Sessional teachers’ checklist

An AUTC-funded project initiative

**Employment issues**

- Do you have a contract? Has your supervisor seen it and discussed it with you? If not, have you suggested this to your supervisor/s?
- Do you get paid appropriately according to the roles and responsibilities you have been asked to assume? Does your workload align with the payment you receive?
- Do you have a statement of duties, roles and/or responsibilities that outline what is expected of you? If not, have you approached your supervisor to discuss this?
- Are you required to be available for student consultation time outside scheduled class hours? Are you paid for this consultation time?
- Are you required to attend any lectures? Are you paid for this time? If not, have you approached your supervisor to discuss this?
- Do you have adequate access to office space, necessary supplies, phone, fax and computer facilities, email, library rights and support services? If not, ask your supervisor or relevant personnel officer about arranging this.
- Are you aware of all the University, School or Union policies and practices that affect you (including intellectual property, harassment, workplace health and safety procedures, ethical guidelines)? If there is a School handbook for sessional staff (or teaching staff in general), do you have a copy?
- Have you read relevant policies or guidelines on casual employment as a sessional teacher at university; for example the NTEU handbook entitled “Smart Casuals” www.nteu.org.au/publications/other/smartcasuals
- Are you aware of University policies on bullying and harassment? Do you know about how to access support services if these issues or other personal problems are affecting your work?
Training and professional development issues

○ Have you participated in any formal induction process (including being shown how to access resources, complete administrative tasks, use teaching technology, facilities, etc)? Are you paid to attend these sessions?

○ Are you provided with any resources or guidelines to assist you in your teaching practices? Are there any available in your School/Department or from a university unit such as a staff development unit?

○ Do you know what level of training and support you are entitled to? Have you accessed it? If you are not officially entitled to any, who could you approach in your School to arrange some internal or external training and professional development?

○ If you believe you have a particular training need, have you approached your supervisor or someone else to discuss the possibility of receiving training or mentoring?

○ Are you paid for professional development activities that you are obliged to undertake?

○ What processes are there for you to provide feedback to your School or supervisor about the level and type of induction, training and support? Have you approached anybody with your feedback on this yet?

○ Does your School or supervisor make opportunities for you to liaise and share ideas with other sessional teachers? If not, what could you do to create these opportunities?

○ Are you trained in how to mark students’ papers and/or carry out assessment procedures? If not, have you suggested some form of training to your supervisor to ensure consistency of assessment across the entire course/subject?

○ What processes are there for you to provide feedback to your supervisor about the level and type of support and supervision s/he provides?

○ Is there a handbook outlining workplace health and safety policies and procedures? Have you read it? What is your role in implementing these with your students and/or in your teaching (eg in laboratory sessions)?
Evaluation and recognition

- How do you receive feedback about your own performance? Do peers or mentors intermittently review your performance? If not, could you approach a peer or supervisor to ask about the possibility of receiving feedback on your work?

- If you are a beginning teacher, do you receive coaching or mentoring from a more experienced teacher? If not, could you approach your supervisor about the possibility of being mentored?

- Is there a requirement to undertake student evaluations of your teaching? Do you know how to organise this?

- If student evaluations are not compulsory but you would like feedback from students, are you able to do this voluntarily and do you know how to go about organising this?

- Can you provide feedback to the course coordinator or Head of School about the level and type of supervision and evaluation you have received? If there are no formal means for doing this, can you identify ways to do this informally?
Integration and communication

- Can you get in touch with your supervisor and fellow teachers when you need to (via email, email lists etc)?
- Do you meet regularly as a teaching team with other sessional and full-time staff who teach the same or similar courses? If so, are you paid to attend these sessions?
- If your students have concerns external to their course or program of study, do you know where to direct them? Do you know about your university’s student support services, including:
  - Academic skills programs
  - Career advice
  - Counselling
  - Disability services
  - Indigenous student support
  - International student support
  - Student equity
  - IT training
  - Library skills
  - Accommodation
  - Finance
  - Enrolment
  - Student union

If your students approach you with a need, problem or concern outside the scope of your role as a sessional teacher, direct them to the appropriate student support network or section. Don’t feel you must solve all their problems for them!!

- How do you receive University-wide information and messages that may be of interest to you or are relevant to you as a staff member? For example, do you have an allocated pigeonhole for receiving mail and newsletters, access to a computer with email, etc?

- Is there a contact person for sessional teachers who is responsible for communicating with casual staff and disseminating relevant information? Who is it and have you had any contact with them?

- Do you know how the course/subject you teach fits into the academic program as a whole and what role it plays? If not, is there some way you could find out? This information can be helpful in your teaching to make links with students’ existing and emerging knowledge.

- In what ways can you make a contribution to the curricula or to the development of teaching and learning practices within your School or course? For example, do you know about your School’s Teaching and Learning Committee or Program Advisory and Review Committee? If no formal means currently exist, could you suggest this to your Head of School or supervisor?