Report of the Teaching Academic Working Party
Draft v3d Dec 2015
Executive Summary

The Teaching Academic Working Party (TAWP) was convened by Professor Jill Downie, DVC-E, in April 2015 to consider the roles, and review policies and career pathways, for Teaching Academics (TAs). The TAWP comprises 19 academic staff members from diverse roles across all faculties of Curtin University.

The terms of reference for the working party were:

1. Clarify the role and workload of the teaching academic in the context of the strategic direction of the university.
2. Consult broadly with the academic community on issues affecting the Teaching Academic role and actively recommend and support continuous improvement strategies.
3. Promote excellence in teaching and learning by enabling staff engagement in reflective practice and scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL).
4. Identify and develop career opportunities and support requirements for teaching academics including encouragement to engage and participate in professional development.
5. Ensure the teaching academic role is clearly aligned with relevant Curtin policies, guidelines and processes and academic and professional activities.

Method and data sources

In considering the position of TAs at Curtin University, the TAWP drew on the national and international literature on TAs, university-wide surveys, focus groups, semi-structured interviews, reports from Teaching Academic retreats and a desktop audit of existing Curtin documents.

Key issues raised

After consulting broadly, FIVE core issues affecting TAs at Curtin were identified as:

1. The lack of clarity around TA roles at Curtin includes the terminology used and expectations and entitlements (including professional development, resources, funding and academic study leave) related to the role.
2. Unrealistic workload allocation which results in crippling teaching/ marking/ administrative loads, with no specific allocation for SoTL or teaching-related duties such as unit and course coordination.
3. The lack of clarity around SoTL (definition, evidence, expectations and boundaries between research and SoTL).
4. Uncertainty over career pathways and transitioning for TAs.
5. Perceptions that the TA role is not valued, and is inferior to the TR role.

Recommendations

The TA Working Party recommends that the results of this report feed into the new EBA agreement discussions, and that guidelines are developed to clarify workload, SoTL and role expectations for TA staff. We also recommend that Curtin University make explicit to all internal and external stakeholders, the value of teaching in the university context at Curtin.
The following specific recommendations result from wide consultation with stakeholders:

**TA role clarity**
1. Relaunch the Teaching Academic role at Curtin as part of the launch of a new Academics@Curtin website.

2. All university documents should be updated to include the new title of Teaching Academic and Teaching Clinical / Professional Academic and remove reference to ‘Teaching Only’ and ‘Focussed’, as applicable.

3. Establish an education program (professional development or update) for Heads of School and Heads of Department on the TA role and how to support TAs, with consideration given to rolling out the program to Directors T&L.

4. Adopt the Teaching Excellence at Curtin Framework for the purpose of evaluation and promotion measures for TAs. Adopt existing measures where applicable to capture performance.

**Workload model**
5. Reduce the band of time allocated for teaching delivery and teaching-related duties for TAs to 65%, and provide a minimum 10% allocation for SoTL. This minimum should be increased for TAs at higher levels who are engaging in education research that is published in quality journals.

6. Provide parameters on how to apply the Academic Workload Management System guiding factors. For the following duties include specific hour allocations in the teaching-related workload taking cohort size and number of locations into account where applicable: unit coordination, development of new unit, assessment activities, supervision, preparation time for lecturing when new to the unit, equal time allocation for online and face to face teaching and TA engagement in SoTL.

7. Consider the developmental trajectory of new TAs by providing a reduced teaching workload for the first semester.

**SoTL and discipline-based research**
8. Develop guidelines on the expectations around SoTL and educational research and provide clarity around the Academic Study Program as it applies to TAs. Review the University’s definition of SoTL to ensure that it is appropriate for the new academic roles and ensure that all related information is clear and easily found on the Academics@Curtin website.

9. Clarify the expectations of SoTL engagement and outcomes for TAs and link to workload to ensure consistency where possible; curate university and faculty SoTL resources for the Academics@Curtin website to include resources and links to key papers.

10. Recognise and support, as central to effective TA performance, the importance of current discipline content knowledge.

11. Support and enable the implementation of effective pedagogical approaches, including discipline-specific pedagogical approaches that assist TAs to fulfil their role as scholarly teachers, and provide help with SoTL activities including language, literature, research processes, ethics and dissemination.
Career pathways and transitioning

12. Explore the possibility for staff to be appointed to a new academic category within their existing role, given appropriate discussion, planning, workload modification and support to do so. Consider other models of flexibility in academic work policy, including a template for transition planning and timeframes. Encourage HoS to acknowledge and celebrate teaching successes in the development program for TAs who seek promotion.

Role perception

13. Provide professional learning for all staff concerning the TA roles, including expectations of support.
2 Background
The Teaching Academic Working Party (TAWP) was convened by Professor Jill Downie, DVC-E in April 2015 in response to a visit to Curtin by Professor Belinda Probert in November 2014\(^1\). Its membership was drawn by invitation from the breadth of Curtin academic staff and included TA staff where possible. The role of the TAWP was to consider the teaching academic roles and review policies and career pathways for Teaching Academics based on teaching excellence. Terms of reference for the working party were:

1. Clarify the role and workload of the teaching academic in the context of the strategic direction of the university.

2. Consult broadly with the academic community on issues affecting the Teaching Academic role and actively recommend and support continuous improvement strategies.

3. Promote excellence in teaching and learning by enabling staff engagement in reflective practice and scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL).

4. Identify and develop career opportunities and support requirements for teaching academics including encouragement to engage and participate in professional development.

5. Ensure the teaching academic role is clearly aligned with relevant Curtin policies, guidelines and processes and academic and professional activities.

2.1 Membership
Membership of the TAWP is shown in Table 1.

2.2 Purpose
The purpose of this report is to document the work of the TAWP and to present the findings and subsequent recommendations of the TAWP for consideration. It begins with a brief overview of existing evidence on TA roles, including those at Curtin, and outlines methods and data sources drawn upon by TAWP to inform its deliberations.

\(^1\) Previous DVC current Adjunct Professor, La Trobe University.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education</td>
<td>Professor Jill Downie (Chair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Associate Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Learning &amp; Teaching, Curtin Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>Julianne Reid (Deputy Chair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Lecturer, School of Economics and Finance</td>
<td>Andrew Brennan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Associate Professor, School of Media, Culture and Creative Arts</td>
<td>Artur Lugmayr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Manager, Evaluation, Curtin Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>Beatrice Tucker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Human Resource Business Consultant, Human Resources</td>
<td>Christie Dawkins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  John Curtin Distinguished Professor, Humanities Research and Graduate Studies – Curtin Academy representative</td>
<td>Dawn Bennett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  Dean, Teaching &amp; Learning, Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor Health Sciences</td>
<td>Georgina Fyfe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  Senior Clinical/Professional Fellow, School of Built Environment</td>
<td>Khoa Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Associate Professor, School of Pharmacy – Curtin Academy representative</td>
<td>Lisa Tee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Associate Professor, School of Psychology and Speech Pathology – Curtin Academy representative</td>
<td>Lynne Roberts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Associate Professor, School of Built Environment – Curtin Academy representative</td>
<td>Reena Tiwari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Senior Lecturer, School of Management</td>
<td>Subra Ananthram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Academic Lead, Curtin Learning Institute, Curtin Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>Tania Broadley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Academic Professional Fellow, School of Education</td>
<td>Val Morey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Dean, Teaching and Learning, Office of the PVC Science and Engineering</td>
<td>Teri Balser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Lecturer, School of Science</td>
<td>Heather Lonsdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Lecturer, School of Civil and Mechanical Engineering</td>
<td>Chris Ford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Coordinator, Scholarship of T&amp;L, Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor Health Sciences</td>
<td>Helen Flavell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 The current state of Teaching Academic roles

Teaching Academic (TA) positions have been introduced into universities across the sector to varying extents. In the United Kingdom, 27.1% (52,575) of academic staff were employed on teaching only contracts at the end of 2013 (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2013) compared with 48.6% (94,480) employed on teaching and research contracts. Across higher education institutions in the UK, the proportion of contracts across a university that are teaching focused range from less than 10% to more than 50% (Locke, 2014). However, there is little available data on the number of academics employed in teaching focused positions across the majority of Europe. In Canada, universities have introduced Teaching-Stream Faculty (TSF), sometimes called “Alternate Stream” positions into at least 14 of the 20 existing publicly funded universities in Ontario alone and these positions are becoming increasingly common elsewhere (Sanders, 2011).

Locally, data from the 2014 Department of Education and Training statistics database show that 35 out of 42 Australian universities have at least some form of full-time or fractional full-time teaching only position, ranging from less than 1% to just over 20%. This figure increased from just 19 universities in 2009 (Probert, 2013). Across publicly funded universities 3,140 staff were employed in full-time or fractional full-time teaching only positions in 2014, a 36% increase from the previous year. This equates to 3.1% of the total full time equivalent (FTE) in 2014. FTE for other roles included 15% of staff employed in research only positions, 26.3% employed in teaching and research positions and 55.6% employed in positions categorised as “other” (Department of Education and Training, 2014).

Whilst it is evident that the number of TA positions continue to rise, the introduction of these roles has not been without resistance – from academics scepticism about lack of parity and equivalence between teaching and research roles, to the controversial implementation at the organisational level, focused on improving research rankings by moving those staff with lesser research records into TA positions. According to Probert (2013) the introduction of TA roles has raised questions around:

- The essence of higher education teaching and what constitutes its excellence.
- The status of teaching in terms of professionalisation and marginalisation.
- The strategic foresight and values of senior management in relation to the roles.

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2 The terminology and language used throughout this report reflects the variations used in relation to teaching and learning across the sector. Where applicable, terminology and language has not been altered from its original state.
Experiences of universities with Teaching Academic roles

Despite TA roles being in place for a number of years in the UK and Australia, the experiences of universities implementing these roles is generally not well documented in the literature. Canadian universities have described their experiences with their equivalent of TA roles: Teaching Stream Faculty (TSF) positions. In a survey of 5 universities, out of 134 respondents employed in TSF positions (response rate 34%), 87% perceived that the positions had a positive impact on teaching quality and on the student learning experience and to a slightly lesser extent on students in general (Vajoczki, Fenton, Menard, & Pollon, 2011). McMaster University in Canada has also briefly reported on the benefits of introducing similar roles into their establishment. Benefits reported include reducing the need for reliance on short term contracts for teaching undergraduate courses and a diversity in career pathways (Wilkinson, 2014).

More has been published on the limitations of the roles compared with the benefits, and few longitudinal studies have been conducted. Some of the implementation issues and limitations of TA roles reported include:

- **Disparity and lack of value** – TA positions are often treated as second-class (Clarke, Drennan, Hyde, & Politis, 2015; Copeland, 2014; Ginns, Kitay, & Prosser, 2010) and this can be seen by the insufficiency of rewards and support for SoTL compared to discipline-based research (Ginns et al., 2010). Survey findings from Canadian universities indicate that the lack of value placed on the role by academy and peers was the main issue faced by those in TSF roles, with a need for TSF representation at higher level positions also reported (Vajoczki et al., 2011). Lack of awareness and understanding further complicates the implementation of these roles (Vajoczki et al., 2011).

  “...Attitude toward individuals in teaching-stream positions is important. Research seems to have become of primary importance to university leaders. As a result, lecturers are often considered second-class citizens and get very little recognition for professional achievements and efforts in the classroom. Compensation is also important. There is currently a very significant discrepancy between lecturer and researcher compensation (salary and bonuses)...” (Vajoczki et al., 2011, p30).

- **Restriction** - TAs are somewhat restricted by their role and struggle to get to the same level on the salary scale that research only academics do (Bentley, Goedegebure, & Meek, 2014), particularly as promotion systems are largely based on research ability and track record and recognition of pedagogical research is lacking in such systems (Copeland, 2014; Kwiek & Antonowicz, 2015).

- **Lack of scope** - the current distribution of academic work roles is too rigid and without adequate scope for TA positions (Bexley, Arkoudis, & James, 2013; Locke, 2014). It has been reported that in European research-intensive universities, teaching academics felt challenged by the increased demand for research when their contracts were focused on teaching (Clarke et al., 2015).

- **Workload** – workload is a common issue that arises in relation to academics in general. More than a quarter (26%) of respondents in the survey by Vajoczki et al. (2011) reported workload as a drawback of the TSF position. There are challenges in defining career pathways, promotions and distribution of workload at the institutional level (Vajoczki et al., 2011).

Whilst it is not entirely possible to create an accurate representation of workload allocations for TA roles due to the varying Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) content and restricted access to some university policies, it is evident that where workload allocations are accessible for Australian
universities, they are variable. A summary of select universities workload allocation for TAs is provided in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Teaching (incl. SoTL)</th>
<th>Research &amp; SoTL</th>
<th>Admin/ Other/ Cap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macquarie University</td>
<td>≤80%</td>
<td></td>
<td>≤20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Catholic University</td>
<td>50-80%</td>
<td>480hrs max</td>
<td>10-30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of South Australia&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>≤80%</td>
<td>20% min</td>
<td>≥80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtin University</td>
<td>≤75%</td>
<td>550hrs</td>
<td>≥25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Queensland University</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monash University</td>
<td>60-70%</td>
<td>≥10%</td>
<td>≥20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Tasmania</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Queensland</td>
<td>40-70%</td>
<td>20-50%</td>
<td>10-30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 – selected workload allocations for TAs

Interesting points:

- Many EBA s put the workload focus onto the Faculties/Schools/Units and do not allocate specific academic workload weightings.
- Flinders, The University of South Australia and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) recognise the need for early career academics (ECAs) to develop their research record. For example, at Flinders ECAs are expected to undertake a balanced teaching and research role, not a specialised role (i.e. TA position). At RMIT and the University of Tasmania (UTAS), ECAs can request a TA position but will not otherwise be placed in these roles.
- ACU allows allocation of annual Scholarship of Teaching hours as part of teaching-related workload.

