A holistic, institution-wide approach to building sessional staff capacity

Professor Jillian Hamilton
Academic Development
QUT

CRICOS No. 00213J

Dominant discourses of lack

Red report:

"the **hidden** part of the massification of higher education"

"the **proletariat** of the academic profession…the Victorian **domestic servant**… making possible the lifestyle of the traditional teaching research academic."

NTEU:

Casualisation is the **the dirty little secret** of university expansion over the past decade [a result of **Underfunding**]

Discourses of complexity

- Scale: **70,000** sector wide **(QUT 2,500)**
- Varied contexts (faculties with different cultures, process, and learning and teaching approaches).
- High turnover.
- Changing sector-wide and discipline contexts.

A ‘wicked problem’ ie: difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete knowledge, complexities, and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognize.

Who are sessionals & what do they bring?

Contribution to student learning > 50%

- Industry professionals :
  Real world learning
- Postgraduate students :
  Current discipline knowledge
- Our wonder students :
  Empathetic insider know-how

QUT has always taken a positive view of **Real World** contribution, and long history of central sessional academic training.

A proposition

Given that sessional academics make a vital contribution to academic life and to student learning engagement, if we are to enable the best possible learning environment for students, it is incumbent upon us to enhance the learning and teaching capabilities of sessional staff; to support and recognise them; and assist them to realise their full potential.

New discourses of possibility

Exemplars of good practice;

Tackling wicked problems ie:

design Institutionally supported, strategic approaches that are distributed, multifaceted and enabling.

Positive change is possible

5 yearly Sessional staff climate survey (QUT)

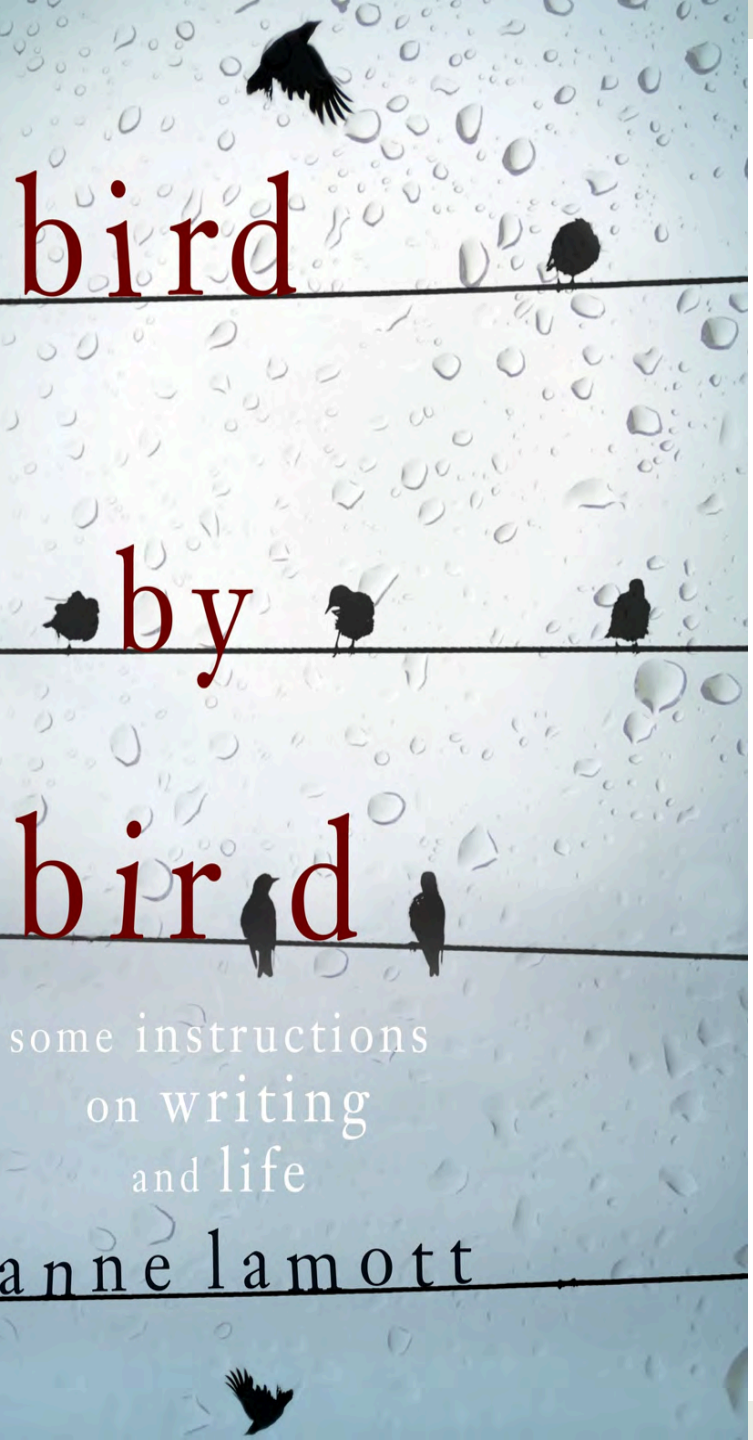
16 measures showed improvement and two remained the same. The average improvement was 10 per cent, some 20%.

