**Professional learning and development framework TEACHING AND RESEARCH**

**Alignment to Securing Success**

Goal [No. 1]: To be a distinctly student-centred university

Goal 6: To secure success with a dynamic, innovative and respectful culture.

Sub-objective 6.4: Develop staff capabilities in key impact areas of the University’s strategic plan.

Sub-objective 6.6: Equip and train staff in the use of emerging technologies which encourage innovation and efficiency.

**Purpose:** In January 2017 the University Executive Committee endorsed the principles that inform the University’s approach to professional learning development for **university staff as teachers and researchers**, and the framework of professional learning opportunities framework to be made available to members of the University community.

**SUMMARY:** As noted in the presentation to Executive in October 2016, The Learning Futures Portfolio, Research Portfolio, and Talent and Leadership Development team are currently planning new professional learning and development opportunities for teachers and researchers to (i) ensure the University is compliant with the Higher Education Standards which came into effect on 1 January 2017, (ii) support the University’s Transforming Western Sydney University initiatives, (iii) ensure the University is equipped with an academic and professional workforce with the capabilities to excel in teaching and research in our new environment, and (iv) improve retention and career progression of our staff who are eager for meaningful professional development opportunities. This integrated strategy is cognisant of the fact that the forthcoming Enterprise Bargaining negotiations may have a bearing on elements of the strategy.

**Background:**  The development of new teaching and research professional development offerings is timely given current and previous professional development offerings for university academic staff have had (i) poor uptake (approximately 10% of new academic staff engage in formal teaching development activities), (ii) limited impact in improving aspects of research (e.g. industry engagement), particularly measures of teaching quality (static performance on QILT benchmarks), and are based on unsustainable and out-dated models of practice (face to face formal instruction; workshops with low attendance).

New professional development offerings for university staff are required that are effective, comprehensive and sustainable at scale. A range of offerings that engage all relevant staff, not just the small number of enthusiasts, that lead to real improvements in the quality of research and teaching activities, and enhance students’ learning outcomes and experiences are required. In the same way that relevance and authenticity are important in our students’ learning, the best learning about teaching and research is grounded in actual practice; we learn best by doing (and developing practical skills), and thinking about what we are doing (developing more complex ways of thinking about learning and research) supported by mentors and colleagues.

This paper sets out the key principles and framework, which will be used to plan, implement and evaluate the future provision of professional learning and development in teaching and research (including HDR Supervision) for staff at Western Sydney University. The proposed approach to professional development encompasses both academic staff and those professional staff who have teaching and research roles, recognising that university teaching and research are no longer the exclusive domain of academics. It is intended to be inclusive of all forms of employment casual, sessional, contract, continuing and honorary. While the approach focuses on staff, it recognises that some of our staff might also be students in HDR and coursework programs.

**A: Principles**

1. The University offers professional learning and development opportunities for staff in alignment with the University’s strategic plan, to support the teaching and research development needs and aspirations of staff, at all stages of their academic career – from PhD students who are sessional staff to the Professoriate.
2. Professional learning is a collaborative, mutually accountable undertaking between the University and staff, and between the Portfolios and Schools and Institutes.
3. The provision of professional learning anticipates and responds to the likely education and development needs of staff in different roles and at different stages in their career. (See section B)
4. The provision of professional learning employs and models contemporary research and education practices (technologies, curricula and pedagogies). (See section B)
5. The provision of professional learning is designed cognisant of the resource capacity of staff, and the institution. (See section B)
6. Professional learning provision is designed to support the development of integrated academic practice consistent with the University’s vision of research-led, student-centred academic practice. (See section C)
7. Professional learning is supported by, and articulates with, appropriate University systems for individual and organisational recognition and reward (including promotion and quality assurance systems). (See section C)
8. It is an expectation that all staff engage in professional learning related to their academic practice. (See section C)
9. It is an expectation that our more experienced and senior staff (particularly the Professoriate) will contribute expertise to support the professional learning and development of their colleagues, whilst being cognisant of their existing commitments.

