funding model that allocates resources for sessional staff professional development.	Professional development of sessional staff is adequately resourced through the institutional funding model on an ongoing basis.	Funding and/or resourcing is available for the professional development of all sessional staff.	<p>No targeted resourcing for the development of sessional staff.</p> <p>Resources and/or funding are inadequate for development of sessional staff.</p> <p>Funding and/or resourcing is uncertain or not sustained</p>	<p>Faculty funding model</p> <p>Funded support position/s for advocate/ convenor for sessional staff professional development</p> <p>Identifiable budget item for annual budget</p> <p>Identifiable recurrent budget item</p>

<p>2.1b Formalised employment and recruitment procedures are in place for sessional staff across the University.</p>	<p>Recruitment and appointment processes for sessional staff are consistent, transparent and fair and comply with university policies, and are efficient, timely and proactive.</p>	<p>Recruitment and appointment processes for all sessional staff are consistent, transparent and fair, and comply with university policies.</p>	<p>Recruitment and appointment processes are not timely, do not employ a rigorous selection process, and do not address gaps in the skill base.</p> <p>No formal recruitment and appointment processes for sessional staff.</p> <p>No institutional policies and practices refer to sessional staff.</p>	<p>Contracts</p> <p>Advertisements</p> <p>Policies</p> <p>Procedures</p> <p>Related policies and procedures are available on the university's public website</p> <p>Databases</p> <p>Eligibility list</p> <p>Schedule / timeline</p> <p>Proactive programs e.g. externally advertised positions / expressions of interest and policies for advertising positions / pool of expressions of interest</p> <p>Role descriptors</p> <p>Conversion opportunities (to tenured positions) for long-term sessional staff</p> <p>Evidence of formal recruitment process including criteria list, short lists, interview panels, interview schedules, CVs of applicants.</p>
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<p>2.1c The University communicates clearly to sessional staff about their rights, responsibilities and entitlements as a staff member.</p>	<p>Relevant information to all sessional staff about their rights, responsibilities and entitlements as a staff member is communicated in a timely manner.</p>	<p>The University communicates some information to sessional staff regarding their rights or responsibilities or entitlements as a staff member.</p>	<p>Absence of communication regarding rights, responsibilities and entitlements of sessional staff members.</p>	<p>Ethics framework, Code of Conduct, website, contract and position description, induction, university policies.</p> <p>Inclusion in contract template (e.g. of rights, responsibilities and entitlements)</p> <p>Code of conduct</p> <p>Induction sessions</p> <p>Enterprise Agreement</p> <p>Rights and Responsibilities resource available</p>
<p>2.1d There is a clear understanding across the organisation of what sessional staff are contracted to do.</p>	<p>Accurate and consistent job descriptions are provided to all sessional staff prior to commencement, and their responsibilities are explained to them in a timely manner.</p> <p>University articulates descriptors of tasks and formulae for payment.</p> <p>Staff understand the activities and hours that sessional staff will be paid for.</p> <p>Sessional staff are provided with contractual arrangements that are consistent across the university.</p>	<p>Detailed job descriptions for all sessional staff and contracts are available prior to commencement.</p> <p>Contract includes meeting hours required as well as teaching hours, and states that sessional staff need to attend all relevant meetings.</p> <p>Sessional staff have a clear understanding activities and hours they will be paid for.</p>	<p>Job descriptions and/or contracts are ambiguous and/or lack clarity around the hours and activities that sessional staff will be paid for.</p> <p>Sessional staff are not provided with contractual arrangements specifying tasks, responsibilities, hours of work and payment procedures.</p> <p>Sessional staff do not have job descriptions or do not receive contracts prior to commencement.</p>	<p>Job descriptions</p> <p>Contracts (include hours marking, meetings)</p> <p>Task descriptions</p>

