

Coordinators Leading Advancement of Sessional Staff (CLASS) Project

Exemplars of Good Practice Initiatives

CHEMISTRY; DEMONSTRATOR CD AND IN-LAB TRAINING, UNIVERSITY of ADELAIDE

EXEMPLAR: CHEMISTRY; DEMONSTRATOR CD AND IN-LAB TRAINING University of Adelaide

Title:	Chemistry; Demonstrator CD and In-Lab Training
University :	University of Adelaide
Discipline Area:	Chemistry
Subject/Unit Coordinator (optional)	Dr Natalie Williamson, Level 1 Director, Chemistry, University of Adelaide
Level of Unit	1
Number of Students:	800
Number of Sessional Staff	Up to 25 demonstrators
Delivery Mode:	Face to face
Profile:	Demonstrators are mostly Chemistry postgraduate students (Honours and PhD) plus some external staff
Background/Context:	Demonstrators take Chemistry practical classes of up to 24 students and are in charge of two experiments simultaneously.

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Good Practice Initiative:

Demonstrators are provided with a CD and in-lab training prior to the commencement of lab teaching.

The CD contains a number of documents including practical scripts for the entire year's lab course, demonstrator tips and tricks for each experiment, marking schemes, lab safety information and demonstrator responsibilities.

The in-lab training session (lasting 2-3 hours) gives demonstrators hands-on experience of each of the experiments they will be teaching that semester in the presence of a senior demonstrator who provides advice and guidance. The start of the session is used to give new demonstrators a tour of the lab and explain its operational and administrative procedures.

Tips for Implementation:

Although demonstrators receive the one CD that contains lab material covering the entire teaching year, two in-lab training sessions are run – one at the start of each semester. This helps familiarize demonstrators with the appropriate experiments at the start of each semester rather than expecting them to remember a training experience that may have occurred six months prior.

One senior demonstrator for every 10-12 in-training demonstrators has been found to be a good ratio.

Evaluation:

Demonstrators have been positive about the training sessions and accompanying CD. They find the in-lab training particularly useful and appreciate the chance to learn from an experienced demonstrator. Demonstrators have also commented that the CD is valuable because it means all of the documents they require are in the one place.

Reflection:

The in-lab training sessions and accompanying documentation mean that demonstrators have a much better idea of what to expect when they teach a lab class for the first time. This helps boost their confidence, which in turn increases the quality of the educational experience they provide to students. Senior demonstrators are able to disseminate good lab practice to new demonstrators, enabling them to set a good example to the students they teach.
