

Recruitment and Selection Guideline for the Appointment of Sessional Academic Staff

Section 1 - Introduction

(1) The University of Newcastle's (University) sessional academic staff play a significant role in contributing to the achievement of our strategic objectives, particularly our strong commitment to an exceptional student experience and our high quality innovative teaching and learning practices.

(2) This guideline should be read in partnership with the [Talent, Recruitment and Appointment Procedure](#), which sets out the minimum selection process for the recruitment of sessional academic staff at the University. This guideline aims to build on the minimum requirement, to encourage Schools/Units to implement a best practice framework that ensures a quality assured, merit-based and consistent approach to the recruitment, selection and appointment of sessional academic staff.

(3) The following streamlined processes for sessional academic staff should not compromise the University's recruitment principles of merit, equity and diversity and fairness.

Section 2 - Audience

(4) Current and prospective University staff.

Section 3 - Identification of Vacancy or Need

(5) The decision to appoint sessional academic staff should be made by the Head of School/Unit, within the context of the workforce plan and budget of the School/Unit in consultation with Course Co-ordinator.

(6) Consideration of elements such as the types of duties, period of employment and hours required, staff profile and workload model will determine whether the position is suitable to be filled on a sessional academic basis.

Section 4 - Position Description Developed

(7) Once the need for a sessional academic staff member is confirmed, a position description should be developed for the purpose of clearly setting out the role responsibilities and typical activities.

(8) The position description will include selection criteria that outline the minimum skills, knowledge, experience and qualifications required for the role. The position description will be developed by the Hiring Manager and provided to the relevant Course Co-ordinator for review, who will be responsible for working with sessional academic staff. The position description must be approved by the Head of School (or delegate).

(9) A generic [Position Description Template - Sessional Academic](#) is attached to this guideline. This draft should be used by Schools/Units as a starting point for developing their own more specific sessional academic position description.

Section 5 - Recruitment Process

(10) To facilitate the filling of sessional roles at short notice, and to ensure a fair, transparent, merit-based and consistent approach, it is recommended that the School/Unit conducts an Expression of Interest (EOI) process to develop, maintain and refresh a register of suitable sessional academic appointees.

(11) The EOI process should be conducted annually (advertised both internally and externally) to ensure equity of employment opportunity, quality of sessional academic resources, relevance and currency.

(12) The EOI process should involve the following:

- a. The Hiring Manager completes a Sessional Academic EOI Request form and obtains Head of School approval. Once approved, the form is forwarded to the Recruitment Team in Human Resource Services.
- b. The Recruitment Team will coordinate a call for expressions of interest which is advertised both internally and externally to the University as determined by the Hiring Manager and the Recruitment Team.

It is recommended that the advertisement is placed at an appropriate time deemed by the School prior to the commencement of the relevant teaching period to allow adequate time for each appointed sessional academic to receive appropriate onboarding and orientation prior to the start of the teaching period.

- c. Applicants complete an online application form through the University's job vacancies page. This form specifically addresses the School's needs and selection criteria. The applicant must attach a copy of their CV.
- d. Once the EOI has closed, the Recruitment Team will provide the Hiring Manager (or nominee) with access to the applications in order for them to conduct the selection process.

Section 6 - Selection Process

(13) The Hiring Manager will coordinate the selection of sessional academic staff. The selection should be made in consultation with the relevant Course Co-ordinator (or delegate) and selection decisions must be approved by the Head of School.

(14) If the Hiring Manager has a financial, family or other close personal relationship with any appointee there is the potential for an actual or perceived conflict of interest. The Hiring Manager must adhere to the University's [Conflicts of Interest policy](#) (clauses 11 -15 Prejudicial Relationships) and the [Code of Conduct](#) before any appointment is made to ensure that there is no actual or perceived conflict of interest.

(15) The Hiring Manager is responsible for ensuring that all applicants deemed appointable are able to provide evidence of their proof of working rights. If the applicant cannot provide this then their application cannot be considered.

(16) Applicants are assessed against the following:

- a. Whether they hold the relevant qualifications; and
- b. How they meet the selection criteria; and
- c. Past teaching performance if they have previously worked in the employing College/Division.

(17) Where the applicant has not previously worked in the employing College/Division, it is necessary to conduct an informal interview to determine if the applicant is suitable for the role.

(18) A minimum of two referee checks must be undertaken for applicants not previously engaged as sessional academic staff in the employing area. The attached Sessional Academic Reference Check Template provides a guide

for the types of questions that should be asked.

(19) Once the selection process is complete, all EOI applicants who are deemed appointable will be added to the School/Unit's sessional academic register which will be held for the academic year.

(20) While it is recommended that all appointments are made from the sessional academic register, circumstances such as lead-time, the availability of potential applicants for emergency situations such as illness, the failure to attract suitable candidates by the EOI or the scheduling of extra classes at short notice may mean that selection from the register is not always possible. In these circumstances the Head of School may use their discretion to appoint a suitable candidate not on the register. In this situation a CV, certified copies of qualifications and proof of working rights and two referee checks must be obtained. The position description should also be provided to the sessional academic staff member prior to an offer of employment.

(21) An appointee's application documentation should be retained at the School/Unit level for the duration of their employment and then destroyed after 2 years (unless required for purposes such as worker's compensation legal proceedings) or kept for eligibility purposes.