Engagement was 85%

(higher than contracted staff)

Even more favourable were:

- Access to information resources
- I am proud to tell people that I work for QUT
- My colleagues give help and support



So how?

"Thirty years ago my brother was trying to get a report on birds written that he'd had three months to write, which was due the next day. …he was at the kitchen table close to tears, surrounded by paper, pencils and unopened books on birds, immobilized by the hugeness of the task ahead.

Then my father sat down beside him, put his arm around my brother's shoulder, and said, "Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird."

Anne Lamott, Bird by Bird, 1995

What do sessional academics want?

(Contexual Review QUT Teaching Fellowship, 2005)

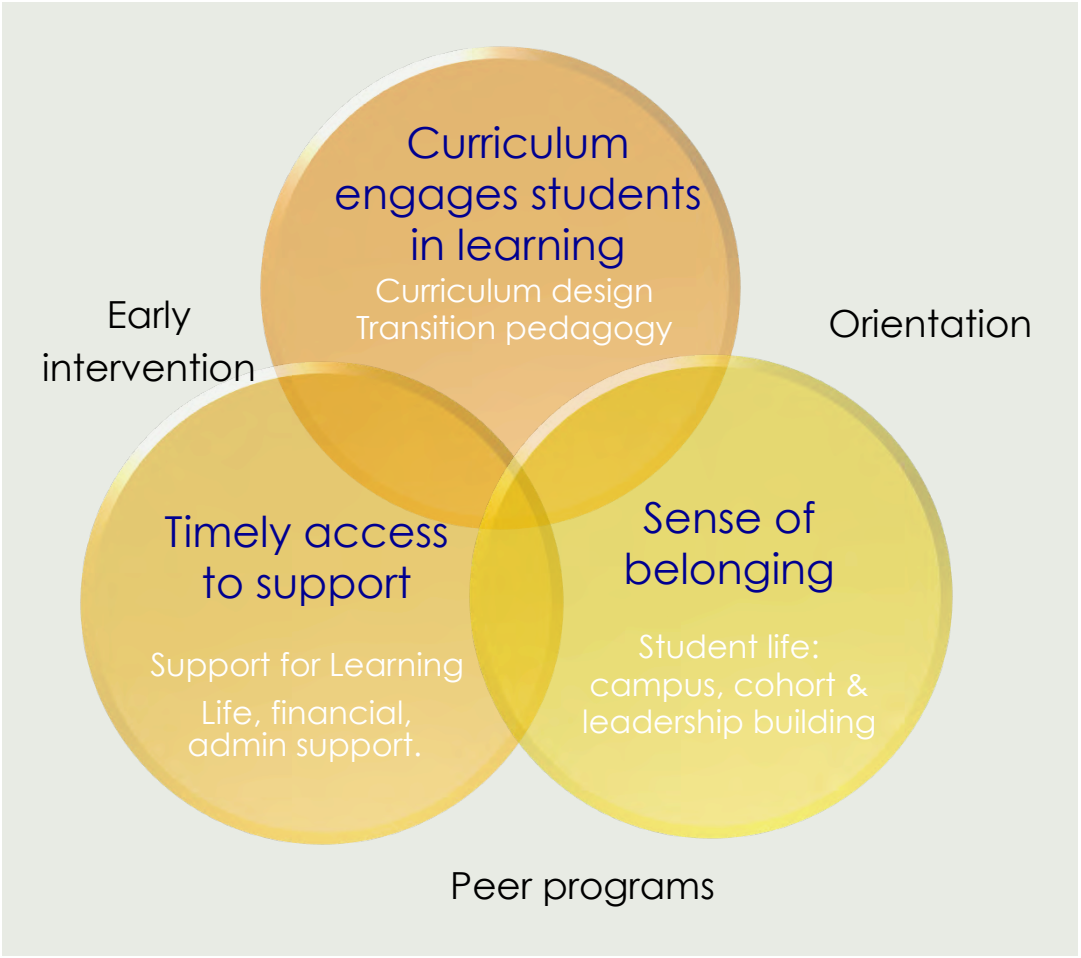
- To do a good job
- Support when they need it
- A sense of belonging
- Be recognised for doing a good job.

Cohering principles

- Strength based (salutogenesis)
- Incremental: Bird by bird
- Multifaceted
- Collaborative
- Distributed leadership
- Just do it!

