



Leading quality learning and teaching with sessional staff & BLASST: Scaling up

Associate Professor Marina Harvey

**9th August, 2017 ACDICT Annual Council Meeting
The University of Melbourne**



blasst

Benchmarking leadership and advancement
of standards for sessional teaching

Sess-ion-al Staff /sessional stæf/ noun.

Any teachers in higher education employed on a casual, short-term contract, or sessional basis. This may include lecturers, tutors, unit, program and subject convenors, demonstrators, and markers (BLASST.edu.au)

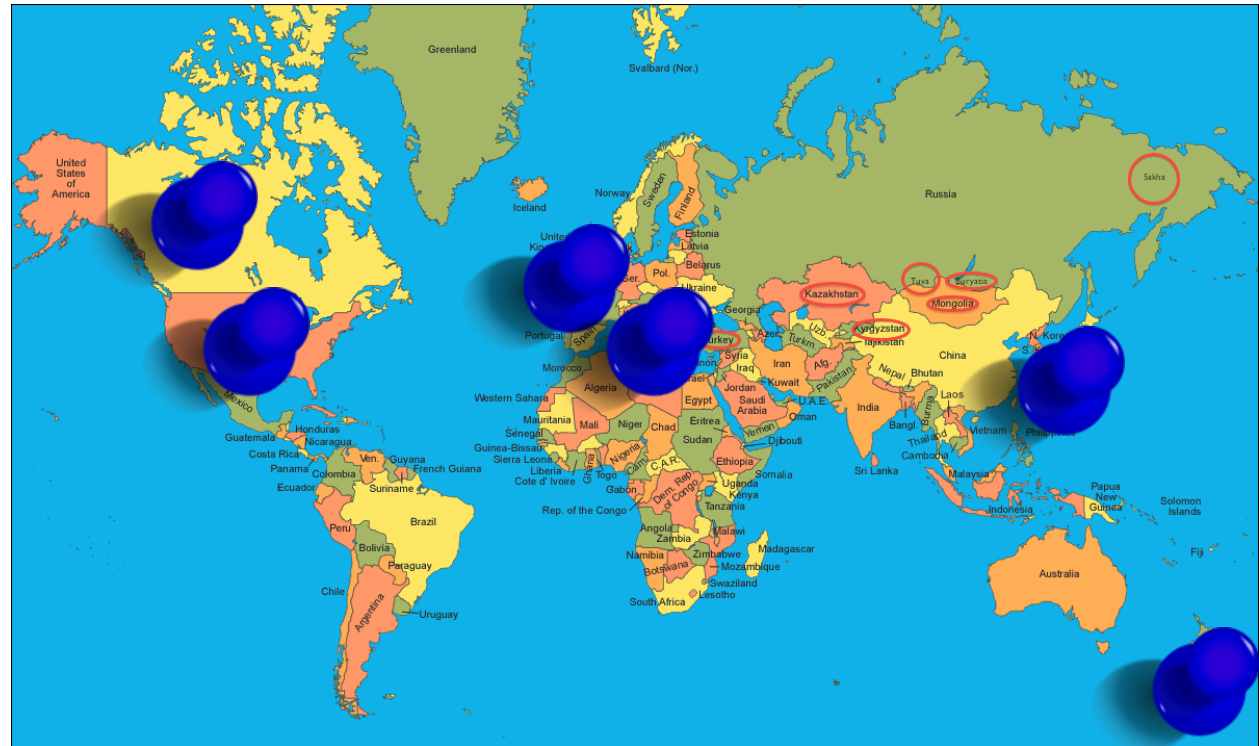


The majority of teaching in Australian universities is now provided by sessional staff (May et al. 2013)

Relying on FTE calculations, sessional staff have grown by 81%
(Larkins, 2011)

The sessional staff workforce has already been scaled up

A global trend



Numbers are increasing in New Zealand (Gilbert, 2013) and across the EU (Sursock, 2015).