(22) Sessional academic staff who are currently teaching in the School/Unit do not need to reapply through the EOI each year. Instead the Head of School or delegate should undertake an appraisal of performance using College/School based metrics which should inform whether they remain on the School's sessional academic register.

Section 7 - Appointment Procedure

(23) The duties, working arrangements and remuneration of sessional academic staff must be in accordance with the University of Newcastle Academic Staff [Enterprise Agreement](#) 2018.

(24) A sessional academic appointment must be approved by the Head of School/Unit.

(25) An online appointment form is submitted to Human Resource Support Services by the Hiring Manager or nominee. A completed University Employment Pack, including certified copies of proof of working rights and qualifications is to be attached to all new sessional academic staff appointments.

(26) Where necessary, a completed New Working with Children Clearance Number Form will need to be submitted with the appointment paperwork. To determine whether a New Working with Children Clearance Number Form is required, please refer to the information at the top of the form.

(27) Once the appointment is confirmed by Human Resources, the Hiring Manager or delegate will provide a letter of offer (and timetable) which includes the duties required, the number of hours, the rate of pay for each class of duty required and a statement that any additional duties required during the term will be paid for.

(28) The Hiring Manager must ensure that the letter of offer is received and signed by the sessional academic before they commence employment with the University.

(29) The appointment procedure is outlined in the table below.

Responsible Party	Action Required
Head of School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grant Approval to appoint sessional academic staff - Nominate a Hiring Manager to coordinate the recruitment and selection process for the School's academic staff - Approve sessional academic position description and EOI request form - Approve appointment of sessional academic selected - Approve appointment of a sessional academic outside the EOI process - Ensure the School's sessional academic register is reviewed and refreshed annually - Ensure the School has an effective orientation program in place for its sessional academic staff - Manage the performance review process for sessional academic staff and provide feedback as appropriate, or nominate a delegate to perform this task
HR Recruitment Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinate the internal and external advertisement of the EOI Provide the Hiring Manager with access to the EOI applications
Hiring Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop position description in consultation with Course Co-ordinators - Forward completed sessional academic EOI request form to the Recruitment Team - Declare any conflict of interest - Conduct interviews and reference checks as part of the selection process, where appropriate - Obtain approval to appoint from the Head of School - Sight and certify copies of qualifications and proof of working rights - Forward sessional academic employment paperwork and related documents to Human Resource Services for processing - Issue the sessional academic letter of offer (or nominate a delegate to perform this task on their behalf) - Ensure a signed letter of offer is received from the sessional academic prior to commencement of duties - Retain recruitment documentation for necessary period - Ensure that the staff member completes their orientation
Course Co-ordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and provide feedback on the position description - Participate in the selection of sessional academic staff - Participate in the orientation of sessional academic staff as required
HR Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Audit the appointment paperwork to ensure it complies with relevant legislation and University policy - Approve the Staff Appointment Online form
Sessional academic staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete EOI application form - Provide copy of CV - Provide at least two referee's contact details - Provide certified copies of qualifications - Provide certified copies of proof of working rights - Provide Working with Children Clearance Number where necessary - Sign and return letter of offer prior to commencement of employment - Complete all necessary onboarding and orientation requirements

Section 8 - Orientation and Onboarding

(30) All sessional academic staff must complete an online orientation program at the time of their first appointment. The following modules must be completed:-

- a. University Academy orientation;
- b. Health and safety induction; and
- c. Equity and Diversity orientation.

(31) It is recommended that the School design a local orientation program that covers the following:-

- a. a tour of the work area and personal work space (if applicable);
- b. provision of keys/swipe cards;

- c. what is expected of them in their role;
- d. core University/College/School policies, directions and guidelines related to the role;
- e. performance and development, including access to training;
- f. safety and emergency procedures;
- g. the resources that will be provided to them;
- h. assign a contact within the School/College/University who can provide them with advice and support;
- i. the Course Co-ordinator details to provide advice in relation to course design, timetable, curriculum, course outcomes and assessment;
- j. awareness of the online CTL resources that are available to new teachers.

Status and Details

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Responsible Executive	Martin Sainsbury Chief People and Culture Officer martin.sainsbury@newcastle.edu.au
Enquiries Contact	Recruitment 4033 9999

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Class" - When referring to a class attended by Students, a class is any teaching and learning activity of a course. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Academic staff" - An academic employee holding a substantive academic position of 0.5 full-time equivalent or above where the contract length is twelve months or longer.

"Academic year" - The period 1 January to 31 December in a given year.

"Applicant" - Where referring to a student, an applicant is an individual seeking entry to a program or course offered by the University or its partner organisation/s. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Course" - When referring to a course offered by the University, a course is a set of learning activities or learning opportunities with defined, assessed and recorded learning outcomes. A course will be identified by an alphanumeric course code and course title. Course types include core courses, compulsory courses, directed courses, capstone courses and electives. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Candidate" - With regard to Higher Degree by Research it has the same meaning as student. For all other instances it is a person considered for appointment to a position.

"School" - An organisational unit forming part of a College or Division, responsible for offering a particular course.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

"Term" - When referring to an academic period, term means a period of time aligned to an academic year for the delivery of a course in which students enrol and for which they are usually charged fees for example semesters, trimesters, summer, winter or full-year term. The academic year for a term is determined by the academic year in which the course commences, not concludes. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"College" - An organisational unit established within the University by the Council.