Improving experiences
Creating value in parity of language, experiences and benefits between TA and Teaching Research (TR) roles, educating those at higher levels about the role, supporting participation in pedagogical scholarship and clarifying research expectations can improve the experiences of universities with the implementation of TA roles (Vajoczki et al., 2011). The nature and complexity of the issues and limitations surrounding implementation of the TA role suggest a need for continuing support strategies.

4.1 Strategies for supporting Teaching Academic roles
Support is an important part of the process when embedding TA roles into university culture. Continuing professional development (CPD), awards and postgraduate certificates in teaching and learning in higher education are some strategies employed by higher education institutions to support TA type roles (Gravestock, 2011; Locke, 2014).

The University of Queensland (UQ) Teaching and Educational Development Institute (TEDI) offers support to TA staff for their SoTL-based research. This includes activities through the ‘advancing scholarship of teaching and learning network’ including a staff development program, introduction to university teaching and a graduate certificate in higher education. TEDI offers workshops for those applying for teaching and learning (T&L) grants and also provides evaluation support and services for TAs (The University of Queensland, 2015c). Further examples of support for TAs at UQ are Advancing

<sup>3</sup> Staff with 168 hours F2F contact time are allowed 100 hours annually to support scholarship of teaching and scholarly activity to maintain professional currency in discipline. 169-336 hours F2F contact time = 140 hours annually. 337-480 hours = 159 hours annually. TR staff also allowed this time, but significantly less.

<sup>4</sup> Teaching and Administration can be up to a maximum of 80% combined.
SoTL at UQ workshops, the SoTL Coffee and Networking group and existing discipline specific SoTL networks including engineering, veterinary and science (The University of Queensland, 2015b).

4.2 Career pathways and transitioning

As Coates and Goedegebuure (2012) note, career pathways/trajectories are complex; flexible career pathways/trajectories should exist alongside or be overlaid onto vertical career pathways/trajectories.

“Clearly, as higher education grows in size and complexity, academic work itself will, adaptively and progressively, become more differentiated. Not all people may undertake all functions as equal parts of their role. And some may, for positive rather than negative reasons, be not at all engaged in a particular function. Hence allowing the core functions to move freely together or apart, as situations and roles befit, would appear to be a more valid and effective means of conceptualising the academic profession and academic work.” (Coates & Goedegebuure, 2012, p878)

In the UK, career pathways are categorised as three-track, two-track or one-track. Three-track pathways are the most common and consist of a Teaching track, a Teaching and Research track and a Research track. Across the sector, there are varying points at which transfer is an option between the three pathways. In some institutions, there are a number of points of transfer available, where others either do not allow transfer between pathways, or only under exceptional circumstances. Promotion through the one-track system can often be attained through either teaching or research-based criteria (Cashmore, Cane, & Cane, 2013). Overall, many institutions in the UK have clear procedures for promotion based on teaching and learning. However, whilst some report that these policies do not translate into an increase in promotion (Cashmore et al., 2013) many institutions do not gather the data in the first instance (The Higher Education Academy, 2009). Having different career pathways available can seem advantageous, but it is often the case that opportunities for advancement are limited (Cashmore et al., 2013).

In Australia, Monash University permits transfer between a Teaching and Research position and an Education-focused position, based on applicants meeting the required eligibility criteria (Monash University, 2014). The Universities of Sydney and South Australia have similar provisions (University of South Australia, 2014; University of Sydney, 2013).

At UQ transition between all academic categories (TF to T&R, RF to T&R, T&R to TF, T&R to RF, TF to CA and T&R to CA) is permitted based on applicants meeting the required eligibility criteria for the new position (The University of Queensland, 2015a). An academic transitions within their existing position, over time, after discussion at their annual performance review, modification of current duties and the development of practical steps for achievement.

Moving from a TF to a TR position

The expectations are that the staff member should be “...Undertaking a viable and productive disciplinary research program, showing the capacity to win competitive research grants, and being a member of a suitable research group or team...” (The University of Queensland, 2015a).

Moving from a TR to a TF position

Expectations are: “...Demonstrating excellence in teaching, making contributions to the scholarship of teaching and learning, taking on teaching leadership roles such as program co-ordinator, undertaking projects such as curriculum review, or chairing relevant school committees related to teaching...” (The University of Queensland, 2015a)
University of Tasmania transitioning
The following guidelines are from the University of Tasmania in regards to their approach to career transitioning for academics.

“...Once in each six-year period, unless otherwise agreed by the Dean (or nominee), an academic staff member can change from their current workload allocation category to nominate for a career transition program, and submit a plan for research, scholarship and/or teaching intended to be undertaken over the next three years. An academic staff member whose submission is successful would be assigned to a different workload allocation category for an agreed period of time with altered percentages of research, scholarship and teaching...” (University of Tasmania, 2013, p88).
To achieve its vision to be “A recognised international leader of research and education,” Curtin University underwent significant workforce reshaping in 2013-14 (Curtin University, 2013). The reshaping of academic roles is not unique to Curtin and as reflected in many university EBAs, saw the introduction of Teaching Focused (TF) academic appointments, which have recently been renamed by the Senior Executive Team to Teaching Academic (TA) roles. The rationale for these university-wide specialist appointments is reflected in the 2014 annual report.

“In 2014, academic reshaping enabled the University to ensure schools have the positions, structure and staff needed to meet strategic objectives for excellence in both research and teaching in a rapidly changing environment. The reshaping will provide for new academic career paths in teaching focused and research academic roles. This will enable Curtin to provide teaching and research staff with greater access to research time, at the same time as enhancing the quality of our teaching programs through the appointment of academic staff with a focus on teaching and teaching innovation (Curtin University, 2014, p9).”

The University is currently working towards its estimated target of 20% of the academic workforce becoming teaching only. As of 2014, Curtin employed 180 full-time or fractional full-time staff in teaching only positions (5.57%), the highest of the five universities in Western Australia. Just over 400 staff are employed in research only positions (12.41%), 719 in teaching and research (22.31%), and 1,924 are employed in positions categorised as “other” (59.7%) (Department of Education and Training, 2014). Teaching Academic roles at Curtin are allocated 75% of available work hours for teaching-related duties with the remaining 25% available for other academic activities (not-defined) (Curtin University, 2012).

Professor Belinda Probert’s visit to Curtin
Professor Belinda Probert visited Curtin in December 2014 to discuss the implementation of Teaching Focused roles and the concept of scholarship at the university. The main issues that arose were:

**Workload**
The workload associated with 18 contact hours per week is not sustainable in terms of keeping up with a large number of students. Workload only accounts for teaching and teaching-related duties with no time for conference attendance. Workload allocation for leadership roles such as Directors of Teaching and Learning were inequitable. TA staff absorbing TR workload in terms of teaching intensifies instead of reallocates workload.

**Role constraints**
There was general confusion around what staff thought they could and could not do, especially in terms of HDR supervision and funding to attend SoTL conferences as opposed to discipline-based conferences. There was also concern around the lack of a genuine career pathway.

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6 Murdoch University - 3.29%, The University of Western Australia 2.21% and Edith Cowan University - 1.44%. There are no TA appointments at The University of Notre Dame Australia.
Confusion about the meaning of SoTL
No one was able to define what scholarship meant or how it should be applied. Probert believes that being fully immersed in the disciplines of higher education and learning is not feasible for 20% of academic staff.

Implementation and morale
Redundancies concerned staff and for some, the TA role was their only option. Some people were put into TA roles merely to enable their School to meet the required quota. Finally celebratory events for TAs were seen by some staff as premature and offensive given the recent redundancies.

Suggested actions to rectify the issues raised included:

- To clarify the strategic purpose of Teaching Focused positions.
- To consider flexibility in career paths.
- To clarify expectations and ensure a systematic communication strategy.
- To relaunch Teaching Focused roles at Curtin.

The TAWP was in part, formed to address the issues raised by Professor Belinda Probert’s visit and subsequent report.
6 Method and data sources
This report draws on data from a range of sources including university-wide surveys and semi-structured interviews (already underway as part of a separate project), focus groups, TA retreat reports and a desktop audit of existing Curtin documents.

6.1 Survey of staff with teaching responsibilities
Quantitative and qualitative results from a survey “What do we know about Teaching Academics, SoTL and Career Development?” (Roberts, Fyfe, & Flavell, 2015) were submitted to the TAWP. The total response rate was 169. The survey asked Curtin staff with teaching responsibilities about their knowledge of and attitudes towards SoTL, engagement in scholarly teaching and SoTL activities, the impact of SoTL activities on their teaching, priorities for SoTL training, academic role and identity and the degree of identification with their current role. Participants were also asked to comment on their perceptions of career paths at Curtin. The survey was re-distributed to new TA staff three months later. The reports supplied to the TAWP reported responses from TA staff only.

6.2 Focus groups
Thirteen focus groups (accounting to roughly 115 participants) were conducted across all areas of the university by members of the TAWP with participants grouped according to their academic role. Questions were based on roles and expectations, career progression, workload, evaluating good practice, role transitioning, and role modification. Participants were given the option to have the focus group recorded. Whilst most participants agreed to this, some preferred not to be recorded and in these cases hand-written notes were taken identifying key themes of the discussion. Focus group recordings were sent to an external company for transcription. NVivo 10 was used to perform content analysis of the focus group data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heads of School (x2)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of Department</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deans, Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR and ODU</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>~12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Health Sciences Teaching and Learning Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Science and Engineering Teaching and Learning Committee</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtin Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtin Academy</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching Academics</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Centre for Aboriginal Studies</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Curtin Business School</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Science and Engineering</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Humanities</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.3 **Semi-structured interviews**
As part of the project conducted by Roberts et al. (2015), eleven semi-structured interviews were conducted by Dr Helen Flavell with participants who had responded to the online survey and indicated that they would be interested in taking part in the interview process. Interview questions built on the online survey and were particularly focused on staff members’ engagement in SoTL and academic role and identity.

6.4 **Desktop audit**
A desktop audit was conducted by Mrs Beatrice Tucker and included a comprehensive review of Curtin’s existing role/position statements, policies and procedures related to staff appointments, support for research activities, promotions, Work Planning and Performance Review (WPPR), Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) and workload.

6.5 **Teaching Academic retreat report summaries**
The two TA retreat report summaries include data from the joint Health Sciences and Humanities retreat held in November 2014 (Fyfe, Flavell, & Pedigo, 2015) and the Health Sciences retreat held in June 2015. Issues raised during retreat sessions were incorporated into the results summary included in this report.
Findings

7.1 Summary by source

A brief summary of the findings from each source of data is included below, with reference to Appendices for in-depth information.

7.1.1 Survey of Staff with Teaching Responsibilities

Data from the survey of staff with teaching responsibilities suggest that staff are confused about Curtin’s definition of SoTL, are not sure what constitutes evidence of SoTL at Curtin and are confused about the distinction between SoTL and research. Workload was consistently identified as a barrier to SoTL engagement and there was also concern over how to maintain disciplinary expertise. Further, there were underlying perceptions of the TA role as inferior to the TR roles. Of particular concern, less than half of TAs surveyed thought there was a career path for Teaching Academics at Curtin. Supporting data can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B.

7.1.2 Semi-structured interviews

Data from the semi-structured interviews with TA and TR staff suggest that local cultures are significantly impacting on staff perceptions of the value of SoTL and TAs and this is impacting on academic experiences and expectations. Data again highlight the lack of understanding of SoTL and the issue of workload impacting on SoTL engagement. Supporting data can be found in Appendix C.

7.1.3 Focus groups

Focus group data highlighted unclear aspects of the TA role including expectations, supervision, PhD’s and academic study leave. SoTL expectations were also unclear although expectations had been defined in some Faculties. Current support for TAs included support from higher level staff and encouragement to attend PD and apply for grants and promotions. Issues with support included the differing levels of support offered across departments, workload limiting access to support and lack of support and high workload leading to staff burnout and stress. Data indicated that whilst some TAs felt valued in their School, there was little demonstration of value at the university level. An overview of the data can be found in Appendix D.

7.1.4 Desktop audit

The desktop audit highlighted the inconsistent terminology used in Curtin documentation in regards to TAs, the lack of clarity around SoTL expectations and TA support, lack of current ability to capture activities related to scholarly teaching and the lack of clarity around workload allocation of teaching-related duties. Supporting data can be found in Appendix E.

7.1.5 Teaching Academic retreat report summaries

The joint TA retreat report (Humanities and Health Sciences) highlighted particular issues around the need for training Heads of School (HoS) and promotions panel staff in relation to TA positions, the lack of clarity around professional development (PD) for TAs and the perceived inferiority of TAs. Supporting data can be found in Appendix F.
7.2 Summary across data sources
Tables 3a and 3b provide a summary of key issues associated with the implementation of TA roles. For each issue, the data sources where the issue was raised is indicated.

