

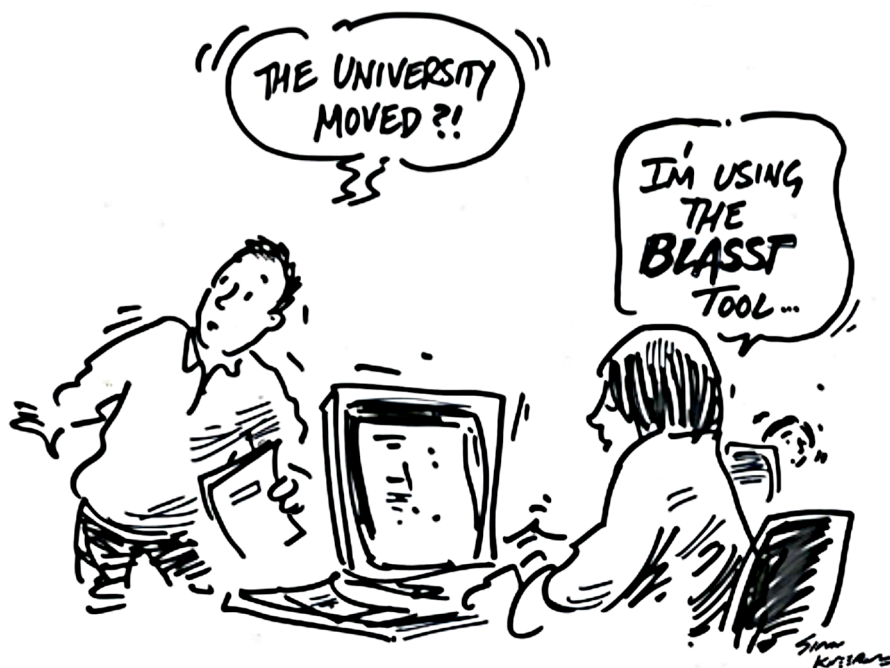
## Introducing the BLASST Sessional Staff Standards Framework

**The BLASST Sessional Staff Standards Framework establishes criteria and standards by which we may evaluate current practice in quality learning and teaching, and in management and administrative policy, procedures and systems affecting Sessional Staff.**

The Framework is designed to stimulate reflection and action, and to enable institutions, faculties, departments and individuals to work towards consistency in good practice with regard to Sessional Staff. It is an evidenced-based foundation for reflective decision-making, and can be used to inform practices and priorities, primarily through benchmarking.

The Framework is also available online as the BLASST Benchmarking Interactive Tool (B-BIT). B-BIT best supports benchmarking in a structured Benchmarking Workshop.

B-BIT is available at [blasst.edu.au](http://blasst.edu.au)



## Background to the BLASST Sessional Staff Standards Framework

The Sessional Staff Standards Framework was initially developed at one Australian university over two internally-funded research and development stages. The first stage (2005-2006) coincided with the institution's participation in the ALTC RED Report project<sup>1</sup> as a linked university, while the second stage (2009-2011) responded to an Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) report that stated that while "good practice in quality assurance for casual staff certainly exists within the University; the challenge is to systematise it"<sup>2</sup>. Systematising good practice is thus the focus of the Framework.

The ALTC *RED report* has also been influential in shaping the Framework's principles, criteria and standard descriptors, and many of the *RED report* recommendations are addressed by and through the Framework.

As such, the Framework can be used in many ways:

### *As an evaluative tool*

The Framework and B-BIT can be used to (self-) evaluate practices across, or between, universities and at a number of organisational levels.

### *As a developmental tool*

The Framework is designed to stimulate reflection, discussion and action.

### *As a flexible tool for working towards good practice*

The Framework recognises that different institutions, faculties, departments and individuals have different needs and resources, and are at different stages in developing good practice.

### *As an educational tool*

The Framework will prompt discussions and professional development about quality learning and teaching, and about supporting and sustaining good practice when working with sessional teachers in higher education.

### *In addition to existing policy and procedures*

The BLASST Sessional Staff Standards Framework should be considered in conjunction with existing policies and procedures, including the current Enterprise Agreement.