2.1e There is a centralised, university-wide payroll system which includes sessional staff.	All sessional staff are paid regularly, automatically and with the option of an annualised system. Sessional staff are provided with options for regular payroll deductions for parking, transport, gym, salary sacrifice.	Sessional staff paid automatically as soon as possible after completion of work cycle. Paperless payment process. Payment system is clearly communicated.	Delays/long waiting periods in payment of sessional staff. Process requires submission of pay requests (timesheets and other paperwork) and/or multiple sign offs.	Payment by exception process Information about payment system on the website Availability of payroll deductions for parking, transport, gym, salary sacrifice
2.2 Faculty level criteria	Good Practice	Minimum Standard	Unsustainable	Evidence
2.2a A Faculty system for communication with sessional staff is in place ²	There is a complete, accurate and updated list of sessional staff for regular communication. An active two-way communication system is in place between Faculty and sessional staff.	There is a complete and accurate list of sessional staff for communication purposes. A faculty system for timely and regular communication with sessional staff is in place.	Faculty does not have a complete or accurate list of its sessional staff. Existing communication systems are inadequate or ineffective. No communication system exists.	Updated faculty database of sessional staff contact details Faculty website with information for sessional staff Evidence of two-way communication system e.g. email, blog, wiki Standardised IT communication e.g. RSS feeds available and accessible by sessional staff
2.2b New sessional staff receive an orientation to the faculty as workplace (for example, administration, Human Resources, Occupational Health & Safety).	Orientation is paid, comprehensive, and timely (i.e. held before teaching responsibilities undertaken).	Sessional staff receive a basic orientation to the workplace.	Sessional staff receive no orientation to the workplace.	Orientation attendance records Development of induction resources Induction resources available on Faculty website Frequency of use of Faculty resources e.g. downloads

² *At some institutions, communication may be the responsibility of the Department or School

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<p>2.2c Faculties provide sessional staff with resources necessary for their roles.</p>	<p>Faculty ensures timely and ongoing access to all necessary resources.</p>	<p>Sessional staff have access to some resources.</p>	<p>Sessional staff have limited or no access to resources.</p>	<p>Faculty funding model includes resources for sessional staff</p> <p>University Email addresses</p> <p>Swipe cards</p> <p>Learning Management System (Blackboard / Moodle) Access</p> <p>Resources provided may include designated workspace, consultation space, staff cards, swipe cards, email addresses, computers, stationery, free access to the library, photocopiers, pigeon holes etc., as appropriate to the tasks sessional staff are required to undertake</p>
<p>2.2d Supervisors have the skills to manage sessional staff.</p>	<p>Faculties have identified a supervisor for each sessional staff member.</p> <p>Faculties have a strategy (in their learning and teaching plan, or equivalent) for training supervisors or unit/subject convenors.</p> <p>Subject or course convenors are employed as ongoing staff and understand their role in supervision of sessional teaching staff.</p> <p>A comprehensive and ongoing unit-level induction is conducted for teaching teams that includes sessional staff.</p>	<p>Faculties have identified supervisors for sessional staff.</p> <p>Course Convenors are employed as ongoing staff and understand their role in supervision of sessional teaching staff.</p> <p>A brief unit-level induction is conducted for teaching teams.</p>	<p>Only some sessional staff have supervisors.</p> <p>Supervisors do not understand or enact their role.</p> <p>No unit –level induction is conducted for teaching teams.</p> <p>No supervisory roles for sessional staff are identified or formally allocated.</p>	<p>Supervisor identified on contract</p> <p>Supervisor training</p> <p>Supervisor training program advertised, e.g. email, newsletter</p> <p>Participants feedback on supervisor training programs</p> <p>Unit convenor training sessions</p> <p>Unit convenor training session attendance</p> <p>Appointment policies and procedures</p> <p>Role/ responsibility statements for course convenors articulating role for supervising sessional staff</p>