Table 3a - Summary of key issues by data source

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY ISSUE</th>
<th>TA retreats</th>
<th>TA survey</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Focus groups</th>
<th>Desktop audit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Lack of clarity (role, professional development, performance measurement, entitlements)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of understanding around the role of a TA</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminology used in Curtin documentation is confusing and inconsistent</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is not clear where to go to get information about the TA role</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local cultures are impacting on academic experiences and expectations</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still confusion over parameters for TA's to supervise PhD students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is not clear how performance is measured for a TA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development (PD) available for TAs is unclear</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff want &quot;just in time, just for them&quot; PD opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear how PD (e.g., conference attendance) is to be funded</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to resources for TAs is not clear compared to TR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study leave entitlement is unclear</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Workload model</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The suitability of the Curtin workload model for teaching-related activities is unclear</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity needed around workload guidelines, in particular regarding workload allocation models</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocations for unit and course coordination required</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of clarity over how SoTL is factored into workload</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions that TAs have high workloads resulting in stress and burnout</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is not clear where teaching innovation fits in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3b - Summary of key issues by data source (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY ISSUE</th>
<th>TA retreats</th>
<th>TA survey</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Focus groups</th>
<th>Desktop audit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 SoTL and disciplinary research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of clarity around SoTL and its requirements/expectations</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload is a major barrier to SoTL engagement (and to access to support)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics processes for low risk T&amp;L research is a barrier to SoTL engagement</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The distinction between SoTL and research is not clear</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern over how to maintain disciplinary expertise and accreditation guidelines if restricted to SoTL</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusion around what constitutes evidence of SoTL</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding for SoTL is inadequate</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Career pathways and transitioning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many are unsure that there is a career path for TAs at Curtin, particularly to higher levels</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many TAs would like the option to transfer to TR roles</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A transitioning mechanism needs to be developed</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestion that TAs be prioritised for teaching leadership positions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for training HoS and promotions panel staff in relation to TA positions and guiding TA staff</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Perception that TAs are not valued</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAs are perceived as inferior</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a clear differential between those who found themselves in the role, and those who applied for positions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consistency between schools in terms of valuing TAs, support and opportunities provided</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local cultures are significantly impacting on staff perceptions of the value of SoTL and TAs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little demonstration of value from the university</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8 Discussion and Recommendations

After consulting with the broader academic community, the Teaching Academic Working Party have identified five key issues affecting current TAs at Curtin.

8.1 TA role clarity

The lack of clarity around TA roles at Curtin includes both the terminology used and expectations around the TA role.

Terminology

The desktop audit conducted as part of this review highlighted the use of confusing terminology in some documentation, a theme which also occurred in various focus groups conducted. The TAWP suggest the following recommendations be considered in order to address the issue of the use of confusing terminology in existing policies and procedures and documentation.

Not only is the use of terminology in documentation confusing, but staff are finding that it is generally not clear where to go to access such information and when they do find the information they need, it tends to be miss-matched either between documents or from what they have been told from Heads of School/Department.

Expectations and entitlements

The apparent lack of clarity around the expectations of TAs at Curtin relates not only to SoTL, which was a recurring theme across all sources of data, but also to PhD requirements, supervision of research students, academic study leave and promotion criteria. Further, many TAs are unsure about their entitlements in terms of professional development and conference attendance and to a lesser extent, resources (in terms of funding and support). The TAWP suggest the following recommendations to address the lack of clarity.

Implementation

Whilst the confusion around where to go to get information about the role and the lack of clear information being given across Schools could be due to the differences in approach and value of the TA roles across Schools, it has also been identified that the reason behind implementation of the TA roles from higher-levels at the university has been inconsistent and this again has caused some confusion. Overall, there appears to be a lack of consistency across the university which needs to be addressed from the top down as the lack of awareness and understanding of the roles complicates their implementation (Vajoczki et al., 2011).

Recommendation 1: Relaunch the Teaching Academic role at Curtin as part of the launch of a new Academics@Curtin website.

Recommendation 2: All university documents should be updated to include the new title of Teaching Academic and Teaching Clinical / Professional Academic and remove reference to ‘Teaching Only’ and ‘Focussed’, as applicable.

The website should include:

- FAQs for Teaching Academics, incorporating policies and procedures
- Clarity around definitions in terms of roles, including Professional roles
- Guidelines around Teaching Academic roles
Guidelines around SoTL
Feedback section

**Recommendation 3:** Establish an education program (professional development or update) for Heads of School and Heads of Department on the TA role and how to support TAs, with consideration given to rolling out the program to Directors T&L.

**Measuring teaching performance**
Academic staff reported the use of eVALUate, pass rates, awards and peer review to measure teaching performance; however, not everyone felt that they were equitable and fair measures of teaching performance across all teaching contexts. Further, information related to SoTL outputs was previously captured in SCRIPT for the purposes of the Teaching Performance Index (TPI). With the demise of TPI this no longer occurs. The TAWP suggest the following recommendations be considered in order to address the issue of teaching performance measurement.

**Recommendation 4:** Adopt the Teaching Excellence at Curtin Framework for the purpose of evaluation and promotion measures for TAs. Adopt existing measures where applicable to capture performance.

The preceding recommendations relate to the following terms of reference:
*Clarify the role and workload of the teaching academic in the context of the strategic direction of the university.*

*Consult broadly with the academic community on issues affecting the Teaching Academic role and actively recommend and support continuous improvement strategies.*

*Identify and develop career opportunities and support requirements for teaching academics including encouragement to engage and participate in professional development.*

*Ensure the teaching academic role is clearly aligned with relevant Curtin policies, guidelines and processes and academic and professional activities.*

### 8.2 Workload model
The current recommended workload allocations for Academic roles at Curtin are shown in **Table 4**. The EBA states that “...the Workload allocation for each staff member will take account of: the staff member’s appointment level, experience and total responsibilities...”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Current Teaching Allocation</th>
<th>Current SoTL/Research Allocation</th>
<th>Recommended Teaching Allocation</th>
<th>Recommended SoTL/Research Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Academic</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>10% SoTL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching &amp; Research Academic</td>
<td>40-60%</td>
<td>20- 40% research</td>
<td>40-60%</td>
<td>20- 40% research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4:** Current and recommended time allocations for teaching and research/SoTL by academic role

The current workload model raises many concerns for TAs at Curtin including variable staff workload planner (SWP) allocations, crippling teaching/ marking/ administrative loads, no allocation for SoTL...
or specific teaching-related duties such as unit and course coordination, which take up a considerable amount of academic staff time. Although teaching support officers are available to provide support, the support is purely administrative in nature and doesn’t account for the more complex components of unit and course coordination such as the development of learning materials. The workload issues raised by TAs are complex in nature and as noted by Vajoczki et al. (2011) addressing workload distribution at the institutional level is in itself, challenging. The TAWP suggest the following recommendations be considered in order to address the issues around the current workload model.

**Recommendation 5:** Reduce the band of time allocated for teaching delivery and teaching-related duties for TAs to 65%, and provide a minimum 10% allocation for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. This minimum should be increased for TAs at higher levels who are engaging in education research that is published in quality journals.

The current minimum workload ratio, as specified in the *AWMS Implementation of Changes to the Academic Workload Management System* (Table 1, 2013, p. 6) currently varies by role (Teaching & Research or TA) and teaching allocation. This is inequitable and requires the TA to complete teaching related duties in less time than a Teaching & Research academic.

The current band of time allocated for teaching delivery and teaching-related duties for TAs is 75%. Despite the noted expectation that maximum teaching delivery hours were not intended to be targets, reports from TA staff indicate that maximum teaching delivery hours are being applied in some areas. As noted on the previous page, this has implications for the quality of teaching and learning provided, and the well-being of TAs. The recommended reduced allocation will still reflect a higher teaching load for TAs than Teaching & Research academics (see Table 4).

High TA workloads do not allow sufficient time for engagement in SoTL, and there is currently no specific time allocation for SoTL in the TA workload. An allocation of half a day per week would provide TAs with the opportunities to engage in SoTL, a requirement of their positions and essential for promotion purposes.

There is a large number of guiding factors that the Head of School is required to take into consideration in setting teaching related activities. No guidance is provided into how these guiding factors should be converted into changing teaching workload ratios. While the need for Head of School to have some flexibility in regard to this is appreciated, without some guidelines there is potential for inequities in how this is applied across faculties/schools.

**Recommendation 6:** Provide parameters on how to apply the Academic Workload Management System guiding factors. For the following duties include specific hour allocations in the teaching-related workload taking cohort size and number of locations into account where applicable: unit coordination, development of new unit, assessment activities, supervision, preparation time for lecturing when new to the unit, equal time allocation for online and face to face teaching and TA engagement in SoTL.

---

7 “While specific maxima have been defined for the allocation of teaching delivery time these are not intended as targets. Indeed, it is expected that most staff will be allocated teaching delivery hours below the maxima with reference to the considerations outlined in section 3.7 of this paper” (Source: *Implementation of Changes to the Academic Workload Management System*, 2013 p. 4).
While the research literature is divided on whether online teaching requires more or less time than face-to-face teaching, recent research findings indicate that academic report developing online units takes longer than developing face-to-face units, but that after teaching a unit a second time the time taken to teach online or face-to-face is approximately equal (Freeman, 2015).

**Recommendation 7:** Consider the developmental trajectory of new TAs by providing a reduced teaching workload for the first semester.

The preceding recommendations relate to the following terms of reference:

*Clarify the role and workload of the teaching academic in the context of the strategic direction of the university.*

*Promote excellence in teaching and learning by enabling staff engagement in reflective practice and scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL).*

### 8.3 SoTL and discipline-based research

TA engagement in SoTL is an area where there is a clear need for guidance, evidenced by the lack of understanding of what constitutes evidence of SoTL, what the expectations are and where the boundaries between research and SoTL lie. Again, there are cultural issues arising between Schools in the value they place on SoTL and this is reflected in the emphasis placed on it. Whilst workload has been identified as a major barrier to engagement in SoTL by TAs at Curtin, it has been reported that SoTL is often less appropriately awarded than discipline-based research (Ginns et al., 2010) which may also partly explain the differences in emphasis placed on SoTL across Schools in the university. There was also concerns raised by TAs around being able to maintain currency in their discipline and being valued by industry/community/other HE institutions without having time to do discipline research.

The TAWP agreed that it would be useful to define the distinction between SoTL and educational research at a particular impact factor. Above an impact factor of X should be classed as education research, and below X should be classed as SoTL. The TAWP also suggest the following recommendations be considered in order to address the issues around SoTL and discipline-based research.

**Recommendation 8:** Develop guidelines on the expectations around the SoTL and educational research and provide clarity around Academic Study Program. Review the University’s definition of SoTL to ensure that it is appropriate for the new academic roles; and ensure that all related information is clear and easily found on the Academics@Curtin website.

**Recommendation 9:** Clarify the expectations of SoTL engagement and outcomes for TAs and link to workload to ensure consistency where possible and curate university and faculty SoTL resources for the Academics@Curtin website to include resources and links to key papers.

**Recommendation 10:** Recognise and support, as central to effective TA performance, the importance of current discipline content knowledge.
Recommendation 11: Support and enable the implementation of effective pedagogical approaches, including discipline-specific pedagogical approaches that assist teaching academics to fulfil their role as scholarly teachers, and provide help with SoTL activities including language, literature, research processes, ethics and dissemination.

The TAWP SoTL subgroup paper can be found in Appendix G.

The preceding recommendations relate to the following term of reference:
Promote excellence in teaching and learning by enabling staff engagement in reflective practice and scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL).

8.4 Career pathways and transitioning
At present, many TAs are unsure that there is a career path for TAs at Curtin, particularly to higher academic levels. Others have also reported this issue (Vajoczki et al., 2011). Being unsure of TA career paths may in part explain the relatively high proportion of current TAs who would prefer to be in a TR role, which has a clearly delineated promotion pathway with demonstrable outcomes as well as time allocation in workload to achieve them. As mentioned previously, TAs expected reliance on seemingly inequitable tools for outcome measures, such as eVALUate, pass rates, awards and peer review, all have their own issues across teaching contexts.

Role models at senior levels are needed at the University to ensure that the TA role is given the same level of value and parity as research-based roles, as well as helping to assure TAs that there is not a ceiling on their careers and that they are able to reach the higher levels of the academic scale.

The TAWP discussed the following mechanisms to support role transitions:

- Transition funding and support.
- Once there is clarity around Academic Study Leave, there is the potential for it to be incorporated into the transition process.
- Moving from a role to another role within current position.
- Head of School discretion.
- One holding position for transitioning for every School.
- The possibility of developing three distinct career pathways; the excellent teacher, the leader of teaching and learning, and the educational researcher.

Recommendation 12: Explore the possibility for staff to be appointed to a new academic category within their existing role, given appropriate discussion, planning, workload modification and support to do so. Consider other models of flexibility in academic work policy, including a template for transition planning and timeframes. Encourage HoS to acknowledge and celebrate teaching successes in the development program for TAs who seek promotion.

The preceding recommendations relate to the following terms of reference:
Consult broadly with the academic community on issues affecting the Teaching Academic role and actively recommend and support continuous improvement strategies.

