

# Sustainability – challenges of the current model

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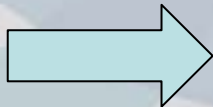
# Sustainability principles

Humanity has to make development sustainable - to ensure that it meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

(World Commission on Environment & Development, 1987, p.8)



***Intra* - generational equity**



***Inter* - generational equity**

# *Intra-generational equity?*

*Well you're not a real staff member, you're not at staff meetings, you're not aware of what is happening in the university in a broader sense, you have no idea what direction things are going. You're just picked up the week before the semester starts and dropped when the semester ends. (Molly)*

*There's a little bit of a class system I think at the moment, that the people that have a say in and know the background to why decisions are made are permanent staff...it's almost that we're incidental to those sort of processes. (Crystal)*

*As far as the fulltime academics, you're most definitely, a second class citizen on the whole. ... there is most definitely a hierarchy and some people, as in any environment, their position in that hierarchy is extremely important to them and they enforce it. (Barry)*

# *Inter-generational equity?*

*I think casuals have a lot to offer in terms of inputting about the way courses are run or issues of the process of teaching... they're used to the structure of the course, they understand the educational principles – so they have a lot to offer. (Lola)*

*... maybe I'll just have to figure out another career option..... Yeah, I'm just like really disillusioned, actually. (Juliet)*

*I don't see myself as working for the university, I think that's important. I work for [the subject coordinators... I don't have any contact with the university at all because I've learnt from experience that it's just not valuable. (Scott)*

# Sustainability for whom?

## The casual academic?

### 2 recent studies

- Barbara Pocock et al (2004) *'Only a casual ...' How casual work affects Australian working families*
- Anne Junor (2004) *Casual university work: choice, risk, inequity and the case for regulation*

### 3 key themes

- Income security & job satisfaction
- Life course
- Voice and identity in the workplace

# Sustainability for whom?

## For the Faculty and its programs?

The Audit Panel gained the impression that the level of rigor in the preparation of new staff for their teaching role, especially tutors and sessional staff, varies across faculties despite the priority given to induction of new staff by the University. ... A crucial element in [balancing priorities given to teaching and research] is to ensure that there is consistency in the preparation of new staff for their teaching responsibilities, especially tutors and sessional teaching staff, given that these are so influential in determining the learning experiences of undergraduate students (AUQA 2006a, p. 27).

Arrangements for the supervision of sessional staff and also their working conditions vary considerably across faculties and departments/ schools. Their level of integration within their faculty as well as their school/ department varies equally. ... The needs of sessional staff will have to be incorporated better in the planning of teaching and the initiatives offered to support staff in improving teaching (AUQA 2006b, p.3).

# Sustainability for whom?

For the institution and the higher education sector?

While some casual staff will be engaged to meet fluctuating and uncertain teaching demands, others will be engaged for their practice-based professional input. That is, people are likely to choose casual academic employment at UTS for a variety of reasons and with differing expectations of reward and recognition. Given its high proportion of adjunct and casual staff, the University is encouraged to examine the needs of casual and adjunct staff and to include strategies for their management and support in its workforce planning (AUQA 2006c, p. 22).

## Key considerations

- Educational quality
- Capacity for organisational learning and adaptiveness
- International standing

# References

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Brown, A., Goodman, J. & Yasukawa, K. , 2006, *Getting the Best of You for Nothing: casual voices in the Australian academy*, Melbourne: National Tertiary Education Union.

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Pocock, B., Prosser, R. and Bridge, K. 2004, *Only a Casual ... How Casula Work Affects Employee, Households and Communities in Australia*, Adelaide: Labour Studies, University of Adelaide.

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# Reflections - Sustainability

- In my university/discipline area, what ratio/balance of permanent to sessional teachers is the most sustainable for high quality teaching?
- What strategies might my university put in place to move towards that ratio? What more can my university do to bring about a sustainable culture of sessional teaching?