## Who can use the BLASST Framework?

Anyone working as a sessional teacher or *with* sessional teachers in higher education can use the Framework. People who support and manage Sessional Staff including departmental or faculty administrators, unit, program or subject convenors, heads of schools and disciplines, and Human Resources staff, may also find the Framework useful.



<sup>1</sup>Australian Learning and Teaching Council (2008a) *the RED report. Recognition, Enhancement, Development. The contribution of sessional teachers to higher education*. Strawberry Hills: Author.

<sup>2</sup>Australian Universities Quality Agency (2003). *Report of an Audit of Macquarie University, July 2003*. AUQA Audit Report Number 14. Melbourne: Author.

## The BLASST Sessional Staff Standards

The Sessional Staff Standards that make up the Framework are standards by which we may evaluate practice in quality learning and teaching, and in management and administrative policy, procedure and practices affecting Sessional Staff.

### The BLASST Key Principles

Three key principles underpin the Sessional Staff Standards. In summary:

#### *Principle One: Quality Learning and Teaching*

This principle refers to those issues that affect the quality of teaching and learning with Sessional Staff. These issues include institutional and intra-institutional commitment to quality learning and teaching, to good practice learning and teaching approaches and values, principles and priorities, inclusivity and inclusion, and to professional development.

#### *Principle Two: Support for Sessional Staff*

This principle refers to the need for recruitment, employment, administration and academic systems that are consistent, appropriate and inclusive of Sessional Staff. It states the importance of support for Sessional Staff in the form of dedicated infrastructure and other resourcing in order for *all* staff to undertake their roles effectively and professionally.

#### *Principle Three: Sustainability*

This principle refers to the need for workforce planning that includes Sessional Staff, at all levels of the institution. The principle is associated with practices that enable retention of good sessional teachers, reduce turnover of Sessional Staff, and encourage Sessional Staff in the pursuit and development of quality teaching. It also acknowledges that this can be achieved by recognising and rewarding Sessional Staff for the contribution they make.

This principle also recognises the need for appropriate resources to underpin processes, and the minimisation of the administrative load on all staff (including academic, administrative and human resources).

### Criteria, Standards, and Organisational Levels of Responsibility

The Framework sets in place **criteria** and **standards** at different **organisational levels of responsibility** by which we may measure the quality of performance and outcomes in learning and teaching, and in management and administrative policy, procedure and practices around Sessional Staff.

#### *Criteria*

These are statements that identify key elements of good practice. In the Framework, a number of different processes, activities and systems relating to Sessional Staff, have been converted into criteria for evaluating current practice.

#### **Examples of criteria from the Framework:**

- 1.2a *Sessional staff are provided with an induction to learning and teaching.*
- 2.1a *The Institution has a funding model that allocates resources for Sessional Staff professional development.*

### Standards

These are stable, predetermined descriptions of the qualities of performance. The Standards reflect the level of achievement for the Criteria.

In the Framework, there are three different standards of achievement in relation to the Criteria:

#### Good practice

The criterion is being met to a national standard

#### Minimum standards

There has been an active attempt to meet the criterion and the basic standard has been achieved

#### Unsustainable

Current practice fails to address the criterion

#### Examples of Good Practice Standards:

*Professional development of Sessional Staff is adequately resourced through the institutional funding model on an ongoing basis*  
(refer to criterion 1.2a)

*There is a complete, accurate and updated list of Sessional Staff for regular communication*  
(refer to criterion 2.2a)

### Organisational Levels of Responsibility

The BLASST Framework supports processes of evaluating and benchmarking practices against the Sessional Staff Standards at four organisational levels –

1. Individual
2. Department\*
3. Faculty\*
4. Institutional level

#### \*Also known as ...

Institutions have different ways of referring to their organisational levels:

BLASST organisational level	also known as
<i>Department</i>	School, Discipline, Unit, Program,
<i>Faculty</i>	College, Division, School, Office,

Refer to the section **Benchmarking using the BLASST Sessional Staff Standards Framework** for information on selecting an organisational level for benchmarking.