Identify and develop career opportunities and support requirements for teaching academics including encouragement to engage and participate in professional development.
8.5 **Role perception**

Variation in the perceptions of the TA role is evident, with some seeing the TA role as inferior to the TR role. This may be due to the apparent differential between those placed in TA roles from TR roles, and those who have applied and been successful in new TA roles. Further, issues of professional identity are apparent in staff moved into roles reluctantly, which may have been caused by the varying management approaches to reshaping.

Whilst some newly appointed staff have reported more positive perceptions of the role during focus group discussions, they are becoming aware of the underlying discontent from academic colleagues, which is in turn impacting on their own perceptions. New TAs surveyed in 2015 were no more positive about the role than those who had been surveyed previously. It is therefore timely that the university attempts to improve the organisational climate and morale around the TA roles and their value. The TAWP suggest the following recommendations be considered in order to address the issues around TA role perception.

**Recommendation 13:** Provide professional learning opportunities for staff around the TA roles, including expectations of support.

The preceding recommendations relate to the following terms of reference:

*Ensure the teaching academic role is clearly aligned with relevant Curtin policies, guidelines and processes and academic and professional activities.*
References


Coates, H., & Goedegebuure, L. (2012). Recasting the academic workforce: why the attractiveness of the academic profession needs to be increased and eight possible strategies for how to go about this from an Australian perspective. Higher Education, 64(6), 875-889. doi: 10.1007/s10734-012-9534-3


Gravestock, P. S. (2011). Does teaching matter? The role of evaluation in tenure policies at selected Canadian universities. (Doctor of Philosophy), University of Toronto, Canada.


Probert, B. (2013). Teaching-focused Academic Appointments in Australian Universities: Recognition, Specialisation, or Stratification. Australia: Office for Learning and Teaching.


University of South Australia. (2014). Enterprise Agreement. Australia: University of South Australia.


What do we know about Teaching Academics, SoTL and Career Development?


A/Prof Lynne Roberts, A/Prof Georgina Fyfe and Dr Helen Flavell

In 2015 a team from the Faculty of Health Sciences commenced a research project ‘Developing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) capabilities of academics with teaching responsibilities’. The first stage of this project was a survey of Curtin Academics with teaching responsibilities. Two aims of this survey were:

1. To explore the understanding of, level of engagement and attitudes towards, SoTL by Curtin academics with teaching responsibilities

2. To determine the development needs of Curtin academics with teaching responsibilities.

In total, 152 Curtin academics (Teaching Academics and Teaching-Research Academics) responded to the survey. The summary of findings presented below is based on the responses of the Teaching Academics (N=61) only to match the focus of the Teaching Academic Working Party.

SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Understanding of SoTL
- Less than half (42.6%) had seen Curtin’s definition of SoTL
- When provided with Curtin’s definition of SoTL, 59% reported they understood the definition
- Less than a third (32.8%) knew what constituted evidence of SoTL at Curtin

Attitudes toward SoTL
On average, Teaching Academics
- agreed that SoTL had application to their teaching;
- rated the funding for SoTL at Curtin as inadequate; and
- neither agreed nor disagreed that SoTL was valued at Curtin

Engagement in SoTL and Scholarly Teaching
On average, Teaching Academics reported they engaged in scholarly teaching activities occasionally. Engagement in SoTL activities is presented in Figure 1 on the next page.
Figure 1. Percentage of Teaching Academics reporting engaging in SoTL activities

Perceived Impact of SoTL
On average, Teaching Academics agreed
- that there was a theoretical basis to their teaching;
- that peer review and reflection improved teaching practice; and
- that they shared their innovative teaching and SoTL

Perceived SoTL Training Needs
There was strong interest in SoTL workshops (see Table 1) and other workshops relevant to teaching Academic positions (see Table 2). The preferred timing of workshops was during student free weeks (51.9%) or semester breaks (32.7%). Preferred delivery modes of training were face-to-face workshops (75.8%) and self-paced online content (15.2%). Three quarters of Teaching Academics were interested in attending one day writing retreats held on- or off-campus with more than half (56.7%) interested in ‘Shut Up and Write’ session and 43% interested in residential writing retreats.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SoTL Training Preferences</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing ideas for SoTL research</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying for SoTL/Higher education grants.</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where to publish: SoTL and Higher Education journals.</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning analytics</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing systematic reviews on teaching and learning in higher education.</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying for ethics approval for SoTL projects.</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Percentage of Teaching Academics interested in training in a range of SoTL areas/activities
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T&amp;L Workshops wanted</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career planning for Teaching Academics</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing evidence to submit an Excellence in Teaching or Citation award</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a teaching portfolio</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a teaching philosophy</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management for the flipped classroom</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-teaching</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interprofessional education focus in the classroom</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plagiarism</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Percentage of Teaching Academics interested in training in T&L workshops

**CAREER PATHS**
Almost two thirds (65.5%) of the Teaching Academics surveyed stated their preferred academic role was a Teaching Academic. One third (32.8%) gave their preferred academic role as Teaching-Research Academic.

Less than half (41.8%) of Teaching Academics surveyed thought there was a career path for Teaching Academics at Curtin, with a further 28.3% unsure. The remaining 30% did not believe there was a career path for Teaching Academics at Curtin. In comparison, the majority of Teaching Academics thought there was a career path at Curtin for Teaching-Research academics (71.7%) and Research Academics (88.3%).

**FUTURE DIRECTIONS**
A further aim of the current research project is:

*To understand the impact of university restructuring on academic staff engagement in SoTL, through examining in-depth the experiences of a small sample of academics in teaching roles over a 12 month period.*

To address this aim, Dr Helen Flavell is conducting interviews with Teaching Academics and Teaching-Research Academics. To date, 8 interviews have been conducted. A report on the findings will be provided to the Teaching Academic Working Party once the analysis has been conducted.
What do we know about Teaching Academics, SoTL and Career Development?

Updated Findings for the Teaching Academic Working Party (August 2015)

A/Prof Lynne Roberts, A/Prof Georgina Fyfe, Dr Helen Flavell and Michelle Broughton

This document provides an update to the preliminary survey findings from the research project ‘Developing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) capabilities of academics with teaching responsibilities’ presented to Curtin Academy in June 2015.

Anecdotal reports suggested that new staff employed in to Teaching Academic (TA) roles in 2015 may have quite different perceptions of the role compared to those staff transferred into TA roles as a result of reshaping. To test this, invitations to participate in the survey were sent to the 71 new TA’s employed since the original survey was advertised (April 2015). Seventeen new TAs completed the survey. This document provides a summary comparison of the results of these 17 TA respondents with previous TA respondents for the key areas of understanding of SoTL, perceived valuing of SoTL at Curtin and perceived career paths. The data for the 17 new respondents (24% response rate) is presented in red. Due to the small numbers and low response rate the findings presented should not be interpreted as necessarily representative of all new TAs.

SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Understanding of SoTL
- Less than half (42.6%) had seen Curtin’s definition of SoTL (new TAs 22.2%)
- When provided with Curtin’s definition of SoTL, 59% reported they understood the definition (new TAs 66.7%)
- Less than a third (32.8%) knew what constituted evidence of SoTL at Curtin (new TAs 27.87%)

Attitudes toward SoTL
On average, Teaching Academics
- agreed that SoTL had application to their teaching (no significant differences between old and new);
- rated the funding for SoTL at Curtin as inadequate (no significant differences between old and new); and
- neither agreed nor disagreed that SoTL was valued at Curtin (no significant differences between old and new)

Perceived Impact of SoTL
On average, Teaching Academics agreed
- that there was a theoretical basis to their teaching (no significant differences between old and new);
- that peer review and reflection improved teaching practice (no significant differences between old and new); and
- that they shared their innovative teaching and SoTL (no significant differences between old and new).

CAREER PATHS
Almost two thirds (65.5%; new TAs 58.8%) of the Teaching Academics surveyed stated their preferred academic role was a Teaching Academic. One third (32.8%; new TAs 41.2%) gave their preferred academic role as Teaching-Research Academic.

Less than half (41.8%; new TAs 35.3%) of Teaching Academics surveyed thought there was a career path for Teaching Academics at Curtin, with a further 28.3% (new TAs 47.1%) unsure. The remaining 30% (new TAs 17.6%) did not believe there was a career path for Teaching Academics at Curtin. In comparison, the majority of Teaching Academics thought there was a career path at Curtin for Teaching-Research academics (71.7%; new TAs 82.4%) and Research Academics (88.3%; new TAs 82.4%).

SUMMARY
Contrary to expectations, new TA staff employed since April 2015 do not appear to be any more positive in their views of TA roles than those TAs surveyed earlier in the year.
What do we know about Teaching Academics, SoTL and Career Development?

Report on the Preliminary Qualitative Comments for the Teaching Academic Working Party

A/Prof Lynne Roberts, A/Prof Georgina Fyfe and Dr Helen Flavell

In 2015 a team from the Faculty of Health Sciences commenced a research project ‘Developing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) capabilities of academics with teaching responsibilities’. The first stage of this project was a survey of Curtin Academics with teaching responsibilities. This document presents key themes with supporting quotes emerging from a content analysis of comments made by Teaching Academics in their survey responses. All responses have been de-identified.

There is some confusion over Curtin’s definition of SoTL

- “It’s quite a lofty explanation which could mean a lot, or little.”
- “It’s a bit over generalised - a bit wordy, we get a lot of blurbs daily and it needs to be super simple and targeted properly.”
- “not really sure about the breadth of this definition”
- “Seems very abstract and not really applicable to some areas”
- “I feel I understand it well. Confusion arises when directions from differing presentation of the definition by academic leaders.”

The distinction between SoTL and research is not clear

- “During most of the discussions relating to SoTL there has been a definite reluctance to adopt the word research - this has been rather strange......”
- “The Curtin definition includes the word "research" but teaching academics do not have a workload allocation for research. So does this mean that TAs are supposed to be doing the low-level, poorly regarded SOTL while the TR academics do the 'research' because they have a research allocation? This is not to say that I do not value SOTL - I do. It’s just that Curtin needs to work out what it wants. It can’t make TA staff have face-to-face teaching hours of 18 hours per week (as happens in many Schools) ans [sic] then also expect them to have the time and energy to conduct SOTL.”
- “I am unsure how this is different to the work that colleagues in Education do as research academics. I am not sure how it relates to my academic discipline. I am not an Education researcher, so I presume that I am not required to become one, however I am not sure where this definition leaves me as a disciplinary specialist”
- “Was told during XXXX that presenting at http://www.issotl2015.com.au/ would count as evidence of SOTL. Conf. organisers confirmed that papers for this were not peer-reviewed. I have been told that this then would not be something I would be funded to attend. So - does proof of SOTL mean publishing in a journal like a researcher rather than presenting at the SOTL peak body conference? If so, then how is evidence of this different to research?”
There is some confusion over what constitutes evidence of SoTL for Curtin Teaching Academics

- “Lack of direction from the top on this one?”
- “This has not been explained sufficiently for these roles”

Workload issues prevent SoTL engagement

- “How is SoTL meant to be conducted when so much teaching is taking place.”
- “However, there is no allocation in my workload for scholarship of learning”
- “As a teaching clinical professional, the teaching and administrative workload actually leaves no time for any formal SoTL activities”
- “Current workload makes it difficult to prioritise SoTL. I find I am so busy dealing with day to day management that I am often running into the classroom thinking "what am I teaching today". In order to do anything other than pay lip service to SoTL there needs to be a reduction in workload so that real time can be spent planning lessons/lectures/tutorials rather than dealing with timetabling, student problems, meetings, contracts, staffing, admin. Very often teaching is the bottom of the list”
- “I have a strong personal and professional commitment to SoTL but am frustrated at the lack of time to pursue this avenue of academic excellence. The very reason for applying for this position was to pursue academic and teaching excellence but I’m constantly frustrated at my inability to commit to developing this in my professional repertoire.”
- “The University need to recognise SoTL with a workload allocation (as ‘research’ is) to show it is serious.”
- “Staff in SoTL areas need to be given more time to achieve these goals.”
- “I think you need to address this to our Faculty leaders as they determine the time given for SOTL in workloads”
- “SoTL needs to attract a workload allocation.”
- “There is no genuine time allocation in the workload for SOTL (Research) for Teaching Focused Academics, therefore making it more challenging to 'do' and for TF academics & SOTL research to be taken seriously by T&R and Research only academics”
- “There has been mention of inclusion of time for scholarship of learning in our workload, but to date there is no evidence of this. This is a roadblock to career advancement as a teaching focused academic.”

There is concern over quality of SoTL

- “I see most recent “innovations” as economically not pedagogically driven. I have no faith in SoTI since most of what I read and see looks like Grade 3 show and tell. No rigour, no critical thinking and no inspiration.”
- “Some head of faculty do not belief in SoTL, and think everything is scholarship anyway.”