“Atypical contracts” are growing across the United Kingdom (Bryson, 2013).

Increased reliance also found for the United States (Dolinsky, 2013) Canada, France, Germany and Japan (Bryson, 2013).

And the prediction is...

...that this reliance will continue
and even increase
(Jaschik & Lederman, 2015).



The majority (56 percent) of Chief Academic Officers across American institutions “agree or strongly agree that future generations of faculty in the United States should not expect tenure to be a factor in their employment at higher education institutions. Just 6 percent strongly disagree with this statement” (p.11).

One implication

The “significant reliance on academic staff employed under casual work contracts” (2012, p. 25) has been identified as a risk indicator by the Tertiary Education Quality Standard Agency (TEQSA).





**How well do
you know
your
sessional
staff?**

Can you pick the sessional staff?

1



2



3



4



5



6



<http://futurestudents.unimelb.edu.au/info/international/in-australia/> / <http://www.uow.edu.au/future/index.html>

http://sydney.edu.au/china_studies_centre/en/business-forum/2013-speakers-panel-1.shtml

http://www.jcu.edu.au/mtb/staff/adjunct/JCUDEV_014141.html /

http://www.whitlam.org/news_and_events/triple_j_40_years_broadcasting_for_the_young_men_and_women_of_australia

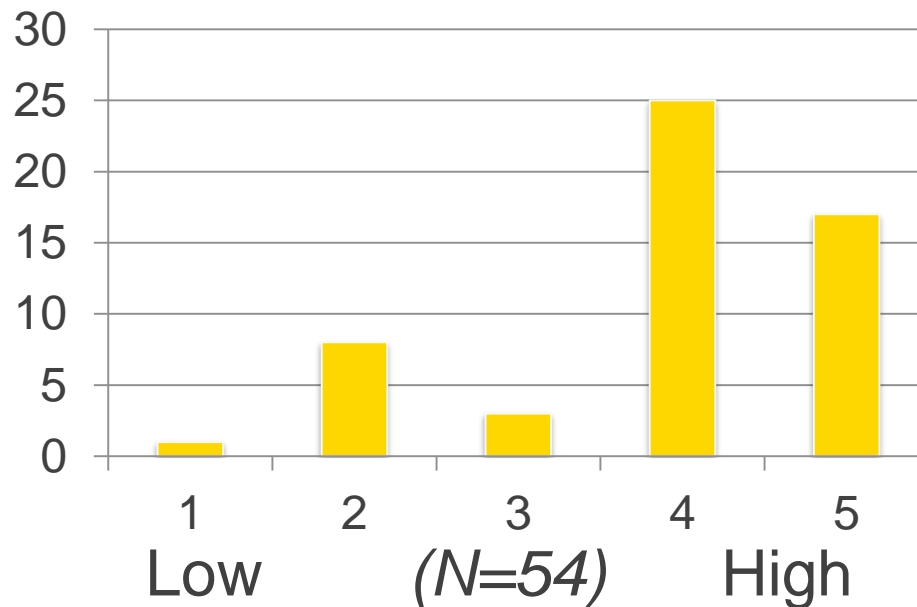
<http://www.kipmcgrath.com.au/Australia/Karratha.aspx?contextid=634484888381112500>



