CHAPTER 12 : CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND TEACHING EXCELLENCE AT CURTIN

The Curtin Learning Institute (CLI)

To support teaching excellence and continuous professional learning, the Curtin Learning Institute (http://curtin.edu.au/cli) provides guidance for the recognition and promotion of teaching excellence through awards and grants programs and facilitates a range of professional learning opportunities for academic staff in teaching roles. (http://curtin.edu.au/cli)

CLI professional learning programs are specifically designed to:

- facilitate teaching and learning change supporting the Transformation of Learning @ Curtin strategic initiative
- support the implementation of the Curtin Converged model of teaching
- provide new staff with a teaching and learning foundation to ensure teaching quality
- support academic career planning and development
- enhance teaching quality
- promote a culture of teaching excellence
- build teaching and learning research capacity.

The integrated professional learning approach employed by CLI is illustrated in Figure 15: Professional Learning Transformation Model. CLI also aims to increase recognition of teaching excellence through the Curtin Academy and internal and national awards and grants programs.

![Figure 15: Professional Learning Transformation Model](image-url)
Individual programs are designed, developed and facilitated by recognised experts from within the CLI, CTL, and the wider Curtin teaching and learning community. Programs aim to build capacity by ensuring all programs embrace the Curtin Converged Model of teaching by integrating:

- collaborative, interactive teaching components
- an introduction to an online resource base
- a sustained continuing professional learning community (Figure 16).

CLI encourages the development of reusable modules for both face-to-face and blended learning environments. Consideration of the impact of each program, including an evaluation component, ensures continuous improvement of programs occurs.

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**Figure 16: Professional development program components leading to impact evaluation**

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**Professional Learning Programs at Curtin**

CLI facilitates a comprehensive range of professional learning programs; programs currently on offer can be found at [http://curtin.edu.au/cli](http://curtin.edu.au/cli).

Programs offered from year to year include the Foundation of Learning and Teaching, leadership programs for unit coordinators and course coordinators and preparation for offshore and intercultural teaching.

**Foundations of Learning and Teaching (FOLT)**

The Foundations of Learning and Teaching (FOLT) is Curtin’s primary professional learning program for teaching academics. The program is available in both semesters and participation is open to all Curtin academic staff in a teaching role, at no cost. It is a policy requirement that all new casual academics who are employed for more than 12 hours per semester complete the first part of the program (i.e., FOLT 1).

The newly restructured program comprises three extended modules: FOLT 1, FOLT 2, and FOLT 3. Each module is run as a full-day workshop, which can be completed in stages over two semesters, enabling progressive integration of a range of teaching and learning strategies within one’s teaching practice.

An additional requirement to complete the FOLT program entails the submission of a Teaching Portfolio, which is a descriptive record and reflective analysis of one’s teaching achievements, supported by an archive of documents and artefacts as evidence. The Teaching Portfolio provides an opportunity for FOLT participants to document their developments as a teacher at Curtin.
In keeping with the Transforming Learning @ Curtin strategic focus and the Curtin Converged approach to teaching and learning, FOLT workshops provide an interactive experience where participants engage with a highly diverse group of peers from a range of disciplines, levels of teaching experience and teaching philosophies. The workshops are supported by guided pre- and post-workshop activities and a rich online resource base to facilitate self-directed professional learning. FOLT articulates into a number of specialist professional learning programs to advance teaching excellence.

FOLT offers a valuable orientation to teaching and learning at Curtin and is therefore a core professional learning program for teachers new to Curtin, as well as those who are seeking ideas to refresh their teaching. Full details, including dates, for FOLT and all articulating professional learning programs can be found on the Curtin Learning Institute website http://curtin.edu.au/cli

Leadership for course coordinators
The course coordinator’s key role is to ensure that the course is of the highest quality and that students have successful learning experiences while at Curtin. The Academic Leadership for Course Coordinators Program facilitated by staff with expertise in leadership development and curriculum design and review. Topics covered include: course coordinator as academic leader; leadership for excellent curriculum; developing academic leadership capability; building a course team; leading change and managing resistance; and building performance. For more information visit http://academicleadership.curtin.edu.au/ALCCP/program.cfm

Leadership for unit coordinators
To assist unit coordinators in managing quality teaching experiences, the Curtin Learning Institute offers the Academic Leadership for Unit Coordinators Program. The half-day workshops focus on effective coordination of units where various aspects of the role are examined, including assessment and moderation, and building a unit team. It is also an opportunity for Unit Coordinators to meet with others in the same role, share ideas and solutions to common challenges, and be exposed to a range of strategies to support student learning, manage the stresses associated with unit coordination and respond to current issues and trends in higher education. For more information contact cli@curtin.edu.au.