Some Teaching Academics have limited experience with SoTL

- “I feel like I’m learning a new PhD topic from scratch again”
• “There is an obvious dearth of people with teaching and course design skills within tertiary education”

Lack of certainty surrounding career paths for Teaching Academics at Curtin, particularly to higher levels

• “Clarity of pathways is not there - talks about pathways but little action”
• “Despite being a place of learning, actual teaching itself appears of lower priority. Who was the last person to attain Professor status as a Teaching academic. How much money is put into Teaching focused ‘stuff’ compared to research? How many academics require a Teaching qualification to actually ‘teach’?”
• “For a few”
• “I hope there is but it’s hard to say when the positions are new and being established. ”
• “I think that there is a career path up to level B and that level C is possibly attainable but that it is very difficult to move up. If you look at the promotions criteria, they are very difficult to attain if you have a heavy teaching load; there is no time to do anything else, especially with the micro-management of the teaching workload (have to account for every hour of the day). Also, it is very difficult to demonstrate achievement in teaching. ”
• “it will depend on the support given to this group and the way the university recognises this group of academics”
• “Officially yes but not in reality”
• “Poor career structure - feel second best to research academics”
• “but maybe not up to level E”
• “Certainly not given equal status by the university”

Concern over how to maintain disciplinary expertise

• “How to maintain disciplinary knowledge when one’s workload is allocated to either teaching or SOTL - what measures TF academics can take to maintain their excellent disciplinary knowledge that is 50% of the reason why they are excellent teachers. I need help to understand this and to understand how to create a SOTL project that will also increase and maintain my disciplinary knowledge.”
• “We have no time allocated to increasing and improving our disciplinary knowledge, which makes us worse teachers.”
• “My teaching hours have gone up. I am involved in teaching and learning research and my PhD has stagnated as a result. ”
• “Too often SOTL projects seem to be generalised Education research completed by someone from another discipline about their own teaching, rather than anything that forwards the investigator’s knowledge of their own discipline … what measures TF academics can take to maintain their excellent disciplinary knowledge that is 50% of the reason why they are excellent teachers. I need help to understand this and to understand how to create a SOTL project that will also increase and maintain my disciplinary knowledge. ”
“I am passionate about my subject and need time to research developments in my subject, time that is not given by Curtin. If teaching was my passion I would be an academic in Education, not in my subject. I resent the demand of Curtin that I do research into teaching methods when time is not allocated for that and it is not my primary interest.”

“While valuing the focus on teaching (being teacher trained) the removal of research on the discipline makes it difficult for those of us that need to focus on updates in the actual discipline - should be open to both especially for those in PGrad field”

“There is not enough time to become competent in my discipline and to develop course work that develops my students, while at the same time trying to undertake SoTL research, writing and analysis. Were I teaching in a teaching discipline it would be appropriate. My own professional practice is not valued or promoted.”

“... compared to other university, some faculty and departments have teaching loads that are proportionally higher to student numbers. Also administration work for some departments for academic staff members are a lot higher than other good universities in Australia. I believe in SoTL and also research into the topics that one is teaching, not just ways of teaching, but the content of teaching. Therefore the best teachers are balanced with a wealth of knowledge content as well as teaching methods. Teaching only positions are for a few who focus on teaching methods. Most teacher needs to build up good knowledge of the expert area, and teaching and research portfolios for most is the healthiest. I agree with SoTL but not the way teaching only appointments are pushed to such great proportion of the staff population. I is such a waste for most who are experts in knowledge areas to stop researching in their area but just focus on teaching methods. Not sustainable and makes Curtin U not as attractive compared to elsewhere.”

Perceived inferiority of Teaching Academic role

“As a TA, I sometimes feel embarrassed to be a Teaching Academic (amongst my peers at Curtin and peers from other universities) as I feel the role is considered inferior to RA and TR roles. I sense that RA and TR academics do not hold a TA position in the same regard as their roles, and that education research is considered 'soft research'. I hope Curtin and its staff can create an [sic] work environment can dispel this.”

“The University needs to practice what they preach and ensure that staff who are teaching focused feel valued.”

“I have heard that some TAs have left the university recently. Is the university collecting evidence about why they are leaving?”
Appendix C – Semi-structured Interview Findings

Report on the Preliminary Findings from Interviews for the Academic Reshaping Working Party

A/Prof Lynne Roberts, A/Prof Georgina Fyfe and Dr Helen Flavell

In 2015 a team from the Faculty of Health Sciences commenced a research project ‘Developing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) capabilities of academics with teaching responsibilities’. The second stage of this project was interviews with academics with teaching responsibilities from across the university. This document provides a preliminary analysis of the eleven interviews that have been conducted (June, 2015).

Eleven academics were interviewed from a range of positions (TAs, TRs), employment conditions (sessional, fixed term and permanent), experience in higher education and length of service at Curtin.

The preliminary themes that are emerging from the data:

- Local cultures are significantly impacting on staff perceptions of the value of SoTL and TAs (this is regardless of whether the participants were TRs or TAs).

- Local cultures are, therefore, impacting on academic experiences and expectations (sense of being valued, how policies are being interpreted, workloads and allocation of time for SoTL, whether they need a PhD to progress their career, and even if they’ve received a performance review in the last few years). This has important implications for equity and staff expressed frustration at the differences across appointments/experiences and conditions.

- There is a general lack of understanding (suggesting communication issues) relating to what SoTL is, TA roles and the re-shaping process (e.g. a lack of transparency around appointments).

- Staff are willing to engage in SoTL (if not already doing so), however, there is a lack of clarity around how to get started, what is required, and workload was identified as a major barrier.

- With regard to professional development to enable SoTL engagement, staff are looking for support that is “just in time and just for them.” For example, workload was identified as a barrier to attending professional learning, practical succinct information with relevance to their situation/discipline was suggested as well as mentoring by more experienced academics and communities of practice.

- Staff who were at Curtin prior to the reshaping feel like the ‘goal posts’ have been shifted; several expressed concern that similar experiences awaited them in the future (will need evidence of research and wouldn’t have had the opportunity/time to do research) and several expressed concerns about practical financial issues related to their employment conditions.
• Resiliency and professionalism: participants demonstrated considerable resiliency, forbearance and professionalism under what had been for some (particularly those at Curtin pre-reshaping) a very difficult time.

• New staff (new TAs) appeared to be less negatively impacted on by the reshaping, however, they were hearing things from colleagues that was causing some anxiety.

• Lost opportunities: considerable opportunities to ‘value add’ were being missed through a mal-alignment of expectations, communication issues and leadership/management styles (in some schools).
What do we know about Teaching Academics, SoTL and Career Development?

Report on the Focus Group Findings for the Teaching Academic Working Party

Michelle Broughton, A/Prof Lynne Roberts, A/Prof Georgina Fyfe and Dr Helen Flavell

In 2015 a series of 13 focus groups were conducted across Curtin University to further explore Teaching Academic (TA) roles (see Table 1). The focus groups were conducted by members of the Teaching Academic Working Party using a semi-structured focus group guide. Following informed consent, focus groups were audio-recorded, or where participants preferred, notes taken. Audio files were transcribed and all transcripts and notes were analysed using content analysis. A summary of findings is presented below.

**Table 1- Focus Groups and Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heads of School (x2)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>HoS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of Department</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>HoD</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>HR and ODU</td>
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<td>HRODU</td>
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<td>Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>~12</td>
<td>T&amp;L</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>T&amp;L</td>
</tr>
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<td>Science and Engineering Teaching and Learning Committee</td>
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<td>T&amp;L</td>
</tr>
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<td>CTL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtin Academy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>CurtAc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Academics</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>TAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre for Aboriginal Studies</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>TAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtin Business School</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>TAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and Engineering</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>TAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td></td>
<td>TAs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

Differences between TA and TR roles

- TAs do more teaching (TAs, HRODU) and are expected to “take teaching more seriously” (TAs).
- Access to resources differ for TAs, including research assistants (TAs).
- Some believed TAs were not supposed to engage in research (TAs) or are not supposed to engage in discipline specific research (HoS, T&L). Others felt that to be a good teacher you needed to research to keep in touch with advancement in the field (T&L).
- Expectations of grant money was one difference stated between the two roles (T&L), as well as RAs[sic] having the ability to offer ongoing research projects (Deans).
- TAs are expected to have a leadership role in SoTL or teaching (CTL, T&L, HoS).
- Promotions/levels of employment – TAs at lower levels (T&L, HoS).
- Inequitable workloads (TAs, HRODU) and TAs have their workload micromanaged compared to TRs (T&L, TAs).
- Some indication that TR roles are increasing in teaching emphasis due to teaching loads required in school (HoS).
- Differential between those who found themselves in the role and those who applied for an advertised position (T&L, HoS, HRODU) – issues around identity.

When asked if a TA could ever be a Head of School, responses were mixed

- Most believed that TAs could be a HoS (CurtAc, HoD, TAs, HoS, T&L, HRODU).
- Others believed the current climate and nature of promotions (focus on research) lead to it not being possible (CTL, TAs).
- There were a few comments around there needing to be a high level appointment TA (i.e. level E) for something like this to occur (T&L, HRODU).

Aspects of the TA role that are unclear

- A general lack of clarity around the TA role and other academic roles (HoD, TAs, HoS, T&L, HRODU).
- Expectations (including time) and definition of SoTL, the difference between research and scholarship (TAs, CurtAc, CTL, Deans, HoD, T&L, TAs HoS, HRODU), scholarly teaching (T&L), financial support for and recognition of SoTL (T&L, TAs, HRODU).
- The expectation of supervision, its classification as teaching (yet TAs cannot lead), and circumstances under which it can occur (CurtAc, CTL, T&L, TAs, HoS).
- Expectations around PhD’s (CurtAc, HoD, T&L, TAs), discipline specific research Vs. SoTL including maintaining disciplinary knowledge (HoS, T&L, TAs, HRODU), leadership and unit coordination roles (TAs).
- Push from TAs to be allowed to conduct disciplinary research and wanting time allocation to do so (HoS, HRODU).
• Ethics issues around data gathering (TAs).

• Academic Study Leave (Deans, TAs) and general leave during a study period (HoS).

• Criteria for promotion, particularly in relation to SoTL, and how to best guide staff with their applications (CTL, HoD, T&L, TAs, HoS).

• Career trajectory (unknown yet whether TAs will progress through to Level D and E positions) and the ability to transition between roles (CTL, Deans, HoD, TAs, HoS, T&L).

• Workload and time allocation for activities other than teaching (HoS, HoD, TAs, T&L, HRODU).

• How performance is measured for a TA (TAs, HoS, T&L). eVALUate and peer review have their own issues (TAs, T&L).

• How TAs meet accreditation requirements around conducting and publishing research (HoS).

Advice about the TA role

• Whilst some used existing documentation (EBA, promotion criteria) to find out information about the TA role (Deans, T&L), most utilised their colleagues or superiors (TAs, HoS, Deans, CurtAc, HRODU). Others struggled to find exactly where to go for this information or found the information to be conflicting (Deans, HoS, TAs, T&L).

• Suggestions for improvement included the need to develop a clear pathway for guidance and information (HoS, HRODU), a central webpage or central point of contact (HoS, HRODU).

Expectations of SoTL

• Most said that there was no clarity around SoTL expectations (CurtAc, CTL, Deans, TAs, HRODU) although expectations have been defined at some Faculty levels (Deans).

• Lack of clarity over distinction between research and SoTL (CurtAc, TAs, T&L).

• TAs struggling with concept of SoTL (CTL).

• High workloads do not allow for engagement in SoTL (HoS).

• Innovation, modernisation and transforming the way we teach should be regarded as SoTL outputs (HoS).

• At higher levels SoTL should have the same rigor as research (HoS).

• One suggestion was that TAs settle into role before engaging in SoTL (CurtAc).

SUPPORT

Current support and development of TAs

• Support from higher level staff (CurtAc).

• Encouraging staff to attend professional development (CurtAc, CTL, Deans, HoD, T&L, HoS) apply for grants (CurtAc, HoD) and promotions (HoS), offer 3rd year honours projects (CurtAc), and supervise students in education-based projects (T&L).
• Support for SoTL (Deans, T&L), open door teaching (TAs), working groups (HoS, T&L) and mentoring (T&L).

• Lower workload at commencement of employment, teaching support staff (CurtAc).

Issues around current support and development

• Differing levels of support offered across departments for both TAs and TRs (CurtAc, T&L).

• Most TAs felt that they had little to no support (CurtAc, TAs) and although some TAs felt that there was a lot of support from colleagues, there was little support from Curtin (TAs).

• Further, workload often limits access to support (T&L, TAs).

• Not working well, staff are stretched and overloaded (CurtAc, HoS, HRODU).

• Some TAs experiencing burn out and stress related to activities around teaching that are packaged in with teaching hours (CurtAc, HoS).

• Some staff reshaped from TR are difficult to engage (CurtAc).

• Most focus has been on SoTL, rather than broader support (TAs).

• The same people always attend working groups etc. (T&L).

• TRs feel like they are being left out (T&L).

Ideally, to support development

• Review contact hours and expectations, acknowledge UC and offshore responsibilities (CurtAc), provide TAs new to Curtin with induction training (TAs) support to settle in to teaching (CurtAc, CTL) and create communities of practice (CTL, TAs).

• TA’s ideal support were predominately focused on competent and not overloaded administrative supports, technological support, mentors (CTL) and additions to academic staff.

• Prioritise teaching leadership roles for teaching academics (Deans).

• Need opportunity to move from TA to TR (HoS).

• Implement a transitional period for sustained support (T&L).

• See a central Curtin non-compulsory training opportunity where both TAs and TRs can gain a qualification in recognition of their work (T&L).

• Focus on those who actually need support, not a blanket approach (T&L).

• Cross-disciplinary research groups, supported by the university (TAs).

Further support required

• Guidance around better management of TAs into new roles (CurtAc, HoS).

