A holistic, institution-wide approach to building sessional staff capacity

Professor Jillian Hamilton
Academic Development

QUT
Red report:

“the hidden part of the massification of higher education”

“the proletariat of the academic profession…the Victorian domestic servant… making possible the lifestyle of the traditional teaching research academic.”

NTEU:

Casualisation is the the dirty little secret of university expansion over the past decade [a result of Underfunding]
• Scale: **70,000 sector wide (QUT 2,500)**

• Varied contexts (faculties with different cultures, process, and learning and teaching approaches).

• High turnover.

• Changing sector-wide and discipline contexts.

A ‘wicked problem’ ie: difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete knowledge, complexities, and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognize.
Who are sessionals & what do they bring?

Contribution to student learning > 50%

- Industry professionals: *Real world learning*
- Postgraduate students: *Current discipline knowledge*
- Our wonder students: *Empathetic insider know-how*

QUT has always taken a positive view of Real World contribution, and long history of central sessional academic training.
A proposition

Given that sessional academics make a vital contribution to academic life and to student learning engagement, if we are to enable the best possible learning environment for students, it is incumbent upon us to enhance the learning and teaching capabilities of sessional staff; to support and recognise them; and assist them to realise their full potential.
New discourses of possibility

Exemplars of good practice;

Tackling wicked problems ie:

**design** Institutionally supported, strategic approaches that are distributed, multifaceted and enabling.
Positive change is possible

5 yearly Sessional staff climate survey (QUT)

16 measures showed improvement and two remained the same. The average improvement was 10 per cent, some 20%.

**Engagement was 85%**

(higher than contracted staff)

Even more favourable were:

- Access to information resources
- I am proud to tell people that I work for QUT
- My colleagues give help and support
“Thirty years ago my brother was trying to get a report on birds written that he’d had three months to write, which was due the next day. ... he was at the kitchen table close to tears, surrounded by paper, pencils and unopened books on birds, immobilized by the hugeness of the task ahead.

Then my father sat down beside him, put his arm around my brother’s shoulder, and said, “Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird.”

Anne Lamott, Bird by Bird, 1995
What do sessional academics want?

(Contexual Review QUT Teaching Fellowship, 2005)

- To do a good job
- Support when they need it
- A sense of belonging
- Be recognised for doing a good job.
Cohering principles

• Strength based (salutogenesis)
• Incremental: Bird by bird
• Multifaceted
• Collaborative
• Distributed leadership
• Just do it!
Foundation: 3 pillars of student success

Timely access to support

Sense of belonging

Curriculum engages students in learning

Curriculum design
Transition pedagogy

Orientation

Early intervention

Support for Learning
Life, financial, admin support.

Peer programs

Student life: campus, cohort & leadership building

Enabled through Academic-Professional Partnerships

Tinto, Nelson, Kift
3 pillars of academic success

- Sense of belonging
- Professional learning engagement
- Timely access to support

So what might this look like? Bird by bird
1. The basics: in collaboration

LTU, HR, Chancellery, Faculties

- Pay and process
- Communication
- Resources
- Feedback
- Recognition
2. Professional learning engagement

Sequenced, scaffolded centrally offered workshops

1. Intro to Learning and Teaching
2. Strategies for Student Success
3. Assessment, Marking and Feedback
4. Strategies for Academic Success
5. Effective Communication

Like our teaching, it involves active learning, is experiential, and is ‘real-world’ focused
3. Professional learning engagement: applied

**ENGAGING STUDENTS IN LEARNING**

How would you rate these strategies? Respond on a scale of 1-10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Engage</th>
<th>Learn</th>
<th>Connect</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Didactic delivery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual reflection, voicing tacit knowledge, collective thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group brainstorm, to develop position, principles etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group presentation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole group reflection on learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry tree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback – stop start go</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate in teams on concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Opportunities to advance

- Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice
- Sessional Career Advancement Development
- Sessional Academic Success Advisors
5. Sessional Academic Success

Rational: while central Academic Development is:

Well Attended \( AD = 840 \) (PA)

Well received Evaluations:
Program average = 4.7/5
Teaching average = 4.9/5
Satisfaction > 99%

It is ....
Generic, remote to school-based context, and in advance of the teaching moment
Centrally co-ordinated, faculty based:

• Creative Industries
• Science and Engineering
• Law
• Business and
• Health.

To help promote

• confidence,
• competence,
• support
• and a sense of belonging
amongst sessional staff at a local level
Provides:

contextual, on the ground, just in time: support, training, advice and community building by experienced sessionals to help ensure the academic success of peers.
Faculty Sessional staff

LTU (Me)

Local coordinator

SASA

Admin

Unit Coord

Distributed leadership

Faculty Sessional staff
Faculty Sessional staff
Training:
Policy and procedure, advising
Project Design: and initiation

Support:
Central and local

Anti-hierarchica:
Driven by the SASAs.