Preparation for offshore and intercultural teaching
In preparation for teaching offshore, staff are expected to attend specialised workshops in their faculty or, at a minimum, attend Module 2 of FOLT. The self-paced online site Transnational Education – Developing Leadership Capability is also freely available to all staff. These modules were created as part of an ALTC/OLT funded project during 2010–2011. See http://tne.curtin.edu.au/.

Professional development for intercultural teaching is available through access to:

- Working Together: Intercultural Academic Leadership Program, which aims to build the capacity of Indigenous and non-indigenous educators to teach Indigenous material more effectively. It seeks to develop the capacity of educators to teach students in a space that doesn’t reinforce binaries but rather provides tools to equip them to facilitate safe yet challenging and transformational student learning.
The Curtin Academy

The Curtin Academy was established in 2014 to promote a culture of teaching excellence by engaging outstanding teachers in a community of practice with opportunities to learn from their colleagues’ expertise and exceptional pedagogical practice. The Curtin Academy embraces teaching excellence and supports Curtin’s vision to be recognised as an international leader in research and education and its mission to change minds, lives and the world through leadership, innovation and excellence in teaching and research while living Curtin’s values. More information about the Curtin Academy can be found at http://curtin.edu.au/cli.

Teaching Excellence at Curtin

Curtin uses criteria to articulate teaching excellence to highlight capabilities and skills that guide the successful recruitment, development, recognition and retention of quality teaching academics. The Curtin Teaching Excellence criteria provide a single set of measures to underpin all relevant reward and recognition processes, so that teaching excellence is clear and consistent with the University’s strategic goals.

The teaching excellence criteria are designed to assist individual academic staff, particularly new and early career staff, to clarify expectations, and provide guidelines to assist in the process of promotion and awards.

The criteria will be used by academic staff and their supervisors as a formative development tool to identify career objectives, and development needs, in addition to forming the basis for informing promotion and awards.

Curtin’s Teaching Excellence criteria are designed to be broad and flexible, whilst providing a robust and valid definition of excellent teaching within the Curtin context. The criteria are aligned to the teaching roles within Curtin Expectations for Academic Performance (CEAP) and the Curtin University Academic, Professional and General Staff Enterprise Agreement 2012–2016.

Curtin’s Teaching Excellence Criteria

Curtin’s Teaching Excellence Criteria mirror those developed in an Office for Learning and Teaching Project and are informed by criteria and evidence employed by the Office for Learning and Teaching, the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education, the Higher Education Academy Benchmarking Project on Recognition of Teaching in Academic Promotion Project and an analysis of criteria developed in other Australian universities. Staff who show evidence of “excellence in teaching” will “contribute to systemic change in learning and teaching through ongoing knowledge sharing and dissemination, for example, presentations within the learning and teaching community, collegial mentoring, pairing and networking, and involvement in university and higher education committees” (Office for Learning and Teaching).

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2 CEAP outlines expected performance in teaching for a Teaching and Research Academic and a Teaching Focussed Academic.

3 University Teaching Criteria and Standards Framework project
Curtin’s Teaching Excellence criteria aim to:

1. Support the initial and continuing professional learning of staff engaged in teaching and supporting learning.
2. Foster dynamic and culturally inclusive approaches to teaching and learning in transforming Teaching and Learning at Curtin through creativity, innovation and continuous development in diverse academic and/or professional settings.
3. Acknowledge the variety and quality of teaching, learning and assessment practices that support and underpin student learning.
4. Facilitate individuals in gaining formal recognition for quality-enhanced approaches to teaching and supporting learning.

The seven teaching excellence criteria are:

1. design and planning of learning activities, units and courses
2. teaching and supporting student learning
3. assessment and providing feedback to students
4. developing effective learning environments, student support and guidance
5. integration of scholarship, research and professional activities with teaching and in support of student learning
6. evaluation of practice and continuing professional learning, and
7. professional and personal effectiveness.