• Administrative support and funding (CTL, HoS, Deans, TAs, HRODU).

• Heads of Schools would like support by way of clarity around workload guidelines in particular regarding allocation models, clarity around the TEAC document (HoS, HRODU),
more engagement regarding needed support resources and some flexibility in School’s for HoS to make the decisions (HoS).

- Support around discipline specific education research (CurtAc).
- Conference support (TAs, HRODU).
- More support for Early Career Academics (TAs).

Needs in order to support and develop TAs

- Time and money (Deans, HoD).
- Teaching support staff who are familiar with the units (CurtAc).
- Time allowance for unit coordination and development (CurtAc).
- Policy infrastructure to give freedom to exercise authority and discretion to facilitate TAs (HoD).
- Information and training around supporting transitioning to TR role as a HoS (HoS, HRODU).

Showing value to TAs

- Providing TAs with leadership opportunities (Deans), professional development events (such as TA retreat) (T&L), teaching excellence awards and certificates (HoS) are all ways staff showed value to TAs. Respect (Deans) and promotion of good achievements through emails, newsletters (HoS) was another way this happened.
- TAs suggested that they would like to be valued in terms of reduced workload, better recognition of teaching related duties and more indication of value beyond eVALUate. Further, some suggested it would be useful if events held for TAs were held when they can actually attend.
- TAs from two Schools indicated that they did feel valued in terms of their role, but that there was very little demonstration of value from the university itself.

Examples of good practice

- Outstanding eVALUates, award nominations, unsolicited emails from students, people who are examples of good practice, assignment office, celebrating eVALUates (all raised by one group of TAs).
- TA retreats have boosted morale (HoS).
- Key leadership roles for TAs (T&L, TAs).
- No division in terms of access to resources for TAs and TRs in one School (TAs).

Transitioning

- Many suggested the need to make the mechanism for transitioning clear (Deans, HoD, HoS, TAs, HRODU) and that there was a strong need for transitioning and flexibility between roles (HoD, HoS, T&L) and staff/mentors to support it happening (TAs).
• There was one suggestion that transitioning between roles was not necessary, but a clear pathway for TAs to move up the ladder was needed to stop them wanting to move into a TR role, thinking that they could easily advance in a TR compared to TA role (T&L).

• Time allocation for research is needed if a TA wants to become a TR (HoS, T&L).

• Other points suggested included increased PD (T&L), time/support to transition (TAs, T&L) the need to be able to be competitive moving to another institution, not just at Curtin (TAs, T&L) and a potential spectrum of roles rather than a division (T&L).

What needs to be changed or refined?

• Workload was a major component that needs to be changed or refined, particularly in terms of allocations for specific components of the TA role, which varies from School to School.

• TAs need more room to be innovative teachers, without the consequence of poor eVALUate scores.

• At the university level, it was suggested that:
  o The system needs to be designed to support academics.
  o The impact of the changes on morale and organisational climate need to be addressed to raise respect and the level of value for the TA role and to address the divide between TAs and TRs.
  o Role clarity for all roles across the university, including documentation.
  o Curtin needs to learn from others who have successfully (or non-successfully) implemented TA roles and transitioning.
  o Clarity around why the TA roles were bought in in the first place, as there was variable emphasis by some senior staff.
  o Improved access for TAs to leadership roles.

OTHER

• Student expectations that they are taught by someone who is doing research, or in specific disciplines, teachers who have industry experience (T&L).

TA perceptions

• Perception of the TA role varies between individuals, groups and Schools (HoS, T&L, HRODU) but generally the RA role is still seen as the more prestigious academic role (HoS, HoD, TAs, HRODU).

• In some Schools TRs go to TAs to seek advice regarding teaching techniques, innovation, online ideas and general ideas. The more senior TA’s should be leading the way in teaching innovation (HoS, HRODU).

• TAs have a sense of belonging, however they also need and require greater integration (HoS). The TA role is a valued contributor to some Schools. However, due to the culture during and after reshaping, TAs who were previously TRs have “devalued themselves in their own minds” (HoS, HRODU).
A desktop audit was conducted as part of the review of the role of the Teaching Academic.

The aim of this audit was to ensure the teaching academic role is clearly aligned with relevant Curtin policies, guidelines and processes and academic and professional activities.

Summary of Audit Findings

1. The terminology used in Curtin documents may at first be confusing. In summary:

   a) Scholarly Teaching Fellows (STF) title is used to replace casual staff so casual numbers are lower. Ongoing Sessional Fellows (OSF) and STF are not eligible for promotion.

   b) Teaching Focussed (TF) and Teaching Focussed Clinical / Professional (TFCP) are the most commonly used terminology. Used to advertise all new teaching positions and in all current Curtin policy documents. Eligible for the normal promotion pathway.

   c) Teaching/Clinical Scholar (TCS) has been phased out on 31 December - changed to teaching focussed (TF) appointment.

Possible Recommendation 1: All documents should be updated to include the new title of Teaching Academic and Teaching Clinical / Professional Academic and remove reference to ‘Focussed.’

2. Whilst there is no specific conflicting information between documents, the role statements, promotions and WPPR documents do not include research in the teaching academic role and the reference to scholarship of teaching is unclear. The documents that support research activities refer to academics and hence it is unclear whether the Teaching Academic is able to apply for Study leave. It is unclear whether a teaching academic who wishes to undertake research as part of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (as outlined in Teaching Excellence at Curtin) is eligible for support such as study leave.

Possible Recommendation 2: There needs to be a clear understanding of the expectations around the scholarship of teaching and Educational Research and how Teaching Academics are supported to communicate innovations and improved pedagogies.

Possible Recommendation 3: There needs to be a way of capturing the activities related to the scholarship of teaching (previously captured in SCRIPT for the purposes of the Teaching Performance Index) to support the WPPR and promotions process.

3. Workload, as outlined in the EBA is a the maximum of 550 hours of teaching delivery per year equates to, according to our calculation, 17.1 hours/week for two teaching study periods per annum or 11.4 hours/week if over 3 study periods. The allocation of workload in the EBA of a maximum of 550 hours of teaching delivery and 36 weeks teaching delivery per year etc may be unclear. Teaching related duties and teaching delivery are allocated a maximum of 75% of available work hours. The suitability of this workload model in capturing activities related to student support, assessment, feedback, unit coordination and so on is untested.

The student to staff ratio varies considerably between teaching and teaching and research academic roles and between Schools.

Possible Recommendation 4: A clearer workload allocation of teaching related duties would provide clarity on the appropriateness of the current workload model and allocations.
The following documents were reviewed:

1. **Staff Appointments**

   Role statements
   
   - Professor_TF
   - Associate_Professor_TF
   - Senior_Lecturer_TF
   - Lecturer_TF
   - Associate_Lecturer_TF

   Probation_Guidelines_080212(2)

   Appt of Fixed-Term & Cont Staff Procedures - April 2015

   Appointment_of_academic_staff_who_do_not_hold_a_doctoral_degree

2. **Support for Research Activities**

   Academic Study Program Procedures - Mar 2014

   HDC_Form_Final_20_August_2013

   Staff_Dev_Fund_Nov2013

   Application_for_Study_Support_(Nov_2013)_v3

   Academic Study Program_Agreement_DM061213_v12

   ASP_Application_Form_030713

3. **Promotions**

   Academic Promotions Procedures - April 2015

4. **WPPR**

   Exemplar-WPPR-Teaching_Focussed-081113

5. **EBA**

   Enterprise_Agreement_2012_-__2016.pdf_-_Adobe_Acrobat_Pro

6. **Workload for Teaching Academics**
Student Staff Ratio

Table 1 shows the student staff ratio (SSR) calculated from Curtin records for teaching academics and teaching and research academics for each School for 2013 and 2014. The data is calculated from Staff FTE and Taught EFTSL by School and includes the teaching of OUA students as well as all onshore students.

SSR (Curtin) represents the proportion of staff against the students taught, using workload as a relative comparison (EFTSL for student load and teaching FTE for staff load).

Calculating SSR (Curtin)

The calculation rules of Student Staff Ratios (SSR) have been provided by DIISRTE, however SSR (Curtin) varies by using FTE (Actual) rather than FTE (Government).

The student staff ratio is made up of two components, the denominator, the Staff FTE value, and the numerator, the student EFTSL data.

For the purpose of this report, the teaching of OUA students as well as all onshore students is included. All offshore teaching is excluded.

As with the Student EFTSL, not all Staff FTE are included in this calculation. Staff figures are calculated using Academic FTE and are filtered by:

- Academic “Teaching” and “Teaching and Research” staff only
- Includes Sessional staff
- (Note that Alesco does not hold details of Offshore and Partner staff).

Where do we get SSR (Curtin) from?

Student data is sourced from Student One, with the Organisational Unit responsibility being derived from the Unit Teaching Organisational Unit.

Staff Data is sourced from Alesco, with the Organisational Structure being derived from the CLEVEL mapping utilised by HR.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Name</th>
<th>Type of Document</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Purpose of Document</th>
<th>Overview of Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Promotions Procedures</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>Scholarly Teaching Fellows or Ongoing Sessional Fellows</td>
<td>Academic Promotions Guide</td>
<td>Not eligible for promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Study Program Procedures</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>No specific reference to Teaching Fellows</td>
<td>Academic Study Program (ASP) Guide - Sabbatical</td>
<td>ASP is primarily intended to provide research opportunities to those academic staff who ordinarily do not have access to intensive and sustained research activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Study Program (ASP)</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>Teaching Focussed (TF), TF Clinical/Professional (TFCP), Scholarly Teaching Fellow (STF), Ongoing Sessional Fellow (OSF), Teaching/ Clinical Scholar (TCS)</td>
<td>Application for Academic Study Program (ASP)</td>
<td>References to 5 types of teaching focused staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Role Statement</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>Teaching Academic, Teaching Focussed (TF), Teaching Focussed Clinical Professional (TFCP)</td>
<td>Advertise an Associate Lecturer / Clinical Professional Associate Position</td>
<td>This role contributes primarily to teaching and learning, at undergraduate and postgraduate and carries out activities to develop scholarly expertise relevant to the discipline or profession. Responsibilities: Teaching and Learning, Service and Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Role Statement</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Academic, Teaching Focussed (TF)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teaching Academic, Teaching Focussed (TF)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teaching Academic, Teaching Focussed (TF)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teaching Academic, Teaching Focussed (TF)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Focussed Clinical Professional (TFCP)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teaching Focussed Clinical Professional (TFCP)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teaching Focussed Clinical Professional (TFCP)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teaching Focussed Clinical Professional (TFCP)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Focussed Clinical Professional (TFCP)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Teaching Focussed Clinical Professional (TFCP)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teaching Focussed Clinical Professional (TFCP)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advertise an Lecturer / Clinical Professional Fellow Position</strong></td>
<td><strong>Advertise Senior Lecturer / Senior Clinical Professional Fellow Position</strong></td>
<td><strong>Advertise an Associate Professor / Principal Clinical Professional Fellow Position</strong></td>
<td><strong>Advertise an Associate Professor / Principal Clinical Professional Fellow Position</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This role contributes primarily to teaching and learning, and carries out activities to maintain and develop scholarly activities relevant to the discipline or profession. A lecturer develops an understanding of the student learning experience through a commitment to high quality, effective teaching practice. This includes the ability to incorporate research, scholarship and/or professional practice into teaching activities and a commitment to teaching and innovation. The incumbent is expected to have a growing profile in teaching and service/leadership. They are likely to lead or coordinate the work of other staff. The incumbent is also expected to have a thorough knowledge of their subject within their discipline. Responsibilities: Teaching and Learning, Service and Leadership</td>
<td>This role makes significant contributions to teaching and learning and carries out activities to enhance and develop scholarly teaching practices relevant to the discipline or profession. Responsibilities: Teaching and Learning, Service and Leadership</td>
<td>The Associate Professor / Principal Clinical Professional Fellow provides leadership in teaching and learning activities, engaging in and leading innovative curriculum design and development and communicating improved pedagogies to teaching staff. This role also contributes to the advancement of teaching and learning, including the incorporation of research, scholarship and/or professional practice into teaching activities. Responsibilities: Teaching and Learning, Service and Leadership</td>
<td>This role provides leadership in excellence for teaching and learning, leads major curriculum initiatives and pedagogical developments and provides a sustained contribution to leadership and governance within the University. Responsibilities: Teaching and Learning, Service and Leadership</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Informal feedback following a visit to Curtin University to discuss the implementation of Teaching Focussed academic roles and the concept of scholarship

Confidential Paper

Teaching-focussed academics

Review of the Teaching Focussed Academic Role at Curtin

Expressed consistent views about the way T-F positions have been introduced, and these were overwhelmingly critical related to:

1. Workload,
2. T-F role constraints,
3. Confusion about the meaning of scholarship of teaching and learning, and
4. Implementation and morale.

Actions to Consider

1. Clarify strategic purpose of TF positions: what scholarship means, how TF academics might develop their careers, clarify perceived constraints - as is they are lower level teaching jobs with little scope for leadership and innovation.

2. Consider flexibility in career paths: 3 possible ways –
   a) excellent teacher - discipline focussed,
   b) leader of teaching and learning - path to upper management,
   c) educational researcher - educational rather than discipline focussed.

