

# CLASS

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

NOVEMBER 2010

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Facilitation of  
Professional  
Development  
Workshops—Phase  
2a:

**January 27-28:**  
Sydney

**February 1-2:**  
Adelaide

**February 3-4:**  
Perth

**February 7-8:**  
Melbourne

**February 10-11:**  
Brisbane

**March 30:** CLASS  
Project Newsletter  
Volume 2, Issue 1  
Published

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## CLASS Project

*Coordinators Leading Advancement of Sessional Staff (CLASS) is a project that has been funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC). The project aims to support and enhance subject coordinators' leadership and management of sessional teaching teams by developing quality processes, practices and resources that can be used across institutions.*

## Subject Coordinators Engage in Action Learning Activity

Subject Coordinators from each of the four initial partner institutions—University of Wollongong (UOW), Australian Catholic University (ACU), University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and University of Western Sydney (UWS) have for the past few months, since attending the pilot PD Workshop held at UTS on June 18, been engaging in an action learning initiative. This action learning initiative was designed to provide Subject Coordinators with an opportunity to practice effective strategies in the leadership and management of teaching teams, particularly with regard to sessional staff.

At the CLASS PD Workshop on June 18, Subject Coordinators identified one aspect of leading a sessional teaching team they personally wished to improve; ascertained a process to support their ability to do this and then implemented this process as an action learning project.

The August CLASS Project Newsletter (Volume 1, Issue 2) profiled the action learning projects undertaken by the Subject Coordinators from the University of Wollongong. This Newsletter provides an overview of the action learning projects that were facilitated by the Subject Coordinators from two of the other initial partner institutions—Australian Catholic University and University of Western Sydney.

### LEAD INSTITUTION:

University of Wollongong



### PARTNER INSTITUTIONS:



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The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council.

# Australian Catholic University CLASS Project Participants

## Jane Allnutt:

Lecturer – School of Nursing

**Project Title:** Increasing Awareness of Mental Health through Interactive Lecturing.

**Project Details:** This project sought to guide and mentor a sessional employee to teach a Mental Health specialty to third year nursing students through the use of current educational research methods related to

interactive learning. Previously students had not performed well when assessed on their knowledge of Mental Health. Past lectures on this topic had been evaluated by the students as 'boring' and 'a waste of time'. This project focused on introducing various interactive lecturing styles to the sessional employee, thus empowering her to make a decision on how she felt most comfortable at imparting her knowledge on the topic to students via lectures. The sessional was fortunate that she could repeat the lecture at a later date to a different cohort of students thus enabling her to reflect and review the lecture and improve on it.

This project addressed an issue related to understanding mental health. This was discussed with the sessional employee, her views, understanding, perceptions and assumptions were challenged and she was encouraged to construct her own ideas on how to improve student perceptions. The sessional tested her ideas in lectures with further discussions transpiring after the original lecture to explore what worked and what didn't work, draw conclusions and define learning. The sessional then integrated the new knowledge into a repeat lecture.



## Fiona Anastas:

Lecturer in Technology, School of Arts and Sciences

**Project Title:** Establishing an effective team of new staff (lecturer-in-charge and tutors).

**Project Details:** The lecturer-in-charge was new to the position in this unit and the 2 sessional staff were new to the University. This project aimed to put a number of activities and procedures in place that would assist new sessional staff in working at ACU in the textiles units. These procedures could also be applied to other technology units. This project was developed based on the lecturer's own experiences of being a sessional staff member. The project particularly involved the strengthening of the following Integrated Competing Values Framework (iCVF) capabilities:

Developer – Building a team and running effective meetings.

Deliverer – Organisation and dissemination of information in a timely manner.

Monitor – evaluating the effectiveness of tutorial activities, timing and assessment tasks.

## Dr Robyn Bentley-Williams:

Senior Lecturer Diversity and Inclusive Education, Faculty of Education

**Project Title:** Cognitive coaching and mediating self-directed learning with sessional staff

**Project Details:** This project was designed to support a sessional staff member in planning career and professional goals through the application of an internal people focus on the iCVF Developer component. A cognitive coaching approach was adopted to explore the sessional staff member's thinking in five states of mind in areas of efficacy, consciousness, flexibility, interdependency and craftsmanship. The project engaged the sessional staff member in planning, reflecting and problem-resolving perspectives in learning and teaching in the complex fields of diversity and inclusive education. The goal of the project was to facilitate the sessional staff member in achieving a deeper understanding of self-as-learner.

**Bronwyn Gordon:**

Lecturer, School of Nursing (NSW & ACT)

**Project Title:** Increasing the awareness of the “Transition Module” for Sessional Lecturers through mentoring by the Lecturer in Charge.

**Project Details:** Guide and mentor a sessional employed to teach a Foundational Nursing theory unit to nursing students through the use of current educational research methods related to successfully transitioning to tertiary learning. This project aimed to develop the sessional lecturer's ability to deliver content that was integrated into the Foundational Nursing theory unit of study. This aspect of the project involved the Subject Coordinator in the role of “Developer” of a sessional lecturer and demonstrated a “People focus” (Vilkinas, Ladyshevsky & Saebel, 2009).

