



## Streamlining Human Resources and Induction Processes

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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### Abstract

**The University of South Australia recognises that sessional teaching staff are an integral part of the workforce and provide a valuable service to the University, particularly in undergraduate teaching. This case study outlines action taken by the University to streamline human resources and induction processes for its sessional teachers.**

### Context

The main concerns listed below were identified through external research (eg Carrick survey, NTEU) and internal consultation (UniSA Sessional Staff Working Group):

- payment and level;
- tools of the trade; and
- involvement in decision making.

### Aims

The University's aims were to adopt a consistent approach to the identified areas of sessional staff contracts, access to resources and facilities, and involvement in activities with full time academic staff.

### Outcomes

The development and implementation of an online employment register for sessional staff

Improved contract documentation

Paid induction

Improved online resources for sessional teachers

Professional development opportunities for sessional teachers tied to performance management

Greater involvement in decision-making

Opportunities for reward and recognition

### What was done?

#### University-wide Working Party

UNISA has a Sessional Staff Working Party that is chaired by one of the Deans, Teaching and Learning.

Membership of the Working Party consists of an Associate Head of School, Dean: International, Director: Teaching and Learning, Human Resource staff and sessional teachers.

This Working Party is trying to systematically identify and address the issues relating to sessional teachers. The activities of this Working Party have put in place many of the initiatives identified below. The Working Party has received sound recognition of their work by the senior management group.

**Recruitment, selection and appointment****Development and implementation of online employment register for sessional staff**

Sessional teachers register details of experience, qualifications, availability, contact details and what they are interested in. (see Links and Resources). Faculty staff can search register for eligible people and register vacancies.

**Improved contract documentation**

Contract documentation was improved to clarify rates of pay, teaching responsibilities and expected duties. Role statements were an important part of this clarification: for example, if the contract says that you are employed to present tutorials there is a drop down underneath that that gives a whole range of dot points that go with what presenting tutorials mean.

**The online contractual arrangements**

Sessional teachers have the right to negotiate their rates of pay through this facility. They also have the option of salary sacrifice if they wish

**Paid Induction****Sessional staff at the University are paid to attend the induction sessions at two levels**

There is a divisional induction session which is held twice yearly across the four academic divisions; and there are also local school induction sessions.

**Resources*****A Quick Guide for Sessional Staff* (see Links and Resources)**

The Quick Guide is available on the website and includes the answers to many of the questions raised by sessional teachers.

**An induction website for all new staff**

This website provides a comprehensive introduction to the whole University (see Links and Resources).

**At the Division level**

New sessional staff in the division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences receive a UNISA memory stick, which includes relevant documents that sessional staff may need.

**Performance Management****Performance review for new tutors**

A final review is undertaken at the end of the first contract. This includes: a self assessment by the sessional academic; and a meeting with the supervisor (Course Coordinator or Program Director) to discuss performance, professional development opportunities and career aspirations.

**Performance review for continuing tutors**

Upon completion of the initial contract, the decision to offer a subsequent contract for the same program is based on satisfactory performance. During the second and subsequent contracts Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) data is required (where feasible) to provide additional quantitative data to support performance assessment. Satisfactory performance is required for further contracts to be offered.

**Performance assessment data**

Performance assessment data is retained at school level to inform future staffing decisions.

**Formative feedback**

On a regular basis sessional teachers can get feedback about what they're doing and also provide the subject coordinator or programme director with feedback.

**Professional Development****Teaching @ UNISA**

After the first contract, the Teaching @ UNISA course is both mandatory and paid for sessional teachers (see Links and Resource). This Program articulates into the Graduate Certificate of Education (University Teaching) which is required for all new academic continuing appointments A to C.

**At the division level**

In the Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences, the locally delivered professional development sessions are a compulsory part of the induction process for sessional teachers.

**Reward and Recognition****Involvement in Decision Making**

Sessional teachers are invited to school board meetings and a range of other working parties. This is usually paid.

**Awards**

The University of South Australia does give sessional teachers Excellence in Teaching Awards.

### Critical Success Factors

The leadership of the working party.

The membership of the working party evolves depending on the focus of the group.

### Review and Improvement

Continual review of the administration of sessional staff contracts.

Pilot study of centralising sessional contract administration to Divisional HR teams to ensure compliance.

### Challenges

To ensure the sessional staff teaching experience is rewarding and provides a stepping stone to an academic career if required.

Local practice matching institutional commitment.

### Links and Resources

Sessional Academic Staff Employment Register  
[www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/sessionalAcademic/index.asp](http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/sessionalAcademic/index.asp)

UNISA Quick Guide for Academic Sessional Staff  
[www.unisa.edu.au/staffdev/guides/sessional\\_academic\\_staff.pdf](http://www.unisa.edu.au/staffdev/guides/sessional_academic_staff.pdf)

Performance Management Plan - Academic Casual Staff  
[www.unisa.edu.au/hrm/employment/](http://www.unisa.edu.au/hrm/employment/)

Teaching @ UNISA  
[www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/learningconnection/staff/](http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/learningconnection/staff/)

Professional Development Resources for Sessional Staff  
[www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/learningconnection/staff/information/sessional.asp](http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/learningconnection/staff/information/sessional.asp)

Sessional Staff Homepage: Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences, Teaching, Learning and International  
[www.unisa.edu.au/easdeanteaching/sessional/default.asp](http://www.unisa.edu.au/easdeanteaching/sessional/default.asp)