Evidence of teaching excellence at Curtin

The Curtin Teaching Excellence criteria underpin all relevant reward and recognition processes, so that teaching excellence is clear and consistent with the University’s strategic goals. The evidence for each criterion is outlined in the following Table 9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Design and planning of learning activities, units and courses</td>
<td>eVALUate Unit Summary Report including unit coordinator response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teaching and supporting student learning</td>
<td>eVALUate Teaching Evaluation Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Assessment and giving feedback to students</td>
<td>Student learning outcomes (retention and pass rates, student projects)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Developing effective learning environments, student support and guidance</td>
<td>Peer Review of Teaching – Reflective Statement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Peer Review of Teaching – Assessor(s) Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Report from community partners and feedback on outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty, University or national teaching awards</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peer recognition of quality teaching, e.g. invitations to teach in other universities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Dimensions of Curtin’s Teaching Excellence for each Academic Level (A,B,C,D and E) and the evidence required for achieving each dimension outline how teaching excellence is evaluated.

### Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

The **Scholarship of Teaching and Learning** (SoTL) for Curtin represents systematic inquiry, critique, research and development in teaching, learning and the broader educational context that advances and publicly provides educational benefit to students, staff and the higher education sector. The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, which underpins the teaching excellence criteria, is taken from the definitions first proposed by Boyer (1990) and later adapted by the University of Queensland (2007).

#### Scholarship of teaching

5. **Integration of scholarship, research and professional activities with teaching and in support of student learning**

6. **Evaluation of practice and continuing professional learning**

| Evidence | Certificate of completion of Professional Learning program e.g. FOLT, ALUCP, ALCCP, ALFCP  
| | Formal teaching qualification in higher education e.g. Grad. Certificate in Teaching  
| | Attendance at internal or external teaching-related workshops  
| | Training and experience from the relevant industry/profession/discipline.  
| | Invitation to present, design or evaluate a teaching and learning workshop  
| | Peer reviewed publications/citations  
| | University or national teaching and learning grants  
| | Details of grants, awards (successful and unsuccessful) and outcomes  

#### Service and Leadership in Teaching and Learning (including Community Engagement and Professional Practice)

7. **Professional and personal effectiveness**

| Evidence | Independent reports from mentees  
| | Peer review/reviewer of curricula demonstrating engagement with the teaching/research nexus  
| | Peer review of curricula as an expert  
| | Leadership in supporting colleagues’ teaching through peer support and review.  
| | Outcomes of committee leadership  
| | Professional Association Awards that validate leadership and expertise in teaching and learning  
| | External Reports from the relevant industry/profession/discipline  
| | Invitation to present, design or evaluate a teaching and learning workshop  
| | Invitations to present keynote at Teaching and Learning and disciplinary conferences on teaching and learning  
| | Membership of senior advisory groups to government  
| | Leadership in external professional networks / interest groups in teaching and learning  
| | Recognition by national or international professional bodies (awards, fellowships, honorary memberships etc.)  
| | Leadership of professional bodies  
| | Contribution to the review and development of national and international professional practice standards  
| | Leadership of a school, faculty, university or national teaching and learning initiative  

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The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) for Curtin represents systematic inquiry, critique, research and development in teaching, learning and the broader educational context that advances and publicly provides educational benefit to students, staff and the higher education sector. The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, which underpins the teaching excellence criteria, is taken from the definitions first proposed by Boyer (1990) and later adapted by the University of Queensland (2007).
The scholarship of teaching develops from a basis of scholarly teaching in a discipline but is not the same as excellent teaching. It involves exploring, testing, practicing and communicating improved pedagogies, learning processes, curricula, policies and learning materials. It meets the following additional criteria in the context of promoting student learning:

- It requires high levels of discipline-related expertise.
- It requires an understanding of who the learners are, how they learn and what practices are most effective in the context of the discipline (pedagogical content knowledge).
- It breaks new ground and is innovative.
- It can be replicated and elaborated.
- It is documented and subjected to peer review.

Teachers engaging in scholarship in teaching and learning seek to improve teaching at the tertiary level by:

- consulting and applying the literature on teaching and learning
- investigating their own teaching
- adopting innovative teaching approaches
- formally communicating their ideas and practice to peers through publication and other formal means, and
- seeking and obtaining peer recognition for their ideas and practice.