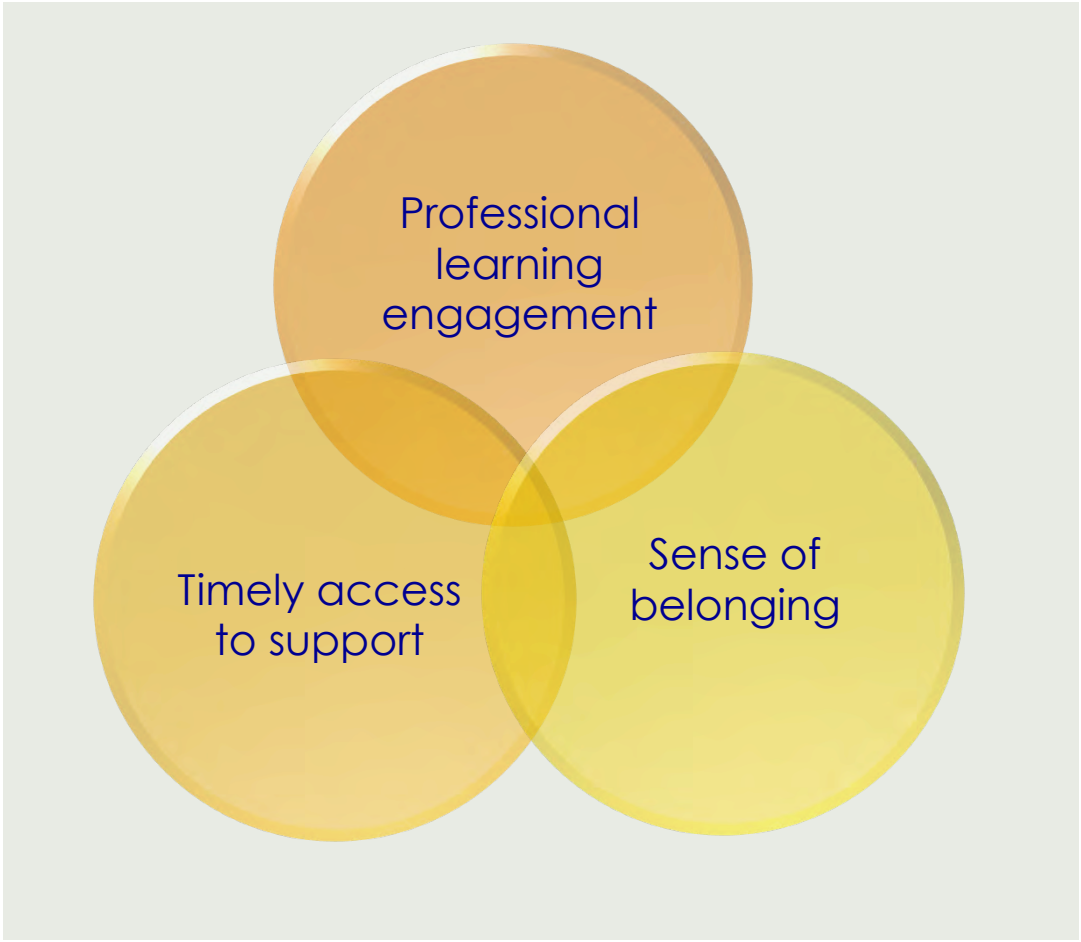
Foundation: 3 pillars of student success