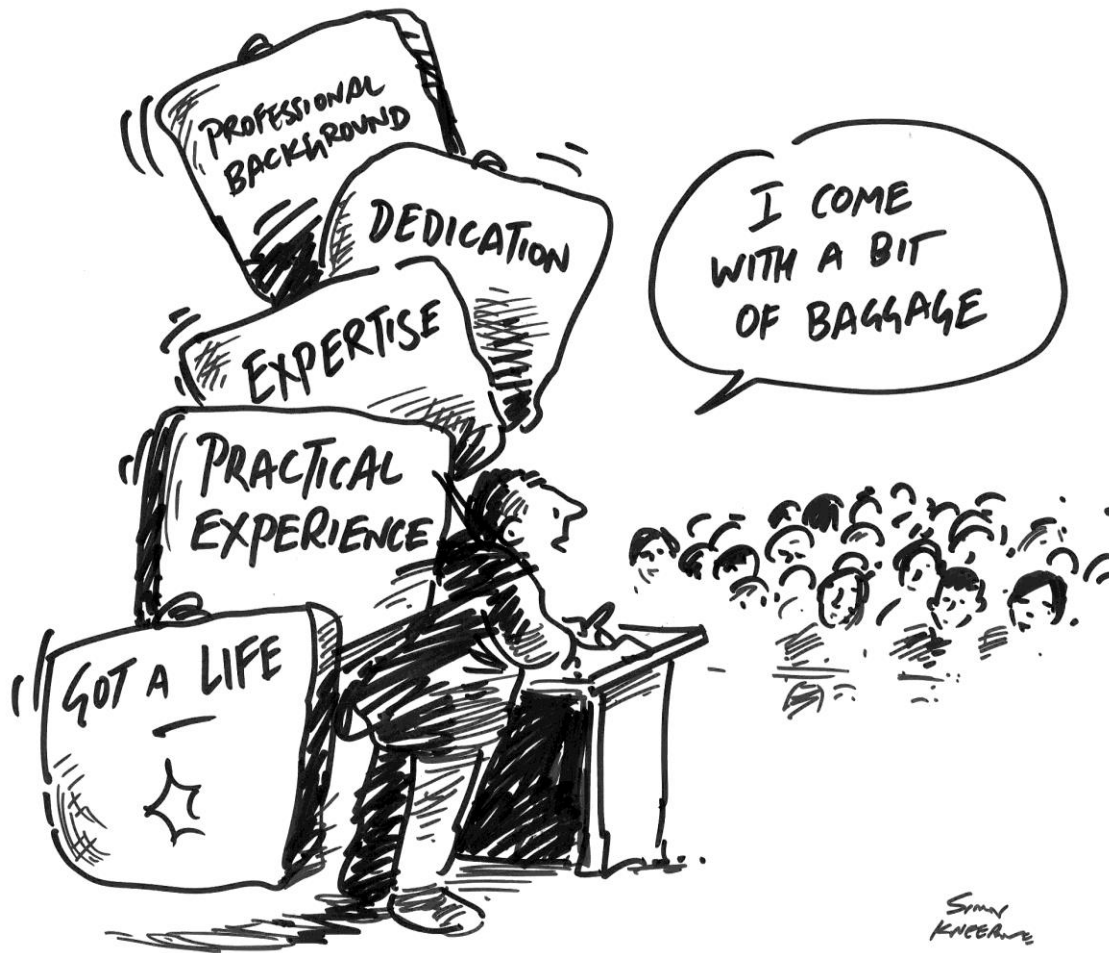
UNSW
SYDNEY

We think we know sessional staff...

Majority of BLASST fora participants perceive themselves as having a high awareness of sessional staff issues



When quizzed about sessional staff in Australian higher education (on a 9 item quiz, n=97) these participants achieved an average score of 27%





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of standards for sessional teaching



**The evidenced-based national standards
have been developed over 10 years of
research**

Our approach to BLASST is underpinned by three key conceptual theories:

1. Reflective practice

2. Distributed leadership

3. Participatory Action Research

Introducing the Sessional Staff Standards Framework

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.

blasst.edu.au

TEQSA have endorsed the BLASST national standards

The standards and criteria are categorised by **3 principles** that underpin the framework

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

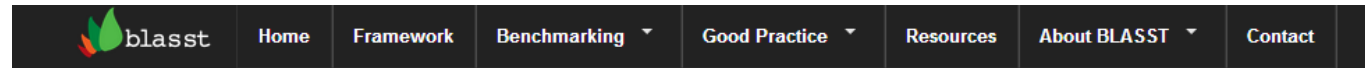


Benchmarking leadership and advancement
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BLASST provides a “positive approach” (Brown, 2015, p.189) in:

- Systematising good practice
through its educative & benchmarking functions
- Rewarding good practice
through internal & external recognition/awards
- Leading good practice
nationally & increasingly internationally

Criteria and their standards are available for 4 institutional levels



BLASST Benchmarking Interactive Tool

Also known as B-BIT

Benchmarking

Visit the [Benchmarking page](#) for more information or use direct links below.

Individual Level

Department Level

Faculty Level

Institution Level

- individual,
- department,
- faculty, or
- organisational level

The B-BIT (BLASST-Benchmarking interactive tool) online interactive tool provides an easy and efficient benchmarking process as the activity can be undertaken within one day (less for one level)



The Sessional Staff Standards Framework
Benchmarking Interactive

Faculty level

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, professional, and Human Resources staff).

Please answer the two questions in this section

3.2a

Sessional Staff are included in academic communities of practice

i. Sessional Staff are invited to and attend academic seminars and other events. Sessional Staff are encouraged to contribute to faculty events. Sessional Staff participate in research on learning and teaching.

ii. Sessional Staff are invited to attend seminars and other academic events.

iii. Sessional Staff are not included in academic activities and events.



Use the drop down menu below to select the statement which best applies to your F

iii. Sessional Staff are not included in academic activities and events.

Please provide reasons for your answer:

bbb



The B-BIT online interactive tool facilitates self-assessment or internal and external evaluation processes

*Are you attaining
Good
Minimum or
Unsustainable
standards of
practice?*

The screenshot shows the Blasst online interactive tool interface. At the top left is the Blasst logo, which consists of three stylized leaves in green, yellow, and red, followed by the text "blasst" and "Benchmarking leadership and advancement of standards for sessional teaching". To the right of the logo is an orange box containing the text "The Sessional Staff Standards Framework Benchmarking Interactive Faculty level". Below this is a header bar with the text "Principle Three: Sustainability". The main content area contains two paragraphs of text. The first paragraph discusses the nature of casual employment and the University's recognition of the long-term sustainability of quality learning and teaching. The second paragraph discusses the University's recognition of sustainability in the achievement of standards. Below the text is an orange bar with the text "Please answer the two questions in this section". The first question is "3.2a Sessional Staff are included in academic communities of practice". Below the question are three options: "i. Sessional Staff are invited to and attend academic seminars and other events. Sessional Staff are encouraged to contribute to faculty events. Sessional Staff participate in research on learning and teaching.", "ii. Sessional Staff are invited to attend seminars and other academic events.", and "iii. Sessional Staff are not included in academic activities and events." Below the options is a question mark icon and the text "Use the drop down menu below to select the statement which best applies to your F". Below this is a dashed orange box containing the text "iii. Sessional Staff are not included in academic activities and events." Below the box is the text "Please provide reasons for your answer:" and another dashed orange box containing the text "bbb".

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The Sessional Staff Standards
Framework
Benchmarking Interactive
Faculty level

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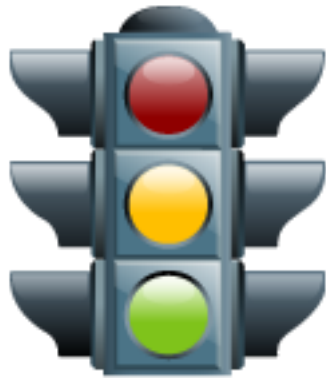
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iii. Sessional Staff are not included in academic activities and events.