**Scholarly teaching**

Scholarly teaching in a discipline involves all of the following:

- striving for a high level of proficiency in stimulating students and fostering their learning in a variety of appropriate ways
- being familiar with the latest ideas in one’s subject
- being informed by current ideas for teaching that subject, and
- evaluating and reflecting on one’s teaching practice and the student learning that follows.

**Educational research**

Like other social science researchers, educational researchers are guided by theoretical and methodological paradigms. A research academic in the field of education deploys theoretical perspectives to understand educational practice. Educational research includes psychological and philosophical inquiry; historical, policy and cultural analysis; and empirical research on a range of areas including learning and teaching processes, pedagogy and curriculum studies. Such research tests the assumptions and worth of theory in terms of whether it provides adequate explanations of the data and evidence. The aim of educational research is to expand our understanding of all aspects of education and to contribute to theoretical debates and developments in the area. The questions addressed are broader than those focused on in the area of teaching innovation and involve stakeholders beyond the context in which the innovation takes place (Research Assessment Exercise Guidelines, 2008).
Peer Review of Teaching

Peer review of teaching (PRT) is an effective strategy through which teachers can be engaged in continuous professional learning, and teaching excellence promoted. Curtin is currently consolidating and expanding existing peer review of teaching practices teaching staff may have previously been involved in. For many staff, their first introduction to peer review of teaching has been through Curtin’s Foundations of Learning and Teaching (FOLT) professional learning program; these foundational approaches will continue to contribute to raising staff awareness of the procedures, practices and benefits of participating in PRT. Additional professional learning opportunities will be available to teaching staff to enable them to enhance their expertise and engagement with PRT. Further to this, data collected through PRT will provide staff with evidence of teaching excellence to support their applications for promotion and teaching awards. This approach will contribute to teaching excellence and provide staff with opportunities for career and professional development and the University with a mechanism for assuring teaching quality. Curtin’s approach to PRT, outlined in Figure 17, incorporates direct and indirect observations of teaching activities, self-reflection, peer discussions and formal documentation of outcomes achieved.

Figure 17: Peer review of teaching at Curtin

The Curtin PRT process consists of three phases, as shown in Figure 20. Essentially, Phase 1 provides staff with a formative evaluation of their teaching, which will enable them to plan for their own professional and career development to enhance their teaching excellence. In Phase 2, teaching staff engage with professional learning and reflective practices, such as collaborative (reciprocal) peer review of teaching, development of teaching portfolios, mentoring and targeted relevant professional development programs. Evidence of teaching excellence in Phases 1 and 2 will be substantiated through the development of Peer Review of Teaching – Reflective Statements. In Phase 3 teaching staff request a summative teaching evaluation, which will provide formal evidence of teaching excellence through Peer Review of Teaching – Assessor(s) Reports. Further details of PRT are available on the CLI website.

Teaching and Learning Excellence Awards

Curtin Awards for Excellence and Innovation in Teaching

The Curtin Awards for Excellence and Innovation in Teaching (EIT) are awarded annually and provide recognition and reward for outstanding performances, by both individuals and teams, in teaching and in enhancing student learning. The awards are aligned with the Australian Awards for University Teaching...
(AAUT) awarded nationally by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) in the Department of Education. The Curtin EIT awards include two additional categories recognising excellence and innovation in teaching in the First Year Experience and by Sessional Teachers. Each award winner receives a certificate and a grant.

All members of Curtin academic staff, whether full-time or part-time, teaching in undergraduate or postgraduate programs, on-shore or off-shore, are eligible to nominate themselves for an EIT award, provided they have taught at Curtin for at least two years. Nominees should refer to each category of awards for more detailed eligibility guidelines. Each of the EIT awards has differing requirements and selection criteria. Applicants should refer to the appropriate guidelines for selection criteria, selection process and timelines. For guidelines, nomination forms and templates see http://ctl.curtin.edu.au/awards_grants/teaching_awards/curtin_eit.cfm. The Award programs include:

- **Awards for teaching excellence**: There are ten award categories with up to ten awards granted at the discretion of the Curtin EIT Awards Committee.
- **Awards for programs that enhance learning**: There are eight award categories with up to five awards granted at the discretion of the Curtin EIT Awards Committee.
- **Citations for outstanding contributions to student learning**: This award category recognises the diverse contributions that individuals and teams make to the quality of student learning at Curtin. There are up to eight awards granted at the discretion of the Curtin EIT Awards Committee. Citations are also open to non-academic staff and university associates who make a contribution to student learning.
- **Faculty awards**: Each Faculty also offers awards to recognise outstanding teaching. For further details, refer to your Faculty website or contact the appropriate dean of teaching and learning.