Tinto, Nelson, Kift



Enabled through Academic-Professional Partnerships

3 pillars of academic success

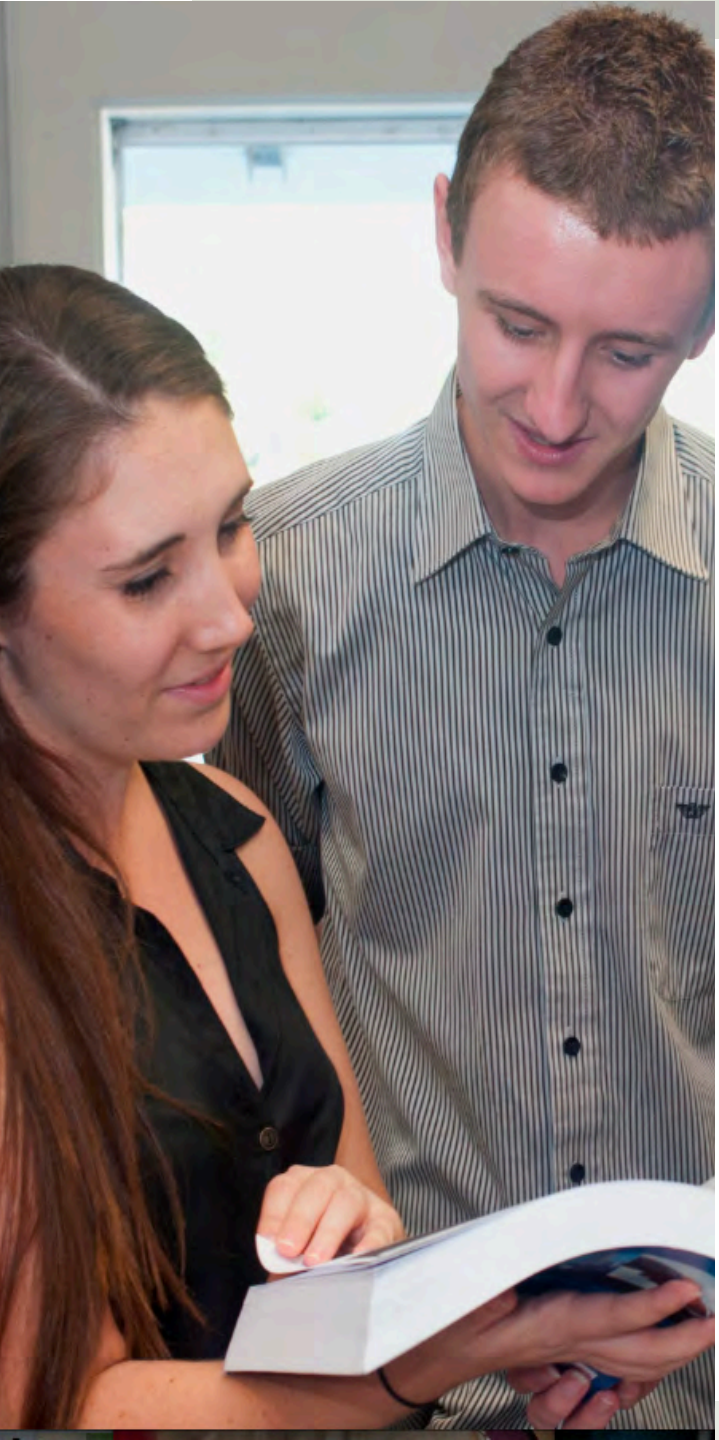


So what might this look like? Bird by bird

1. The basics: in collaboration

LTU, HR, Chancellery, Faculties

- Pay and process
- Communication
- Resources
- Feedback
- Recognition



2. Professional learning engagement

Sequenced, scaffolded centrally offered workshops

1. Intro to Learning and Teaching
2. Strategies for Student Success
3. Assessment, Marking and Feedback
4. Strategies for Academic Success
5. Effective Communication

Like our teaching, it involves active learning, is experiential, and is 'real-world' focused

3. Professional learning engagement: applied

ENGAGING STUDENTS IN LEARNING

How would you rate these strategies? Respond on a scale of 1-10

Strategy	Engage	Learn	Connect	Rank	Notes
Didactic delivery					
Individual reflection, voicing tacit knowledge, collective thinking					
Group brainstorm, to develop position, principles etc.					
Group presentation					
Whole group reflection on learning					
Poetry tree					
Feedback – stop start go					
Social activity					
Debate in teams on concepts					

4. Opportunities to advance

- Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice
- Sessional Career Advancement Development
- Sessional Academic Success Advisors

5. Sessional Academic Success

Rational: while central Academic Development is:

Well Attended AD = 840 (PA)

Well received Evaluations:

Program average = 4.7/5
Teaching average = 4.9 /5
Satisfaction > 99%

It is ….
Generic, remote to school-based context, and in advance of the teaching moment

Sessional Academic Success: model

Centrally co-ordinated, faculty based:

- Creative Industries
- Science and Engineering
- Law
- Business and
- Health.

To help promote

- *confidence,*
- *competence,*
- *support*
- *and a sense of belonging*

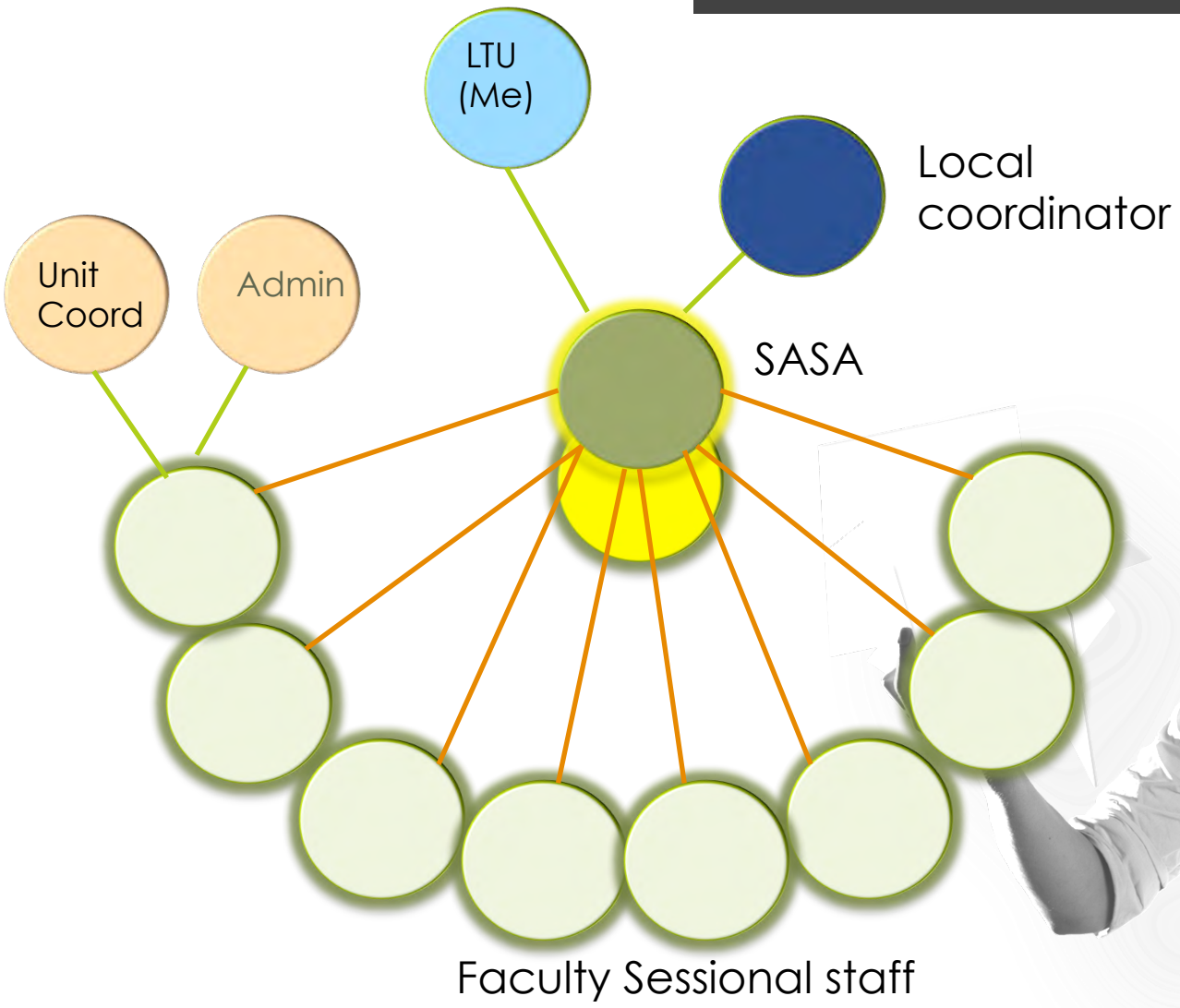
amongst sessional staff at a local level

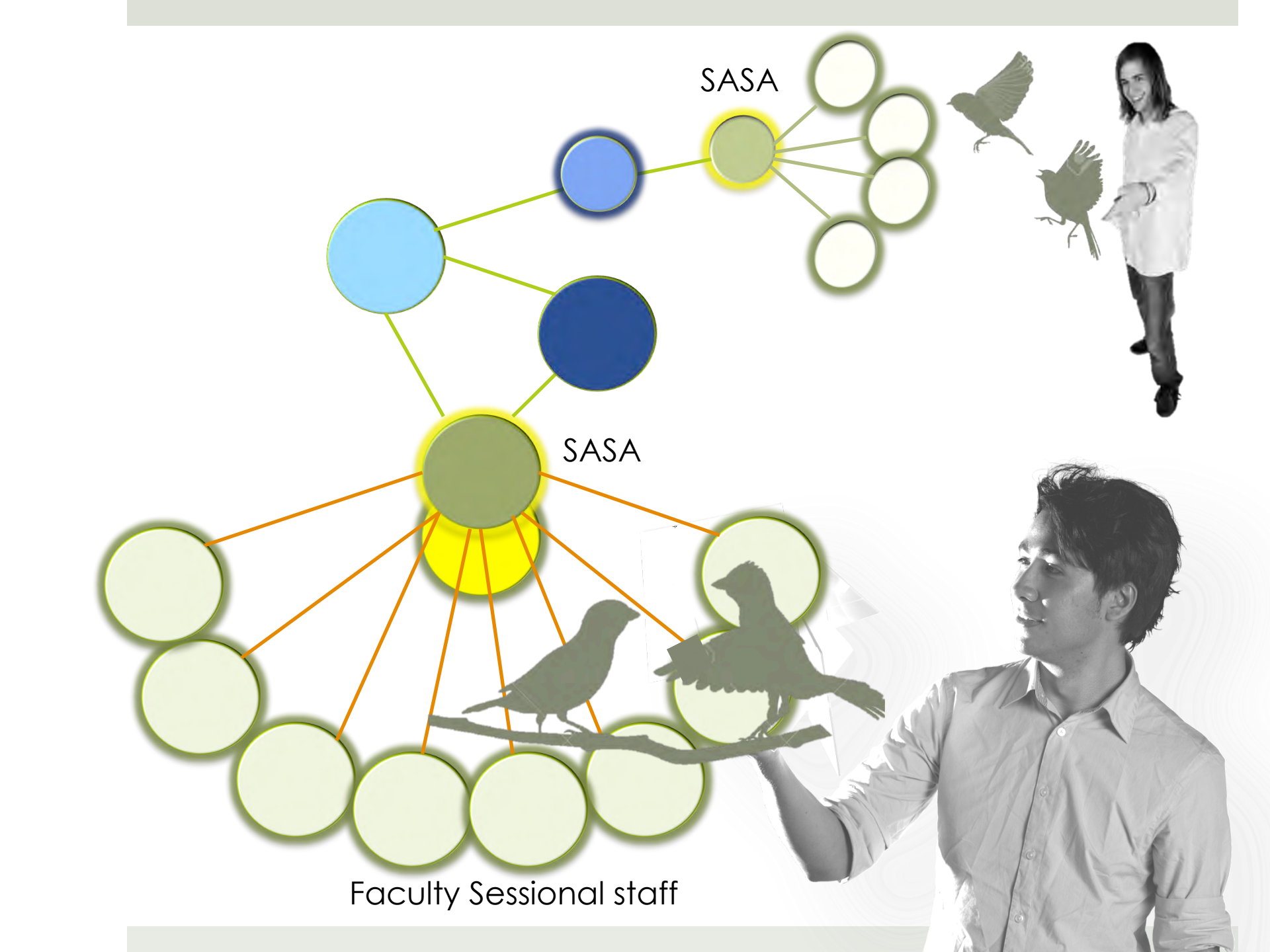
Sessional Academic Success: model

Provides:

contextual, on the ground, just in time: support, training, advice and community building by experienced sessionals to help ensure the academic success of peers.

Distributed leadership




SASA
SASA
Faculty Sessional staff

Sessional Academic Success: framework

Training:

Policy and procedure, advising

Project Design: and initiation

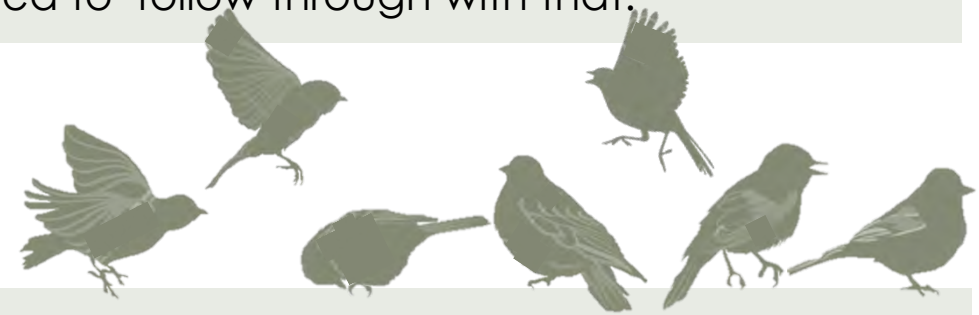
Support:

Central and local

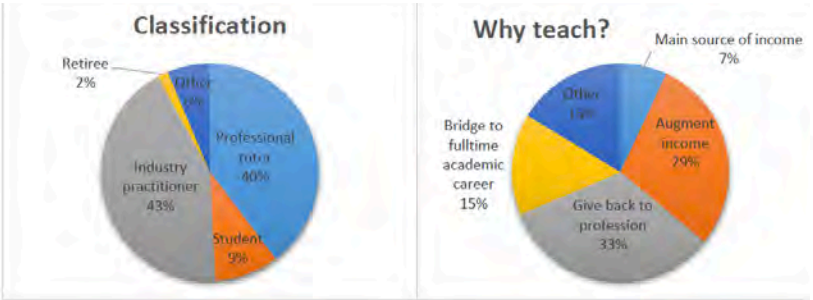
Anti-hierarchical:

Driven by the SASAs.

"There was a solid guidance structure in place at the beginning of the program that required us to be quite specific with our goals, and I think that was enough. It was then great that we were trusted to follow through with that."



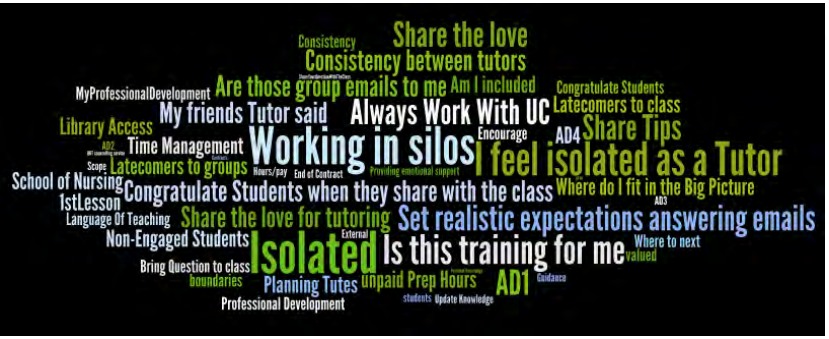
Activities: Surveys



Sense of Community

Are you provided with opportunities to connect with other sessional and full-time staff?

Response average: 2.7 (1 = few opportunities, 5 = many opportunities)



MECA SASA

To help us, help you, let us know your challenges and aspirations as a Sessional Academic?

MECA • OCTOBER 08, 2012

ANONYMOUS
DECEMBER 11, 2012

I don't understand the current pay system. I no longer have to put in my own paysheets but I now can't really tell how many hours I have been paid for, if I have been allocated all my hours or when I will stop being paid.

ANONYMOUS
SEPTEMBER 01, 2013

Knowing whether you're doing a good job and will be invited to tutor again;

knowing how to tutor (due to the fact we rarely meet with other tutors).

ANONYMOUS
SEPTEMBER 01, 2013

I provide feedback to my students, but I recieve little myself. Am I doing ok? I don't know