2.3 Department level criteria	Good Practice	Minimum Standard	Unsustainable	Evidence
<p>2.3a A Department system for communication with sessional staff is in place.</p>	<p>There is a complete, accurate and updated list of sessional staff for regular communication.</p> <p>An active two-way communication system is in place between department and sessional staff.</p> <p>There are multiple channels for communication with sessional staff.</p>	<p>There is a complete and accurate list of sessional staff for communication purposes.</p> <p>A departmental system for timely and regular communication with sessional staff is in place.</p> <p>There is at least one channel for communication with sessional staff e.g. email</p>	<p>Communication is ad hoc and depends on individual staff members.</p> <p>Department does not have a complete or accurate list of its sessional staff.</p> <p>Existing communication systems are inadequate or ineffective.</p> <p>There is no communication system in place.</p>	<p>Dedicated point of contact, e.g. departmental liaison for sessional staff</p> <p>Learning management system as a channel</p> <p>Mail room with provision for sessional staff</p> <p>Updated department database of sessional staff contact details</p> <p>Department website with information for sessional staff</p> <p>Evidence of two-way communication system e.g. email, blog, wiki</p>
<p>2.3b Sessional staff are provided with student consultation space.</p>	<p>Sessional staff have, as needed, access to private meeting and consultation space.</p>	<p>Sessional staff have access to private meeting space.</p>	<p>Sessional staff have no access to private meeting or consultation space access and must rely on communal spaces.</p> <p>Sessional staff have no access to meeting or consultation space.</p>	<p>Dedicated consultation space</p> <p>Booking system</p>

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<p>2.3c Supervisors have the skills to manage sessional staff.</p>	<p>Departments have identified a supervisor for each sessional staff member.</p> <p>Departments have a strategy (in their learning and teaching plan, or equivalent) for training supervisors or unit/subject convenors.</p> <p>Course Convenors are employed as ongoing staff and understand their role in supervision of sessional teaching staff.</p> <p>A comprehensive and ongoing unit-level induction is conducted for teaching teams that includes sessional staff.</p>	<p>Departments have identified supervisors for sessional staff.</p> <p>Course Convenors are employed as ongoing staff and understand their role in supervision of sessional teaching staff.</p> <p>A brief unit-level induction is conducted for teaching teams.</p>	<p>Only some sessional staff have supervisors.</p> <p>Supervisors do not understand or enact their role.</p> <p>No supervisory roles for sessional staff are identified or formally allocated.</p> <p>No unit –level induction is conducted for teaching teams.</p>	<p>Supervisor identified on contract</p> <p>Supervisor training</p> <p>Supervisor training program advertised, e.g. email, newsletter</p> <p>Participants feedback on supervisor training programs</p> <p>Unit convenor training sessions</p> <p>Unit convenor training session attendance</p> <p>Appointment policies and procedures</p> <p>Role/ responsibility statements for course convenors articulating role for supervising sessional staff</p>
<p>2.3d Departments manage, administer and allocate resources to sessional staff.</p>	<p>Sessional staff are provided with timely and ongoing access to necessary resources.</p>	<p>Sessional staff have access to some resources.</p>	<p>Sessional staff have limited or no access to resources.</p>	<p>Stationery, desk, unit convenor, admin support, desk copies of texts, readers etc.</p> <p>Departmental budgets</p>
<p>2.4 Individual level criteria</p>	<p>Good Practice</p>	<p>Minimum Standard</p>	<p>Unsustainable</p>	<p>Evidence</p>