**Australian Awards for University Teaching**

The Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) in the Department of Education has responsibility for the co-ordination of the Australian Awards for University Teaching (AAUT). The awards are highly competitive and involve an intensive selection process to assess the achievements of applicants. The AAUT comprises five award types: Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning; Awards for Programs that Enhance Learning; Awards for Teaching Excellence; Prime Minister’s Award for Australian University Teacher of the Year; and Career Achievement Award. Curtin nominees to the AAUT are selected by an internal University committee and are supported in developing their application. For more information see http://www.olt.gov.au/awards.

**Teaching and Learning Grants**

Staff are able to apply for a variety of available grants. These include national grants through the Office for Learning and Teaching and internal Curtin grants such as the eScholar Program. Staff are encouraged to apply for grants and should contact the Curtin Learning Institute for assistance and information on grant criteria and timeframes.
Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) Grants

Curtin encourages staff to apply for the national OLT grants, which provide funding for academics and professional staff to investigate, develop and implement innovations in learning and teaching. For more information about the OLT grants programs see http://www.olt.gov.au/grants-and-projects.

In response to the OLT requirement for a centralised coordination of submissions, Curtin has established an internal submission process. Access the guidelines for the internal process and the proforma for letter of support at http://ctl.curtin.edu.au/awards_grants/olt_grants/olt_grants.cfm

eScholar Program

The eScholar Program aims to identify champions of classroom transformation among teams of academic staff from across the University to implement new technology-enhanced learning and teaching. A grant of up to $10,000 is available for each successful application, with preference given to teams of applicants. The projects must focus on active learning and engagement of students, help students achieve graduate capabilities, and show promise as a scalable or reusable approach. Applications open in October and in the following year successful scholars implement technology-enhanced learning strategies, conduct research into the development, implementation or impacts of their project, share their reflections and experiences through presentations to colleagues and publish their research results.

For further information see http://ctl.curtin.edu.au.

Teaching Excellence Development Fund

The Teaching Excellence Development Fund (TEDF) has been developed to support innovative projects and capacity building approaches that foster excellence and scholarship in teaching and learning. The scheme accommodates new Academic roles and is aligned with Curtin’s Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Plan 2013-2017. The broad aim of the TEDF is to assist in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in alignment with the aspirations of the Transforming Learning at Curtin strategy and associated initiatives such as the Assessment, Review and Transformation project (ART 2015). Funding is available for individuals or teaching teams via a competitive bid for funds for activities/projects up to a maximum of $20,000. For more information about TEDF, see http://ctl.curtin.edu.au.

Teaching Focused Scholarship Seed Grants

Curtin is renowned for high quality teachers who incorporate innovative teaching and learning practices to enhance the student learning experience. This has been evidenced through our success in attracting national teaching and learning awards, grants and fellowships. To continue to build capacity in our teaching staff and further enhance the excellence of our teaching and learning, the University has committed some seed grant funding. The funding will be to support initiatives that enhance staff engagement in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) through the support of high quality teaching and learning projects to explore, test, practice and communicate improved pedagogies, learning processes, curricula, policies and learning materials.
Academic Staff Promotion

Continuing and fixed-term academic staff are eligible to apply for promotion, which at all levels is based on an applicant’s contribution towards the University’s vision, mission, goals and values, specifically in teaching and learning, research or creative works, leadership and service. The dimensions of Curtin’s Teaching Excellence for each academic level (A, B, C, D and E), and the evidence for achieving each dimension provide further details guiding academics on how teaching excellence may be evaluated for the purpose of academic staff promotion. See [http://hr.curtin.edu.au/academic_promotion.cfm](http://hr.curtin.edu.au/academic_promotion.cfm).

Chapter 12 References:

