

UON ACADEMY

DEVELOPING, SUPPORTING AND ENGAGING OUR SESSIONAL ACADEMIC STAFF

2019 HIGHLIGHTS



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

NEWCASTLE.EDU.AU/UONACADEMY

INTRODUCTION



MESSAGE FROM PROFESSOR LIZ BURD
Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

It was great to be involved in some of the initiatives of the UON Academy in 2019 in my Acting role as DVC (Academic). The results of the Your Voice 2019 survey indicates a very committed and engaged sessional academic cohort that contribute significantly to student teaching and learning activities. All sessional academic staff have been provided the opportunity to be involved in the Educator Network (tEN) in 2019 as pivotal members of the network which promotes collaboration, innovation and excellence amongst staff who are engaged in the student experience. In my role as Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) I will continue to engage with sessional academic staff particularly leading the Centre for Teaching and Learning.



MESSAGE FROM TINA CRAWFORD
Co-Champion of the UON Academy
Director, Equity Diversity and Inclusion

The UON Academy continues to be a sector leading initiative of the University of Newcastle, now in its sixth year of operation continuing to develop, support and engage with a critical component of our workforce – our sessional academic staff. The UON Academy operates collaboratively across the University and this year had such a successful collaboration with the Connect 2019 event. Members of HR, Academic Division, Faculties and Schools came together to contribute to enhancing the skills and knowledge of our sessional academic staff. I look forward to working with Professor Mark Hoffman the incoming Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) to offer more teaching and learning support to members of the UON Academy.

YOUR VOICE

In February 2019, we received a great response from the staff engagement survey. This was the second survey dedicated to sessional academic staff. We continue to have a very engaged sessional academic workforce committed to supporting our students. 72% of respondents responded that the best aspect of working at our university was job satisfaction and helping and supporting our students.

The survey results highlighted areas of strength including:

- 97% of respondents are engaged
- 85% of respondents feel they had adequate resources
- 82% of respondents feel like they work as part of a team
- 78% respondents are satisfied with access to technology to assist with teaching
- 73% of respondents would like to be working at UON in two years' time.

Areas where opportunity for improvement was identified include:

- 43% of respondents feel that the process for hiring sessional staff is fair
- 44% of respondents feel that they receive feedback about their performance
- 45% of respondents feel they are valued at our University
- 45% of respondents feel supported to take on professional development opportunities



YOU SAID, WE LISTENED

In 2019, the UON Academy team focused their work on the areas that were highlighted for improvement in the 'Sessional Academic Staff Your Voice Survey' which was conducted in March. Outcomes of this work across the year included:

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As a result of this feedback the UON Academy partnered with the Educator Network (tEN) and Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) to host the inaugural Connect 2019 event on 26 August - a skill-building expo that offered short presentations as well as a number of booths to develop skills and assist sessional staff with tools to enhance their teaching impact. Over 80 sessional academics attended the event.

FEELING VALUED

The Voice survey data indicated that sessional academics usually undertake professional development in their own time.

In response to this feedback, the UON Academy was able to gain sponsorship for two hours paid attendance at the Connect event for this professional development opportunity and the feedback received so far has been really positive in regards to attendees feeling more valued by the University and receiving takeaway teaching skills.

A feedback survey was sent to all attendees and the following results of the survey show that the event was an exceptional achievement in the engagement and development of UON's sessional academic staff cohort:

- 95% of attendees think it would be beneficial to run the expo at least annually in the future
- 87% of attendees would recommend the expo to other sessional staff
- 80% of attendees found out about University Services available to support them in their teaching
- 82% of attendees rated the expo as either "good", "very good" or "excellent"

PRD FOR SESSIONAL ACADEMICS

We have heard that sessional academics don't always receive feedback on their performance. There is a formal PRD system at the University and we have piloted this with sessional academic staff in the School of Nursing and Midwifery. Feedback has suggested the development of a fit for purpose PRD template for Course Co-ordinators to use with sessional academic staff at the end of each semester. The UON Academy will engage with sessional academic staff, Heads of School and Course Coordinators in 2020 to develop this tool. In the meantime, conversations at the end of each semester will still continue with course Co-ordinators and sessional academics to provide feedback on performance, to mentor and discuss possible development opportunities.





THE UON ACADEMY END OF YEAR CELEBRATION

More than 50 staff gathered at NUspace for the annual UON Academy end of year celebration. Hosted by Tina Crawford, Director People and Workforce Strategy, this event celebrated the incredible contributions sessional academic staff make to the student experience.

“Sessional staff are at the coalface of the student experience and should be offered opportunities for engagement, support and development.” said Tina in her official opening of the event.

REWARD AND RECOGNITION

A highlight at the end of year celebration was the awarding of the UON Academy Professional Development Prize worth \$1000 to a sessional academic who has demonstrated teaching excellence. This is the fourth year the prize has been awarded. Nominations were received from both staff and students and this year they were of a particularly high calibre.

Congratulations to the 2019 UON Academy Professional Development Award winner, School of Nursing and Midwifery’s, Bethany Porteous. Bethany has worked as a sessional academic at our University since 2017 and had made a substantial positive impact.

Bethany is known for being a prepared, committed and reliable teacher. Her student feedback identifies that she goes “above and beyond for her students” and is “meticulously organised, intelligent, relatable and most importantly she is the type of nurse that I aspire to be”.

Congratulations to Bethany as well as the other award finalists:

- Dr Chloe Killen – School of Creative Industries
- Katy Jones – Centre for English Language and Foundation Studies
- Cheryl Sykes – Newcastle Law School

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

The UON Academy continues to keep sessional academics abreast of relevant information through the UON Academy e-news (released at the commencement of each semester), the UON Academy dedicated website ‘one stop shop’ for sessional academics and the UON Academy LinkedIn Group.

The UON Academy welcomes feedback through the UON Academy email address UONAcademy@newcastle.edu.au