<p>2.4a As a sessional staff member I am provided with the opportunity to become familiar with policies and procedures that affect my work.</p>	<p>As a sessional staff member I am provided with the opportunity to become involved in and engage with policy development.</p>	<p>As a sessional staff member I am provided with opportunities to inform yourself of relevant policies and procedures.</p>	<p>As a sessional staff member I am not provided with opportunities to inform myself of relevant policies and procedures.</p> <p>I make no attempt to gain knowledge of relevant policies and procedures.</p> <p>I make no attempt to take up opportunities to inform myself about relevant policies and procedures.</p> <p>I am provided with information about policy and procedures but I do not regularly access the information.</p>	<p>Compliance with policies</p> <p>Contribution of sessional staff to policy development e.g. minutes, emails and other feedback.</p>
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<p>2.4b As a sessional staff member I maintain communication with departments and other staff members as necessary.</p>	<p>As a sessional staff member I actively maintain timely and regular communications with my department and relevant staff.</p>	<p>As a sessional staff member I respond to departmental/ administrative³ emails.</p> <p>As a sessional staff member, I attend paid meetings</p>	<p>As a sessional staff member I do not respond to administrative emails or attend paid meetings.</p>	<p>Emails</p> <p>Sessional staff included on relevant email distributions lists</p> <p>Sessional staff included on contact lists</p> <p>Provision of communications resources, e.g. institutional email account, phone, physical space for communications</p> <p>Meeting records, pay records as evidence of payment for meeting attendance</p>
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³ *That is, *not* student emails.

Principle Three: Sustainability

The nature of casual employment means there are limits on the level to which the University can plan for, provide for and develop sessional staff as individuals. However, the University recognises that long-term sustainability of quality learning and teaching requires retaining good quality sessional staff, reducing turnover of sessional staff, and encouraging them in the pursuit and development of academic teaching careers. This can be achieved in part by recognising and rewarding sessional staff for the contribution they make to the university.

The University also recognises that sustainability in the achievement of standards depends on the provision of appropriate resources to underpin processes, and the minimisation of the administrative load on all staff (including academic, administrative staff, and Human Resources).

Principle 3: Sustainability - Criteria	Standards			Suggested sources of evidence
	Good Practice	Minimum Standard	Unsustainable	
3.1 Institution level criteria				
3.1a Teaching excellence by sessional staff is recognised and rewarded.	Sessional staff are encouraged to apply for University teaching awards. Special categories of awards exist for sessional staff.	Sessional staff are able to apply for University teaching awards. Sessional staff are given guidance on how to document teaching experience.	Teaching excellence by sessional staff is not recognised or rewarded.	Awards Certification of teaching experience by University

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<p>3.1b Sessional staff interests are considered and incorporated into appropriate decision-making processes.</p>	<p>The institution actively seeks input and incorporates feedback from sessional staff in decision-making processes.</p> <p>Sessional staff are represented on university committees and bodies e.g. L&T committee, Senate, Staff Consultative group; and the institution provides resources to support this.</p> <p>There are dedicated centralised resources for supporting sessional staff.</p>	<p>Sessional staff are recognised as a specific and identifiable cohort of staff with particular needs.</p> <p>Policy and practice takes account of the needs of sessional staff.</p> <p>Sessional staff feedback is considered in the development of university policy and practice.</p> <p>Sessional staff are provided with opportunities for representation on University Committees, Projects and Initiatives.</p>	<p>University makes no special provision for sessional staff.</p> <p>No dedicated resources are provided for sessional staff.</p>	<p>Meeting minutes</p> <p>Membership lists</p> <p>Feedback channels</p> <p>Policy documents</p> <p>Budget allowance for sessional staff to participate in process</p> <p>Multi sources of information in a range of formats – hardcopy, online</p> <p>Web page dedicated to sessional staff</p>
<p>3.1c The University collects and maintains comprehensive and accurate data on its sessional staff.</p>	<p>Information on sessional staff is centrally located.</p> <p>The institution maintains an accessible database that is regularly updated and used to improve the overall experience for sessional staff.</p>	<p>University maintains a central data depository on sessional staff.</p>	<p>There is no integration of data on sessional staff.</p> <p>There is no access to data on sessional staff.</p>	<p>Data and database that is accessible and centrally located.</p>
<p>3.1d Administrative and human resource processes for sessional staff are streamlined, clear, and transparent.</p>	<p>Administrative processes are streamlined, automated, accessible and integrated across the University, reducing administrative load at all levels.</p> <p>Integration of systems across IT, Finance, Human Resources, Library.</p>	<p>Clear administrative processes are in place around sessional staff.</p>	<p>Processes around sessional staff are ad hoc, reactive and unintegrated.</p>	<p>Streamlined processes and procedures</p>