**Kelly Johnson:**

Education and Exercise Science

**Project Title:** Reflective Journal - Experiences in the mentoring relationship

**Project Details:** This project was developed to allow the writing of a reflective journal about the Subject Coordinator's learning experiences as a first time LIC. The challenges/successes and the strategies/skills used in this role were recorded and evaluated to discuss progress, difficulties, suggestions, feedback and to make the necessary adjustments to become a more confident and capable LIC.

**Dr Maria Cynthia (Cindy) Leigh:**

Senior Lecturer, School of Nursing (NSW & ACT)

**Project Title:** Mentoring a new sessional to be a well-prepared and reflective teacher of a large Year 3 Nursing unit.

**Project Details:** This project aimed at mentoring a sessional academic staff member to prepare, teach, assess and reflect as a competent teaching team member of the unit NRSG 346 in semester 2, 2010. This final Year 3 BN subject has a large enrolment (385 students) and is the consolidating unit that focuses on further developing competencies and attributes of students expecting to complete the course and be Registered Nurses within 6 months' of completing. The only other subjects taken in the last semester is a Nursing Context unit (Nursing Practice in Specialty Areas) and two Clinical Placement subjects. As a subject that aims to assist in the transition from Nursing students to practising clinicians, there are high expectations for the teaching team to create a positive learning environment and enthuse students to learn. The main objective, as the LIC of this subject, for this Action Learning Project was to mentor the sessional staff to prepare, teach, assess and reflect as competent teaching team members.

**Dr Abdur Rouf:**

Lecturer, School of Arts and Sciences, North Sydney Campus

**Project Title:** Sessional Staff Advancement

**Project Details:** This project was developed to expand the potential of the sessional staff who work in the Applied Science for Practice 4 unit, at the North Sydney Campus of ACU. Sessional staff were introduced to the project initially via an introductory email and invited for an induction meeting in the first week of the semester. After some structured basic discussion about their teaching profile at ACU, further discussion continued related to the teaching roles of a University academic. They were provided with the RED link and copies of the CLASS project workshop materials held in June 2010 at UTS, for reflection on their roles. This first discussion explored their cognitive thinking/awareness and motivation for further development. Sessional staff engaged in planning, reflecting and adopting to become better educators with appropriate support and resources.

## University of Western Sydney CLASS Project Participants

**Dr Swapan Saha:**

Associate Head of School, School of Engineering

**Project Title:** Developing tutors skill with online assessment

**Project Details:** This project aims to develop tutors' skills in setting up online quizzes using lecture notes and encourage students and tutors to engage in the lecture and practical classes. As part of the project scope tutors will be provided training on how to set up online quizzes using e-learning facilities. This approach will assist to stimulate the discussion in the tutorial class and the online grading of the quizzes for large classes as a formal assessment.

# University of Western Sydney CLASS Project Participants [Continued]

## Dr Olayide Ogunsiyi:

Lecturer, School of Nursing & Midwifery

**Project Title:** Use of debriefing in supporting sessional staff in Knowing Nursing unit

**Project Details:** The focus of this project was to use debriefing to support and engage sessional staff towards the provision of high quality teaching to first year students enrolled in the unit "Knowing Nursing". The intended outcome of this project is to be able to inform future practice in supporting sessional staff.

## Mr Ian Stevenson:

Course Advisor, School of Communication Arts

**Project Title:** Conforming Assessment Standards

**Project Details:** This project will attempt to formalise the process of conforming assessment standards between staff working in a unit. The proposed method is to blind double mark a small selection of student assessment tasks and then compare the application of the standards and criteria and discuss discrepancies. Once marking is complete the descriptive statistics of the results of each marker will be compared and assessed.

## Katrina Sandbach:

Lecturer, School of Communication Arts

**Project Title:** Social media as a space for collaborative teaching

**Project Details:** This project used a social media platform as a means of facilitating an online meeting space with sessional staff, with the hope of cultivating a stronger sense of connectivity, when teaching team members particularly sessional staff, are off-campus.

## Ms Diana Messum:

Head of Program, School of Biomedical & Health Sciences

**Project Title:** Sessional staff experience at UWS

**Project Details:** The goal of this project was to gain understanding of the sessional staff experience at UWS. Questions including what works well, why it works well here, what can be improved and what resources are needed to foster quality teaching and learning experiences for students were addressed.



## Dr Judith Thistleton-Martin:

Lecturer, School of Education

**Project Title:** "What about me?": Reculturing primary practicum supervision by better supporting casual academic staff

**Project Details:** The aim of this project was to identify constraints in primary practicum supervision and remove these or reduce them in order to strengthen the relationship between the Professional Experience Coordinator and casual staff. In addition there was a goal to maintain and increase the number of casual academic staff.

## Jean McCartney & Paul Micet:

Lecturers, School of Accounting

**Project Title:** An audit of resources made available to sessional staff in the various units offered by the School of Accounting

**Project Details:** This project will document the reality of the quality and consistency of sessional staff resources provided to and used by sessional staff in the School of Accounting. Data will be gathered by way of a structured questionnaire and follow up interview with unit coordinators and a focus group of sessional staff.

## Dr David Newlyn:

Lecturer, School of Law

**Project Title:** Building essential skills for effective tutorial teaching

**Project Details:** The purpose of this project was to identify essential teaching skills and provide resource sheets on these skills to tutors. Tutors were presented with these sheets at the beginning of Weeks 3, 6, 9 and 11, and asked to implement some of the tips from the sheets during the following weeks. They were then asked to provide some feedback on how useful these resources were in enhancing their teaching.