“There was a solid guidance structure in place at the beginning of the program that required us to be quite specific with our goals, and I think that was enough. It was then great that we were trusted to follow through with that.”
Sense of Community

Are you provided with opportunities to connect with other sessional and full-time staff?
Response average: 2.7 (1 = few opportunities, 5 = many opportunities)

MECA SASA

To help us, help you, let us know your challenges and aspirations as a Sessional Academic?

I don't understand the current pay system. I no longer have to put in my own paysheets but I now can't really tell how many hours I have been paid for, if I have been allocated all my hours or when I will stop being paid.

Knowing whether you're doing a good job and will be invited to tutor again; knowing how to tutor (due to the fact we rarely meet with other tutors).

I provide feedback to my students, but I receive little myself. Am I doing ok? I don't know

I share my teaching experiences.
I understand your dilemma re the talking in class and it's a common one - because like yourself - I don't want to come across as schoolma'am -ish, as it tends to stifle the flow and the discussion.

If your students have been brave to comment to you that it's frustrating when others are chatting, and are wanting to learn, we especially owe it to them to advocate for them.

Some strategies I have used:
If someone is chatting, I stop the class and sit and wait and look at the perpetrators, waiting for them...
The role of this SA is complex and challenging, especially where most of us are experienced practitioners and not formally trained teachers.

- Generic QUT resources are available at MOPP
  http://www.mopp.gu.edu.au/88595_R4_Region

- Staff Development and Training opportunities available
  http://www.italiaeducation.gu.edu.au

- There are many QUT resources available at FAQ
  http://www.italiaeducation.gu.edu.au

Parking Tips
City Parking is always a headache.
Get in early before 8 am. Two reliable parks are the tennis court off Herston Road below P block and F block student car park. Both are pay n display so save your coins.

Responses from the Editor
For those with pay enquiries, first discuss your contracts with unit co-ordinators who sign and forward them to the head of school. They then go on to our finance officer. This process does take time. If you have any concerns you can contact our SON Finance Officer on 31833911
marcela.charles@qut.edu.au

Events
Coffee and chat time? Drop into Beadles opposite the library 9.30am Thursday 17/10/13
Cheers
Deborah

"Activities: Local communication"
Activities: local academic training

You give me a deeper, richer understanding of my profession

I see you will be my future boss

You give me renewed excitement for Design

I love your youthful energy

Are you spending too much time in the kitchen?

Check the "Live Better Electrically" scale and see

So much of your life is spent in the kitchen! It's simply good sense to keep your kitchen up to modern living with an electric range. Food will taste better and you'll have so much more time—and peace!—to enjoy the benefits of modern, electric cooking. If you're missing too many meals, maybe it's time to change to an electric range—and to start living Better Electrically with all the other cooking aids available. See your electric utility or appliance dealer.

5) How do you gain swipe access to a room?

a) Bang on the door until someone lets you in
b) Ask security
c) Request access through QUT Virtual
d) Ask your Unit Coordinator
e) Ask your Faculty Administrative Assistant
SHOWCASING MECA SESSIONAL TEACHING EXCELLENCE

To celebrate and recognize excellence in teaching, the Sessional Academic Success program and the School of MECA invite Sessional Academics to showcase innovative & effective teaching practices.

Excellence may encompass many things:
- Innovation within your teaching context
- Ways of engaging students in learning
- Effective approaches to communication
- Inspiration of your peers.

The showcases will take the form of 3 minute 'Pecha Kucha' style Powerpoint presentations.

SUBMISSIONS CLOSE FRIDAY 18 OCTOBER 2013.

To access the online submission form or for further information email: meca.sasa@qut.edu.au

QUT’s School of Design Sessional staff present a SESSIONAL SHOWCASE of their professional work

22-24 October 2013
D107 QUT GP
Opening event: 6-8pm, 21 Oct
Family, friends, staff and students are all welcome

Image by Nigel Gough
http://www.nigelgough.com
Nigel tutors in Architecture and Industrial Design
6. Training unit coordinators

SASAs
GCAP – ECARD
Resources and presentations eg:

“Tutor Loyalty: Why? How?”

• If you are doing something new take them with you

• when can they expect to receive things – notes, etc

• Can they contribute?

• For new tutors: show exemplars of student work

• Seek expressions of interest early
6. Training unit coordinators

**Year 1**
- **new researcher**
- **new tutor**
- **PASS tutor**
- help students in earlier years

**Year 2**
- **new researcher**
- **experienced tutor**
- become a mentor
- repeat and consolidate
- present a lecture

**Year 3**
- **published researcher**
- exhibition design outcome publication
- **advanced tutor/lecturer**
- head tutor
- lecturer
- subject coordinator
- award nominee

**Pre-PhD**
- **PASS tutor**
- attended training
- mentored

- **ECARD academic**
Holistic collaborative distributed: impact

Substantial Increase in sessional staff:
- Engagement
- Agency
- Support
- Feeling valued

5 Vice Chancellor’s Awards for SASAs
Ripple effect- many more outcomes than planned (matched by faculties)
More birds to come....

jg.hamilton@qut.edu.au
McCulloch, G., 2013 Casualisation “the dirty little secret of university expansion”, union to tell public parliamentary hearings into insecure employment bill.