3. Clarify expectations and ensure systematic communication strategy.

A TF re-launch -‘re-launch’ once there is real clarity across senior academic
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Planning and Performance Review</th>
<th>WPPR Exemplar</th>
<th>Teaching Focussed (TF), TF Clinical/Professional (TFCP), Scholarly Teaching Fellow (STF), Teaching/Clinical Scholar (TCS)</th>
<th>EXAMPLE: Senior Lecturer-School of Organisational Ethics, Faculty of Business WPPR</th>
<th>General Exemplar of what a Teaching Focussed Academic should have in their WPPR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching and Learning</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Coordination &amp; teaching of four Business Ethics and Organisational Behaviour units</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Supervision of two honours students</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Completion of Graduate Certificate in Higher Education</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Objective 1:</strong> Deliver high quality teaching in four Business Ethics and Organisation Behaviour units.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Objective 2:</strong> Improve outcomes for honours students to ensure 100% of students receive 70% + in their proposal submissions.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Objective 3:</strong> Complete formal qualification in higher education</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Finished Graduate Certificate in Higher Education with CWA of 76%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Service and Leadership</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Attended and effectively contribute to national committee on business ethics</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Performance Review

Objective 1: Contribute to Management and Business Ethics professional bodies across WA regularly throughout the assessment period.

- Attended all meetings of the Business Ethics group held on a bimonthly basis

Other Leadership/Service achievements

- Co-ordinated CBS’s student mentor program for Semester 1 and 2
- Represented CBS at graduation ceremonies in Perth in February 2013
- Organised the CBS Open Day staff involvement and attended related meetings.

Teaching Excellence at Curtin

Curtin Teaching and Learning (Sept 2013)

Teaching academic

The teaching excellence criteria are designed to assist individual academic staff, particularly new and early career staff, in clarifying expectations, as well as providing

The Curtin Teaching Excellence criteria provide a single set of measures to underpin all relevant reward and recognition processes, so that teaching excellence is clear and consistent with the University’s strategic goals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curtin University Academic, Professional and General Staff Enterprise Agreement 2012-2016</th>
<th>Fair Work Commission guidelines to assist in the process of supporting academics and establishing guidelines for promotion and awards.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching focussed, Teaching focussed (clinical/professional), Scholarly Teaching Fellow (STF), Teaching/clinical scholar</td>
<td>Defines the role of Teaching Focussed and Teaching Focussed (Clinical/Professional, Scholarly Teaching Fellow (STF))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teaching focussed career structure is equivalent to the levels of appointment and remuneration of Academic Staff Members appointed as teaching and research. STFs were established to provide a career opportunity for Casual Academic Staff Members thereby reducing the number of Casual Academic Staff Members in the University workforce.

The teaching/clinical scholar role as described at Schedule 12(5), Transitional Arrangements – Teaching/Clinical Scholar will cease to operate from 31 December - change to teaching focussed (TF) appointment.

**Scholarly Teaching Fellow (STF)** means an Academic Staff Member who is principally engaged in Teaching Delivery and Teaching-related Duties and is drawn from an applicant pool of Casual Staff Members or Academic Staff Members on Fixed Term Appointments (existing or former) with at least 12 months or 2 study periods of academic employment in total in Australian universities within the last 3 years.

**Teaching Delivery** means the provision of education through activities such as lectures, tutorials, seminars, demonstrations, laboratory sessions, clinical/practicum sessions, fieldwork, supervision, or other teaching methods, including teaching in equivalent ways and equivalent duration using technology through web-based, technology enhanced, online and
distance education media.

**Teaching-related Duties** includes curriculum development; unit coordination; preparation of materials; consultation; assessment and feedback; higher degree by research supervision; pedagogical innovation; and training for on-line and alternative delivery.

**Workload** includes any of the duties relating to teaching and learning, research, scholarship and creative production, leadership, administration and service and any matter that is incidental thereto.

**Teaching Focussed and Teaching Focussed (Clinical/Professional)**

23.5.1 A teaching focussed appointment will be to either a teaching focussed role or teaching focussed (clinical/professional) role in accordance with Schedule 8, *Classification Standards (Academic Staff)*.

23.5.2 A Staff Member on a teaching focussed appointment will be allocated up to a maximum of 75% of available work hours for Teaching Delivery and Teaching-related Duties, with a maximum of 550 hours of Teaching Delivery a year.

23.5.3 A Staff Member on a teaching focussed appointment will normally have a maximum of 36 weeks Teaching Delivery per year. However, this may be varied due to alternative teaching arrangements, clinical teaching, practicums and fieldwork. The Workload allocation will provide for a 10 week Teaching Delivery-free period as included in annual work planning (and this should preferably be in a single block or blocks of weeks subject to the core teaching program commitments of each Staff Member).

23.5.4 A Staff Member on a teaching focussed appointment will be allocated a minimum of 25% of available work hours for other academic activities.

**Scholarly Teaching Fellow (STF)**
23.6.4 An STF will be allocated up to a maximum of **75% of available work hours** for teaching and Teaching-related Duties, with a maximum of **550 hours of Teaching Delivery a year**.

23.6.5 An STF will normally have a maximum of **36 weeks Teaching Delivery per year**. However, this may be varied due to alternative teaching arrangements, clinical teaching, practicums and fieldwork. The Workload allocation will provide for a 10 week Teaching Delivery-free period as included in annual work planning (and this should preferably be in a single block or blocks of weeks subject to the core teaching program commitments of each Staff Member).

23.6.6 An STF will be allocated a minimum of **25% of available work hours** for other academic activities.

23.6.7 A STF will principally undertake work that would otherwise have been performed in the University by a Casual Academic Staff Member.

The Teaching Focussed (TF), teaching focussed (clinical/professional) Report on Teaching Focussed Academic Retreat aims to disseminate the outcomes and recommendations from the November two-day retreat to facilitate appropriate professional development and how to successfully navigate workload and maintain discipline knowledge with the University’s current definition of SoTL.

Staff in clinical professional roles (particularly in Health Sciences) are faced with slightly different challenges as they are already required to do ongoing professional development as part of their professional accreditation; for them issues arise around meeting both Curtin outputs for TFs and their professional body’s requirements.

TF appointments are clearly feeling devalued; teaching focused academics experience marginalisation due to the status of teaching and educational
Curtin Expectations for Academic Performance (CEAP) including three parallel Academic Roles, namely ‘Teaching and Research’, ‘Teaching Focussed’ and ‘Research Academic’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Staff: Teaching Focussed (including Clinical/Professional Fellows)</th>
<th>Outlines expectations at levels A-E for each type of academic staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The Teaching Focussed (TF) Academic will contribute primarily to teaching and learning associated activities as agreed through the WPPR process. All teaching focussed staff are expected to engage in innovative curriculum design, development and delivery as appropriate to their level. This will require a scholarly engagement with the relevant disciplinary and pedagogical literatures. While publication of scholarly articles in leading journals is desirable at all levels it is essential for promotion to level E. All TF academic staff are expected to contribute to service and leadership at an appropriate level. | }
Appendix F – Teaching Academic Retreat Report (Summaries)

Summary of results from the TF/TA Retreats run in 2014 and 2015

Inaugural Teaching Focussed Retreat (Humanities and Health Sciences), November 2014

Method

Demographic information was collected including gender, level of appointment, teaching focus (e.g. undergraduate, postgraduate or fieldwork) and years of experience in higher education. A pre and post participant questionnaire based on the external evaluation undertaken for an OLT Fellowship by Associate Professor Jacquie MacDonald (2014) was also employed. The external evaluation of Professor MacDonald’s Fellowship by Edwards (2012) utilised a questionnaire that explored four domains: knowledge, confidence, attitudes and practices. An adapted version of this approach was adopted to determine whether there was a shift in the domains following participation at the Retreat. Participants were asked to respond to questions (using a 5 point Likert scale) relating to the Retreat learning outcomes across knowledge, confidence, attitudes and practices.

At the start of day one participants were asked to answer questions addressing the four domains (Appendix 2, day one questionnaire). The same questions were repeated at the end of day two along with additional questions that asked participants to rate the key sessions. Participants were also given the opportunity to provide broad qualitative feedback at the end of day two (see Appendix 3, day 2 questionnaire). Finally, future initiatives/activities identified by participants in the final session of the Retreat were recorded (anonymously).

Due to ethical issues relating to identifying participants (and the unequal power relationship between the Deans of Teaching and Learning conducting the evaluation) it was decided not to match the pre and post data, but rather look at overall changes across the domains for the group. Ethics approval was granted through the Faculty of Health Sciences’ teaching and learning, low risk, ethics review process.

Results

The quantitative pre and post rating data was aggregated in SPSS v22 and measures of central tendency (median and where appropriate mean) and distribution (upper and lower quartile and where appropriate standard deviation) were compared in order to identify and describe changes in the aforementioned measures. All qualitative feedback and future recommendation were de-identified where necessary, aggregated and imported into NVivo 10 where the data was reviewed and thematically coded with a focus on identifying key areas of difficulty and value for TFs as well as identify strengths and areas of improvement for the TF Retreat.

Fifty-two participants on day one completed the questionnaire and forty-two on day two. As mentioned earlier, no attempt to match the pre and post data was made due to ethical issues relating to identifying participants.

Demographics

Gender, years in higher education, current teaching focus and level of appointment

The majority of participants were women who were experienced academics, with over 50% having 10 or more years’ employment in higher education. Undergraduate teaching was the focus for the majority of the participants. Most of the participants were at Level B, followed by Level C appointments.
Figure 1: Gender representation of the participants across the two days

Figure 2: Number of years in higher education

Figure 3: Participant teaching focus
Across the domain of understanding, the results suggest that participants’ understanding deepened—in relation to the learning outcomes—across the two days. In particular, there was a marked improvement for questions three and five, which were associated with networking and the potential of a community of TF scholars to support SoTL outcomes.

**Level of Understanding**

Figure 4: Participant appointment level

**Pre participation - Level of Understanding**

- Q1: The role and expectations of teaching focused roles
- Q2: The impact that your perception of academic identity can have on your personal scholarship
- Q3: How to build links with other teaching focused staff
- Q4: How to apply strategies that utilise change management theory
- Q5: The potential for SoTL outcomes that result from a T & L community of practice
- Q6: Career opportunities for teaching focused academics

Figure 5: Pre participation level of understanding

**Post participation - Level of Understanding**

- Q1: The role and expectations of teaching focused roles
- Q2: The impact that your perception of academic identity can have on your personal scholarship
- Q3: How to build links with other teaching focused staff
- Q4: How to apply strategies that utilise change management theory
- Q5: The potential for SoTL outcomes that result from a T & L community of practice
- Q6: Career opportunities for teaching focused academics

Figure 6: Post participation level of understanding
**Level of Confidence**

Data relating to participants’ level of confidence suggests that the Retreat improved their confidence particularly in terms of their capacity to build links with other TF academics, and apply change management strategies. Participant confidence in the potential for career development as a TF also increased.

![Pre participation - Level of Confidence](image)

**Figure 7: Pre participation level of confidence**

![Post participation - Level of Confidence](image)

**Figure 8: Post participation level of confidence**

**Attitude to the Role of TF Academics**

Although there was some shift in attitude to the TF role across the two days, this was less marked than growth in confidence related to the value of a community to support TFs.

![Pre participation - Role of Teaching Focused Academics](image)

**Figure 9: Pre participation attitude to the TF academic role**
Likely Actions of Respondents

It appears as though there was also an intention to shift future actions as a result of participation in the Retreat.

Pre participation - Likely Actions

Post participation - Likely Actions
**Value of Sessions**

Clearly the session most valued by participants was the one facilitated by Professor Sue Fyfe and Associate Professor Linley Lord on career progression. The sessions that were least well received were those that challenged participant thinking, for example, the one on academic identity and the session facilitated by Professor Rick Ladyshewsky on intrapersonal skills and emotional intelligence to manage change (e.g. faulty thinking).

![Value of Sessions](image)

**Figure 13: Value of sessions**

**Key Valued Aspects**

**Networking**

The most frequently sited valued aspect of the retreat was the opportunity to network with other professionals. Particularly, individuals highlighted the opportunity this gave them to share with and learn from each other as well as to share experiences. Additionally several participants highlighted the informal social tone, and how this, together with discovering shared experiences in their colleagues was reassuring to them.

Learnt a lot, mainly from the other participants at the forum who I will continue to work with.

Networking or: opportunities to meet + chat to other colleagues both in relation to work (issues/concerns/ideas) but also purely social chat.

Discovering people as confused as I am - but also that Uni does not actually have clearly formulated expectations for role, so stress may not be my own failing.

**Leadership Presence**

Many respondents expressed value for the leadership presence and engagement at the event. Respondents highlighted the quality of the VC presentation, as well as the approachability and engagement of the VC and leadership staff. Several respondents also felt that the leadership presence at the event served to indicate that the university valued and wanted to engage with TF staff.

The openness & honesty of the leadership e.g. Georgina Fyfe, & Kerry to listen to some quite strong opinions + negatives. The VC is listening

The VC address was clear, Re-assuring & transparent. People kept referring back to this during the 2 days
I loved the informal tone of the retreat where I could talk to the Dean of T&L as well as new colleagues. It was fair and I think going to lead some great collaborations.

Good leadership is essential to the [success] of Curtin and so are we [apparently].