3.2 Faculty level criteria	Good Practice	Minimum Standard	Unsustainable	Evidence
3.2a Sessional staff are included in academic communities of practice.	<p>Sessional staff are invited to and attend academic seminars and other events.</p> <p>Sessional staff are encouraged to contribute to faculty events.</p> <p>Sessional staff participate in research on learning and teaching.</p>	<p>Sessional staff are invited to attend seminars and other academic events.</p>	<p>Sessional staff are not included in academic activities and events.</p>	<p>Email list</p> <p>Advertisements of upcoming learning and teaching events</p> <p>Faculty website</p>
3.2b Succession planning is in place at a Faculty level.	<p>Faculties engage in proactive long-term planning for recruitment, retention and professional development of sessional staff.</p>	<p>Faculties engage in proactive short-term planning for recruitment and retention of good sessional staff.</p>	<p>Faculties have no plans in place or ad hoc approach to recruitment and retention of good sessional staff.</p>	<p>Faculty level plans documented and implemented</p>
3.3 Department level criteria	Good Practice	Minimum Standard	Unsustainable	Evidence
3.3a Sessional staff are appointed in a timely manner.	<p>The timeframe for appointment by the department allow substantial time for preparation, professional development, and mentoring of staff.</p>	<p>The timeframe for appointment by the department allow sessional staff adequate time to sufficiently prepare for their role.</p>	<p>The timeframe for appointment is inadequate for sufficient preparation of sessional staff for their role, with the risk of cancellation of units of study.</p>	<p>Records of dates of appointment and recruitment processes</p> <p>Continuation of unit of study</p>

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<p>3.3b Departments systematically review their reliance on sessional staff as a risk management measure.</p>	<p>After each unit offering, departments conduct staffing reviews that inform workforce planning.</p> <p>Sufficient staff are appointed to meet or exceed national benchmarks in order to maximise learning opportunities of students.</p>	<p>Adequate student/staff ratios are benchmarked to discipline specific averages.</p>	<p>Insufficient staff are appointed, resulting in higher student/staff ratio.</p> <p>No reviews are undertaken.</p>	<p>Student / staff ratios</p> <p>Workforce plans</p>
<p>3.3c Good sessional teachers are identified and retained</p>	<p>There are systematic processes in place to identify good sessional teaching.</p> <p>Sessional staff who provide good quality teaching are offered longer-term contracts and/or employment over a sustained period of time.</p>	<p>There are some processes in place to identify good sessional teachers.</p> <p>Some sessional staff who provide good quality teaching are offered longer-term contracts and/or employment over a sustained period of time.</p>	<p>There are no processes in place to identify good sessional teachers.</p> <p>There is no opportunity for sessional staff to be re-employed in any systematic way</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>Some sessional staff are offered the opportunity to be re-employed at the end of their contracts.</p>	<p>Long-term sessional staff statistics</p> <p>Length of experience at institution</p> <p>Attrition rates of sessional staff</p>
<p>3.4 Individual level criteria</p>	<p>Good Practice</p>	<p>Minimum Standard</p>	<p>Unsustainable</p>	<p>Evidence</p>
<p>3.4a As a sessional staff member I am provided with the opportunity to provide feedback to my departments/ unit convenor/ subject coordinator.</p>	<p>As a sessional staff member I am provided with the opportunity to provide feedback on all aspects of my teaching experience, including teaching, texts, resources, learning activities and communication.</p>	<p>As a sessional teacher I provide feedback on some aspects of my teaching experience.</p>	<p>I do not provide any feedback as a sessional teacher to my department.</p>	<p>Feedback processes at all levels</p> <p>Reports are written for unit/subject convenors/ coordinators</p>