ANONYMOUS
SEPTEMBER 01, 2013

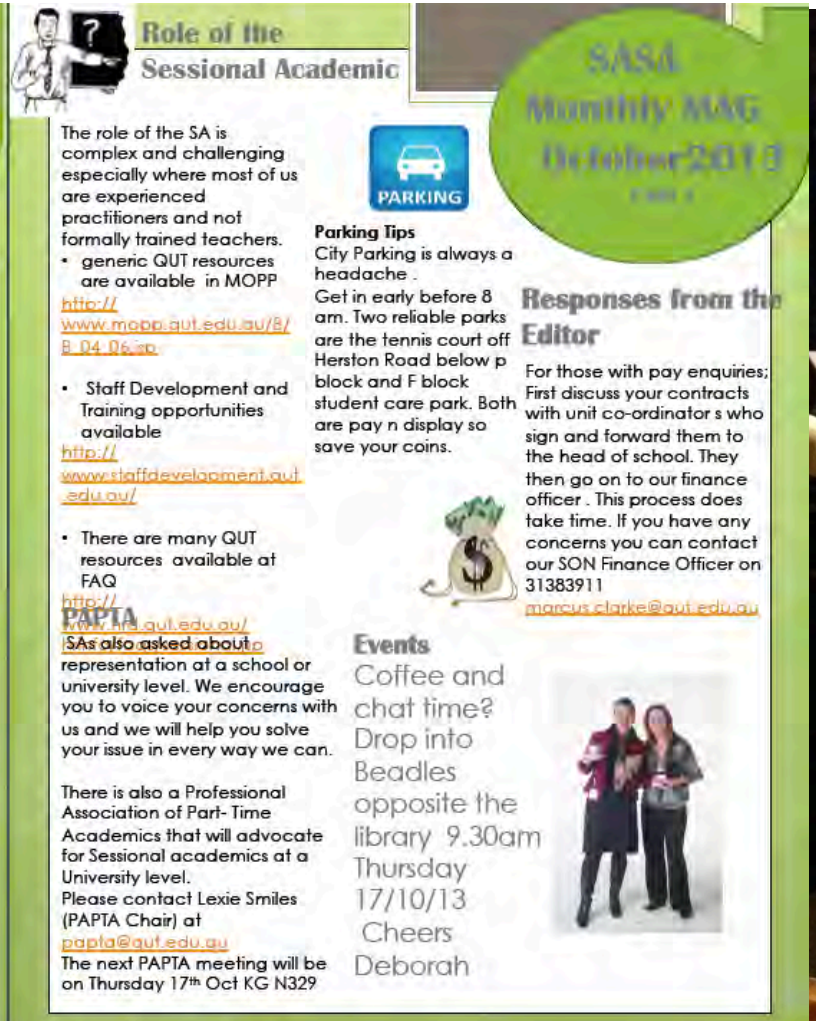
share my teachign experiences.

Activities: support and guidance

I understand your dilemma re the talking in class and it's a common one - because like yourself - I don't want to come across as schoolma'am -ish, as it tends to stifle the flow and the discussion.
If your students have been brave to comment to you that it's frustrating when others are chatting, and are wanting to learn, we especially owe it to them to advocate for them.

Some strategies I have used:
If someone is chatting, I stop the class and sit and wait and look at the perpetrators, waiting for them

Activities: Local communication



Role of the Sessional Academic

SASA Monthly MAG October2013

The role of the SA is complex and challenging especially where most of us are experienced practitioners and not formally trained teachers.

- generic QUT resources are available in MOPP http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/8/8.04.06.sp
- Staff Development and Training opportunities available http://www.staffdevelopment.qut.edu.au/
- There are many QUT resources available at FAQ http://www.hrs.qut.edu.au/

PARKING

Parking Tips
City Parking is always a headache .
Get in early before 8 am. Two reliable parks are the tennis court off Herston Road below p block and F block student care park. Both are pay n display so save your coins.

Responses from the Editor

For those with pay enquiries; First discuss your contracts with unit co-ordinator s who sign and forward them to the head of school. They then go on to our finance officer . This process does take time. If you have any concerns you can contact our SON Finance Officer on 31383911 marcus.clarke@qut.edu.au

PAPTA
SAs also asked about p representation at a school or university level. We encourage you to voice your concerns with us and we will help you solve your issue in every way we can.

There is also a Professional Association of Part- Time Academics that will advocate for Sessional academics at a University level.
Please contact Lexie Smiles (PAPTA Chair) at papta@qut.edu.au
The next PAPTA meeting will be on Thursday 17th Oct KG N329

Events
Coffee and chat time? Drop into Beadles opposite the library 9.30am Thursday 17/10/13
Cheers
Deborah