**Opportunities for Discussion**

In addition, many respondents also indicated that, beyond a surface level networking opportunity, they appreciated the opportunity to discuss and engage freely with a variety of issues surrounding TF roles and SoTL. Additionally some respondents highlighted the value of being able to discuss these subjects with individuals from outside their own school.

Chat to other colleagues both in relation to work (issues/concerns/ideas) The opportunity for authentic + reflective conversations.

Getting to meet/discuss issues with people from another faculty. The ability to just talk to other staff outside my own school.

**Areas for Improvement**

**Need for Clarity and more Concrete Practice Focus**

Many respondents indicated that a greater focus on practical, concrete practices as well as greater clarity was needed. These tended to concern either the career structure and definition of the TF staff identity or, concrete working examples of SoTL and successful teaching practice and techniques. This often came up in with respondents contrasting a need for this with an overabundance of less concrete activities.

More relevant focused group activities + tasks that can help to clarify what the possibilities of SoTL can be, instead of ‘sharing’ tasks i.e. real work understanding.

More focus on developing excellence in teaching + new education approaches rather than so much time on SoTL and everyone’s problems + concerns + frustrations.

More concrete opportunities to learn & how to be more effective/successful as a TF academic.

Still need more documented clarity on professional development, career progression & level promotion. Maybe heads of department should attend to address more issues.
Eagerness and Need for Future Events

Many respondents expressed that they felt future TF and SoTL events such as this one were needed. Often these suggestions were specifically associated with the need for concrete practice examples as mentioned above and indicated that this event, though good was only the beginning of what was needed.

A good beginning, but a more rigorous working session would help us feel like we are achieving something worthwhile to make a difference in our understanding of TF + SoTL.

I [would] to attend a separate event that looked at some practical things are teaching Like festival of learning, but everyone together in one place with 30 min snapshots of techniques + strategies. A follow up event of this in six or 12 months. Showcasing SoTL achievements/developments. Include HOS more with the organisation of this. At times they seemed a bit out of the loop.

This is only the beginning and a good start. Future events - allow what that has been proposed to realise suggestions.

Staff Consultation

Several responders indicated they felt it would have been valuable to have consulted the staff to establish what was needed in the retreat prior to the retreat being run. Sometimes this came up in context with reducing repetition, or the need for greater concrete solution focus.

Ask the participants what questions they have before they attend - them address these things throughout the two days. Ask us first what we want/need before planning event

Pre-retreat questionnaire on what should be covered to aid those in the TF role.

Leading Teaching and Learning (Emotional Intelligence Session)

Comments indicated that many participants found the information useful and of value and one individual did single this presentation out for praise. However some participants reacted negatively feeling that it placed blame on TFs for any negative emotions they had rather than acknowledging any difficulty they may have encountered. Emotional intelligence session - while it is good for us to think more positively, it also seemed like it was a bit more of a ‘blame the TF’ staff for how they feel. The authors believe that the mood of the audience was less receptive at this point as they were still grappling with their identity in the newly established TF roles.

Issues Raised During the Sessions

- Some of the main issues raised by participants in the different sessions included:
  - Clarity around defining SoTL and University expectations.
  - How do TFs stay current in their discipline when the focus is on SoTL outputs and Curtin’s current definition of SoTL is very narrow?
  - Streamlining ethics processes for low risk teaching and learning related research.
  - Developing a Community of Practice: a “College of Teaching Practitioners.”
  - Clarity around career paths for TFs.
  - Consistency between Schools in terms of valuing TFs and opportunities provided.
  - Who will train Heads of School and promotions panel staff in relation to TF positions (e.g. managing the culture at Curtin that values research over teaching)?
• Create University-wide forums to share teaching ideas and innovations.
• What professional development is available for TFs?
• Be inclusive of Teaching Research colleagues with a passion for teaching.
• TF academics on different senior committees to support cultural change.
Summary of results from the second Teaching Academic Retreat (Health Sciences), June 2015

Method

Evaluation questionnaires were administered at the end of day one and two. Participants were asked to rate their overall impression of the day on a 7 point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Participants were also asked to rate their knowledge and skills preceding and following the sessions. Qualitative data was also collected via general questions on which session/s were most useful and why, how they intended to use the information gained in the future and areas for improvement.

Results - Quantitative Data

Overall Impressions

The following figures illustrate that overall participants preferred day two.

Figure 1: Day One Overall Impressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1 - Impressions of retreat activities (n=49)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree Somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree Somewhat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Day Two Overall Impressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 2 - Impressions of retreat activities (n=37)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree Somewhat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
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<td>Agree Somewhat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Knowledge and Skill Pre and Post Sessions
Results comparing pre and post items using Related Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests indicate that there are significant differences (large effect sizes) between pre and post test scores for all sessions.

**Day One**

![Figure 3: Day One Pre-data](image)

![Figure 4: Day One Post-data](image)
Day Two

Results comparing pre and post items using Related Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests indicate that there are significant differences (large effect sizes) between pre and post test scores for all sessions.

Figure 5: Day Two Pre-data

Figure 6: Day Two Post-data
Qualitative Data - Day One

Most useful session

Dawn Bennett’s session on academic identity was the most popular session on day one (nine comments).

- “...Dawn Bennett – encouraged me to think about some concrete concepts I had not considered...”
- “...Prof Dawn Bennett. She was engaging and her activities stimulated thought...”

The session on Careers and Leadership and TA’s SoTL and Careers were joint second (eight comments each).

- “...Careers, leadership and identity were useful as personal insight/development...”
- “...TA’s, SoTL and careers – the stats showed the true story...”
- “...TA’s, SoTL and careers was most useful in terms of practical information for applying for promotion/achieving current position...”

The VC’s address got six mentions, whilst six people had also said all sessions were equally good.

- “...VC’s address learning about what support the university is giving to TA’s...”
- “...The VC address was helpful to get an understanding of Curtin’s viewpoint of the TA role...”
- “...All were excellent. Really well thought out program. Enjoyed everything, all the sessions were great. Thank you!!...”
- “...All of them are great. Mainly because they are interactive and collaborative...”

Intention to use information from sessions in the future

The majority of people intended to use the information they had gained from the sessions to help them in developing their academic career plan (16 comments).

- “...To plan out my career trajectory at Curtin...”
- “...Help me work out what direction I might take in my TA career...”
- “...The information about practical steps and strategies to develop criteria, paired with the more inspirational personal development aspects will go towards applying for permanency...”
- “...Explore avenues for career progression (further education)...”
- “...Improve my career prospects – move towards possible PhD...”
- “...Use “Lynne’s document” to be strategic about my activities for career progression and promotion...”

Attendees also intended to use the information to guide their SoTL work (nine comments) and implement strategies into their teaching (six comments).
• “...Work towards collecting evidence of SoTL...”
• “...I’ll consider how to incorporate SoTL into Honours projects...”
• “...Following today I will have a better idea of how to incorporate SoTL in my work that I already do...”
• “...Start networking more to get more links to engage more in SoTL...”
• “...Adopt activities for use with students...”
• “...Implement teaching ideas learnt from networking with colleagues...”

Promotion, networking and keeping their CV up to date were also common responses from attendees (four responses each [12]).

• “...Think more about academic promotion...”
• “...Plan for promotion...”
• “...Take inspiration from others...”
• “...Maintain and establish networks...”
• “...Start networking more to get more links to engage more in SoTL...”
• “...Keeping CV up to date” is certainly a great idea...

How to improve the sessions

Whilst most attendees thought there was no need to improve the sessions (seven comments), some suggested the sessions needed more relevance (five comments) and that they needed more opportunity to interact and discuss with colleagues (five comments).

• “...Everything was great: location, food, table arrangements and activities...”
• “...Overall, I have enjoyed day 1 and you’ve done a good job...”
• “...Nothing, very good. Thoroughly enjoyed it. Inspired me! Hope tomorrow is just as good...”
• “...The activities were fun, but I didn’t really understand how they translated to the intended information/topic...”
• “...It was interesting but quite generic -> not sure I walked away with anything I can now do/implement...”
• “...More opportunity for interacting (morning sessions)...”
• “...Extend networking for more discussion about teaching methods/ideas...”
• “...Provide more discussion time...”

Day Two

Most Useful Session

Attendees on the second day of the TA retreat found Jill Downie’s presentation on the Belinda Probert review the most useful session (13 comments).
The Teaching Portfolio and Philosophy session by Rachel Sheffield and Helen Flavell was also well received by attendees (17), as were the SoTL (nine comments). Overall, all sessions on the second day were well received and attendees found them useful.

- “…Jill Downie’s session – her honesty and openness to address questions…”
- “…Jill was fantastic!”
- “…Probert review added context…”
- “…SoTL brainstorming…”
- “…SoTL panel – great idea!!…”
- “…SoTL ideas brainstorm -> creative cluster…”
- “…The SoTL ideas session at the end…”
- “…Appreciate Rachel and Helen’s session and the workshops that will ensue…”
- “…Session by Dr Rachel Sheffield – wish it was a longer session…”
- “…Really enjoyed the teaching portfolio. Presentation was engaging and felt like I really got a lot out of the session…”

**Intention to use information from sessions in the future**

Attendees were most interested in using the information from day two’s sessions to start creating a teaching portfolio (12 comments) and to network with colleagues from the Retreat (seven comments).

- “…Use the information to commence my teaching portfolio…”
- “…Create web-based portfolio…”
- “…Start my teaching portfolio next week!!…”
- “…Organise meeting with my creative cluster…”
- “…Intend on using network connections to do collaboration TEDF projects…”

Similar to day one, some attendees intended to use the information to guide their SoTL work (six comments), to implement learnt strategies into their teaching (6 comments) and for career development and future planning (5 comments).

- “…Use it to assist TA staff with their SoTL ideas…”
- “…Access support to progress SoTL…”
- “…Lesson redesign -> specifically for students. Innovative teaching methods. New assessment to reflect innovative methods…”
- “…The assessment ideas were fantastic and I intend on using them in my units…”
- “…As motivation for improving teaching practices/engagement…”
• “...It will help me plan for the future. Not only the units I teach in or coordinate, but also for my career...”

• “...Am leaving today feeling more valued by the university as a TA. Have better ideas on how to progress my career and a better understanding of what is expected to get there...”

• “...Apply to development of and approach to TA path...”

How to improve the sessions

As in day one, most attendees thought there was no need to improve the sessions (7 comments). Some had commented that and that they needed more time to discuss with colleagues (three comments) and that there needed to be an earlier break in the afternoon of day two (2 comments).

• “...Great day – reassuring. Found yesterday lowered my motivation whilst (to)day was empowering and enhanced my motivation...”

• “...All sessions were great today, very practical. Thank you!...”

• “...More opportunity for networking and discussion with colleagues...”

• “...More discussion time. The small group and peer discussions were invaluable...”

Attendees also commented on the need for more time to explore Rachel and Helen’s session (2 comments) and that the sessions needed to be more interactive (2 comments).

• “...More time in the portfolio/philosophy session...”

• “...More interactive sessions...”
Appendix G - TAWP subgroup report: definition and support of SoTL for TAs

Actions arising from subgroup discussions, December 2015
Subgroup members: Georgina Fyfe, Dawn Bennett, Artur Lugmayr
Aim: to clarify expectations of TA with regard to evidence of SoTL

The working party endorsed both the SoTL LibGuide [http://libguides.library.curtin.edu.au/sotl](http://libguides.library.curtin.edu.au/sotl) (Figure 1a and 1b) and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning/Research in Higher Education Reference Guide to Planning and Gathering Evidence from Health Sciences (Figure 2) as exemplars of the sort of resources that need to be provided either as Faculty-specific or university-wide.

Actions required to clarify expectations of TA staff with regard to SoTL:
- Clarify the expectations of SoTL engagement and outcomes for TAs and link to workload to ensure consistency where possible;
  - Ensure that promotions guidelines, WPPR prompts and the workload allocation system clearly articulate expectations of all staff with teaching responsibilities in relation to SoTL, and that this is consistent across all policy documents
- Recognise and support, as central to effective TA performance, the importance of current discipline content knowledge;
  - This will be context-dependent and may vary across Faculties, but some guidance should be developed for Heads of School
- Support and enable the development of effective pedagogical approaches, including discipline-specific pedagogical approaches, that support teaching academics fulfil their role as scholarly teachers;
  - This should be coordinated through CLI but some faculty-specific approaches will also be needed
- Support and enable the development of SoTL activities including language, literature, research processes, ethics and dissemination;
  - Consider support in each Faculty for a SoTL coordinator (currently part of the T&L team in both Health Sciences and in Humanities) to assist staff with grant applications, project development, and dissemination of SoTL
- Synthesise and curate university and faculty SoTL resources for the new website and include resources and links to key papers;
  - The Health Sciences SoTL Libguide was considered a good example of useful resource collation
- Review the University’s definition of SoTL to ensure that it is appropriate for the new academic roles;
  - Current definition on website is not referenced
- Consider the Field of Research for SoTL publications and discuss concerns about dilution of Education FoR with R&D
  - Possible way forward is to encourage TAs to publish “Professional” papers on T&L within their discipline FoR and reserve Education FoR for higher impact journal publications
- Ensure that all information related to the above is clear and easy to find on the website.

Figure 1a – SoTL Libguide screenshot
Figure 1b – SoTL Libguide screenshot
Figure 2 - Scholarship of Teaching and Learning/Research in Higher Education Reference Guide to Planning and Gathering Evidence