**B: Design Features**

1. The University will offer a flexible responsive framework of teaching and research professional learning opportunities in three broad forms:
2. Work and project-based learning (supporting the staff members’ research, curriculum design, delivery and renewal work /secondments / community engagement / scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) inquiry projects / 21C curriculum transformationprojects /Research Themes / RDIs)
3. Formal training (courses / self-study modules / workshops / seminars)
4. Learning communities (networks / mentoring / social or peer learning groups)
5. Re-useable, high-quality, web-based resources centrally accessible to Schools and Institutes and individuals support all professional learning offerings.
6. While project-based learning and learning networks are by definition ‘participant-led’, all three strategies including formal training are ‘participant-centred’, being responsive to the established and emerging development needs of staff and the research and teaching contexts they work in.
7. Within, and across the professional learning offerings, staff will be able to choose a personally appropriate level of engagement. (They can ‘dip-in’ to popular components of programs, choose ‘just-in-time’ activities, or choose more prolonged engagement through communities of practice, to achieve different outcomes.) Staff will be able to track their own progress and activity on the learning portal.
8. A staff member at any career stage can access a blend of these opportunities.
9. More experienced staff, and occasional external guests including invited industry representatives, will participate as mentors and lead and share their expertise through these programs.
10. There is an articulation between different offerings, with common and suggested ‘progressions’ that staff might choose to follow and which are suggested to staff as they complete activities (as in Amazon; *readers who enjoyed this book also bought…*)
11. The professional learning opportunities offered are accessible (personalised and searchable) based on a staff member’s agreed career development plan and interests.
12. The University documents and reports engagement in professional learning for staff and organisational units.

**C: Institutional System Enablers**

Professional learning and development is only one element of an effective institutional strategy to develop our workforce (see discussion paper Appendix B). To be effective, professional development for teaching and research staff must be aligned with, and supported by, other elements of the institutional system. The University will:

1. Explicitly ensure appropriate teaching and research capabilities in new staff appointments through the recruitment and selection policies and processes. (i.e. selection criteria and appointment standards);
2. Ensure completion of appropriate entry-level professional development activities (e.g. currently FULT for new academic teaching staff) through the appointment and probation process, or through demonstration of competence or recognition of prior learning;
3. Recognise and encourage productive engagement in professional learning about teaching and research policy and processes through its performance planning and review policies and processes;
4. Explicitly value staff members’ contributions to research, teaching and the professional development of colleagues curriculum through awards and promotions;
5. Ensure there are coherent standards and expectations about research, teaching and learning in policy, processes, practice; and in professional learning opportunities, across the institution;
6. Appropriately support staff members’ participation in relevant professional learning and development about teaching and research;
7. Provide reliable institutional data as a source of evidence for researchers, teachers and managers to support high-quality, evidence-based practice and professional learning in research, teaching and curriculum design (e.g. learning and research analytics data); and
8. Regularly monitor, review and renew the professional learning provided for teaching and research staff.