Activities: local academic training

You give me a deeper, richer understanding of my profession

I see you will be my future boss

You give me renewed excitement for Design

I love your youthful energy

Activities: sharing and recognition

6. Training unit coordinators

SASAs

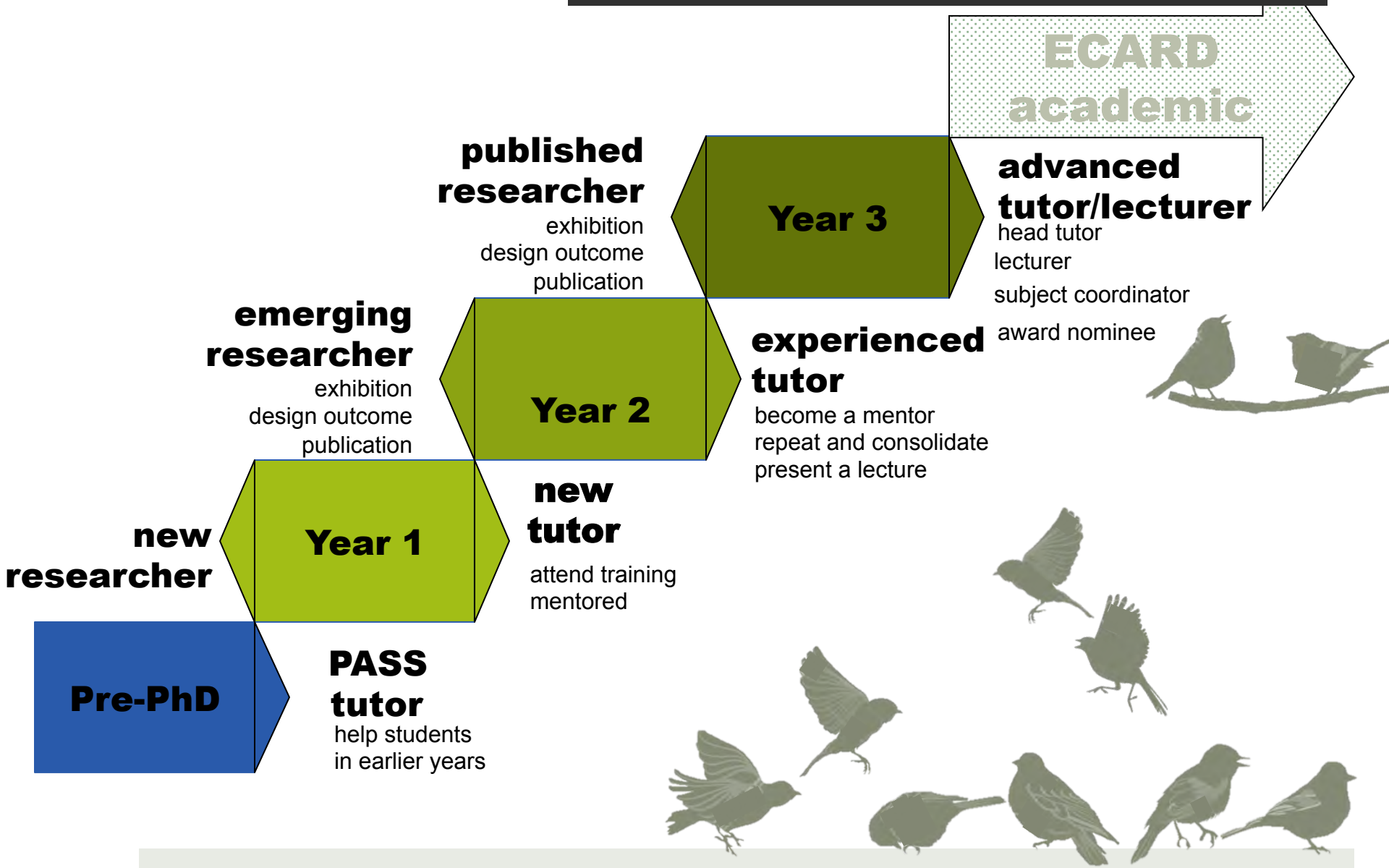
GCAP – ECARD

Resources and presentations eg:

"Tutor Loyalty: Why? How?

- If you are doing something new take them with you
- when can they expect to receive things – notes, etc
- Can they contribute?
- For new tutors: show exemplars of student work
- Seek expressions of interest early ...'

6. Training unit coordinators



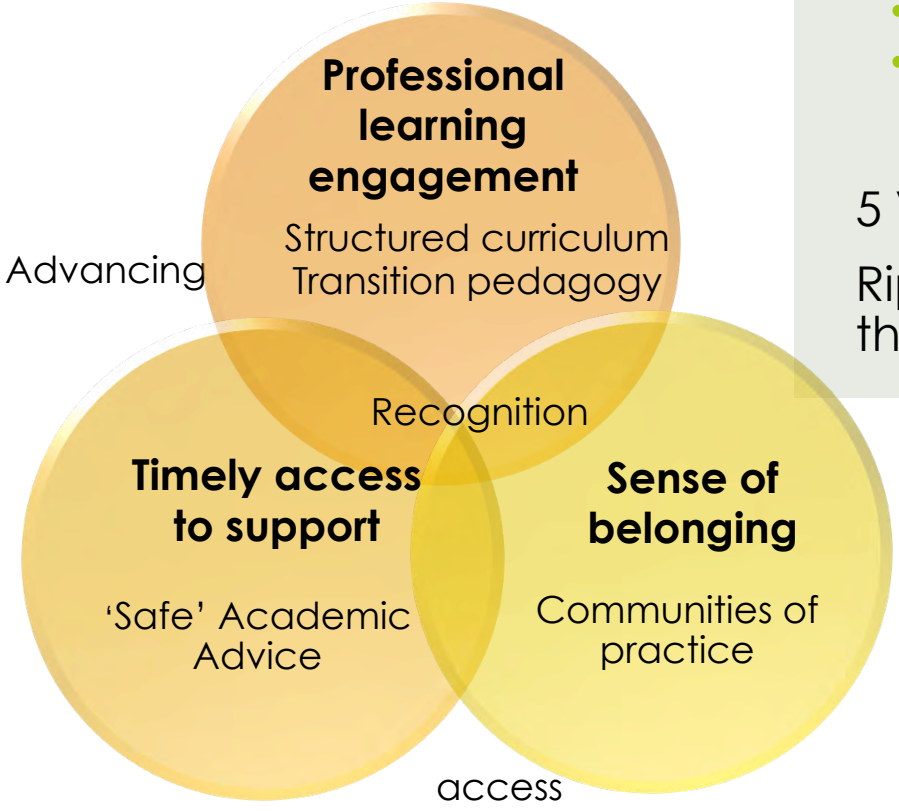
Holistic collaborative distributed: impact

Substantial Increase in sessional staff:

- Engagement
- Agency
- Support
- Feeling valued

5 Vice Chancellor's Awards for SASAs

Ripple effect- many more outcomes than planned (matched by faculties)



More birds to come….

jg.hamilton@qut.edu.au

VIDEO

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VIDEO