Please provide reasons for your answer:

bbb

The B-BIT online interactive tool generates a customised (traffic-light) colour coded report – your evidence or data



Unsustainable

Minimum

Good



Benchmarking Report - Faculty Level		
Completed by:	test academic LTC	Date: 27/03/2012
Principle One: Assuring the Quality of Learning and Teaching		
Question 1.2a	Sessional Staff receive an induction related to Learning and Teaching	
Your Faculty's current level of practice:	Unsustainable	<i>Current practice fails to address the criterion; refers to practices that cannot be sustained in the long-term.</i>
Reason:	iii. Induction is not provided. Induction is not part of Faculties' strategic plans.	
	<i>why should we?</i>	
Evidence:	<i>Have none</i>	
Question 1.2b	Sessional Staff are informed and updated about standards, procedures and policies affecting	
Your Faculty's current level of practice:	Good Practice	<i>Indicates that the criterion is being met or exceeded. Refers to practices that systematically enhance quality learning and teaching for students and retention of quality staff</i>
Reason:	i. Sessional Staff are regularly informed of changes that may impact their work e.g. standards, procedures and policies affecting learning and teaching. Faculty distributes policies with	

Who is leading good practice at your university or faculty?

Individual Level

Department Level

Faculty Level

Institution Level

benchmark this
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Next steps...

International Journal for Academic Development

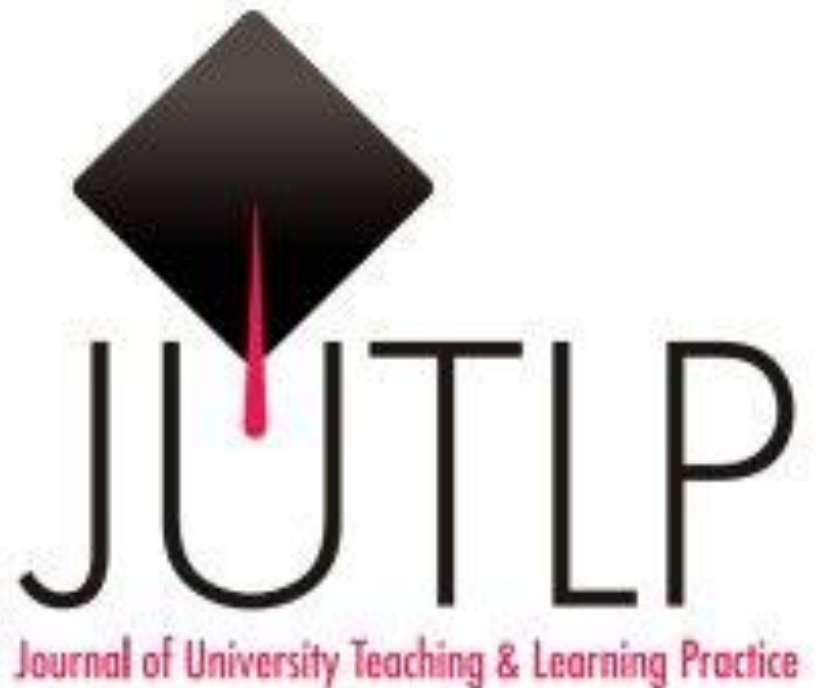
Special Issue (2017)

Quality learning and teaching with sessional/adjunct/casual teachers: Systematising good practice for academic development



Special issue

Volume 10, Issue 3 (2013) Setting the standard:
Quality Learning and Teaching with Sessional Staff.
Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice
<http://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol10/iss3/>





HERDSA Guide

Quality Learning and Teaching
with Sessional Staff

Edited by
Marina Harvey and Vanessa Fredericks



Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia

Available from [HERDSA online](https://www.herdsa.org.au)

Theoretical references

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Harvey, M. (2014). Strengths-based approach. In D. Coghlan. and M. Brydon-Miller (eds), *The SAGE encyclopaedia of action research, Volume 2*, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 732-735.

Harvey, M. (2013) So you think you are doing action research? Indicators of enactment of participatory action research in higher education. *ALARj (Action Learning and Action Research Journal)*, 19 (1), 115-134.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2017.1276661>

<http://emedia.rmit.edu.au/distributedleadership/>

www.distributedleadership.com.au



Associate Professor Marina Harvey, PFHEA
Australian National Learning and Teaching Fellow

marina.harvey@unsw.edu.au

blasstspeak@gmail.com

blasst.edu.au