**D: Framework of professional learning opportunities**

Based on these principles (A) a suite of professional development offerings will be developed utilising the design features (B) of work-based learning, formal training programs, and learning networks to develop research and teaching capabilities. Appropriate institutional systems and enablers (C) will be developed to support this suite of offerings. Table 1 provides illustrative examples of some the professional development offerings that will be developed as part of this suite. These are illustrative examples only.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Teaching | | | | | **Career stage** | Research | | | |
| Examples of Institutional enablers | Examples of Learning networks | Examples of Formal training | | Examples of Work-based learning |  | Examples of Work-based learning | Examples of Formal training | Examples of Learning networks | Examples of Institutional enablers |
| e.g. Agreed standards for sessional staff training recruitment etc | Program/discipline-based peer support networks, e.g. for tutors or online facilitators. | Facilitated online experiential learning module *Teaching online*.  Practice Guides. | | Induction in unit teams, supervision and mentoring by UC and DAPs | Casual and aspiring academics *[sessional staff]* | Grant development mentoring | Epigeum, Vitae, Research workshops  HDR Supervision modules | ECR network | Grant Development Support Strategy (GDSS) including executive summaries and track records  Internal Grants  Data Management |
| e.g. Appointment and Probation requirement.  Workload. Career Planning & Development. Recognition Teaching awards Academy etc. | Teaching Scholar Networks (Sustainability scholars;  STARS coordinators; #EdTech network; Yammer groups.  Professoriate, DAP and Teaching Scholar- led sharing of best practice  Peer Mentoring  Designing for Learning Showcase | New *Foundations of Academic Practice* program: mandatory, one semester, teaching & research development projects with online skills modules (e.g. teaching online, QM rubric based course design, assessment & feedback) and supported by School-based ‘hub & spoke’ teams (CAs, CQOs, BLADES) | | | Early-career academic *[new academic appointments]* | Attendance at Industry conferences and forums to build networks and uncover trends, opportunities and challenges | *Foundations of Academic Practice* to include both T&R | Industry networks and mentoring/guest seminars | Mandatory induction seminar on pitch writing  Editorial support for science communication |
| e.g. Learning Analytics to support projects.  Promotion guidelines. Career Planning & Development | Advanced skills seminars (visiting /local experts) on curriculum topics. Seminars and capstone Grad Cert in HE | Expert mentoring & peer support for curriculum TWSU projects (e.g. WIL, OES) as prioritised by Schools, Fellowships | | Mid-career academic *[continuing professional development and skills updates]* | CSIRO ONInnovation program | Research Professional advanced search profile workshops | Writing Track records with influence  Research Programme development and training | Workload allocations  Matched Funding  External Reviews method/approach ( as part of GDSS) |
| e.g. DAP DD position descriptions & induction; Professoriate mentoring expectations | DAP forums  Deputy Deans group | Leadership development.  Advanced specialist briefings, e.g. on TEQSA audit, accreditation) | Guidelines for leadership roles, including Professoriate, ACAs, DAPs, mentoring junior colleagues. | | Academic leaders *[Professoriate responsibilities and T&R leadership roles]* | Direct to corporate partnering and grants website briefings (eg. AstraZeneca, GSK, Novartis) | Science Communication training for all career stages | Skills recognition training for research development and mentoring | Central facilities  Legal Seminars on contracts eg dtat, embargos, publishing, IP  Research Director roles |

**Evaluation**

An increased focus on evidence-based learning programs is sought in order to inform future planning and investment. The intent is to develop and implement active evaluation of the impact of each initiative. Four levels of evaluation that use both qualitative and quantitative indicators will form the foundation for assessing and adapting program efficacy. Data will be derived from both the institution and learners perspectives as detailed below.

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| **Level of Evaluation** | **Description** | **Exemplar** |
| 1. **Experience / Participation** | User engagement and experience. In parallel, it will provide a conduit for user-centred learning design through feedback loops | Eg. Surveys following participation including opportunities for feedback, , analytics tracking PD engagement across career stages |
| 1. **Behaviour / Learning** | Change in participant behaviour, conceptual change and new learning following participation. | Eg. (Depending on nature of learning) Participant and Manager ‘before/after’ surveys, multiple choice test for knowledge retention, recording of process interaction changes such as evidence of participants making earlier submissions |
| 1. **Outcomes** | Examining whether learning is leading to improved teaching or research outcomes; changes to institutional culture | Eg. Reports derived from cross referencing our data to reveal instances of learning interventions against grant success |
| 1. **Bottom line** | Measuring the increase in value of outcomes. (e.g. number of successful grant applications of learners. Load / reputation impact of implementing new curriculum.) | Eg. Production of report analytics from our finance, curriculum & load mapping, QILT data etc. and other portals by area to determine financial and/or increased volume outcomes |

**Recommendation:** Executive endorses the proposed principles and approach to designing new professional development offerings for university teachers and researchers.

**Appendix A – Discussion Paper on ‘The Future Academic Professional’**

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