

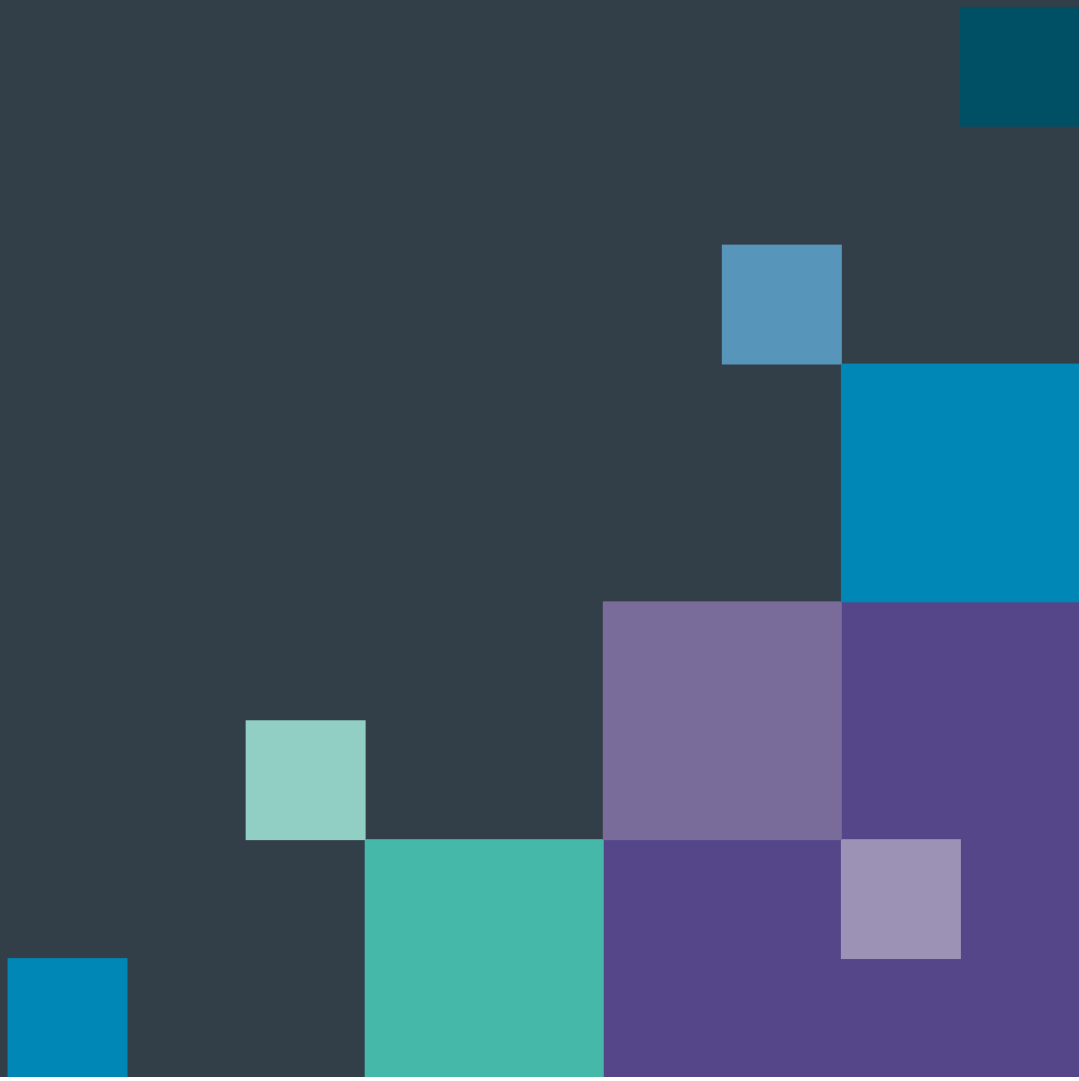
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Windows into practice

**Academic Development: Supporting Capabilities and
Career Development**

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand



Overview

The [Centre for Academic Development \(CAD\)](#)—Te Kōtuinga Mātauranga at Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington plays a pivotal role in supporting learning and teaching excellence across the university community. CAD offers a comprehensive range of services aimed at bolstering academic development, fostering innovation, and enhancing the teaching environment. The support provided by CAD includes:

1. **Academic Teaching and Learning Capability Development:** CAD delivers targeted programs that develop teaching skills and capabilities, ensuring that educators are equipped to provide high-quality instruction. These development opportunities include supporting teaching excellence awards applications, as well as HEA fellowship processes.
2. **Curriculum and Course Development Facilitation:** Guidance and collaboration with teaching teams to design, refine, and implement effective curricula.
3. **Higher Education Research and Innovation Support:** Assistance in conducting and developing higher education research, encouraging innovation in teaching methods.

CAD also offers a range of professional development (PD) opportunities designed to support academic staff in enhancing their teaching methods, advancing their careers, and developing essential capabilities. These activities include the [Victoria Early Career Academic Programme \(VECAP\)](#), specifically tailored to support early career academics with permanent contracts at Victoria University of Wellington. This program is designed for those within the first five years of their academic careers, providing comprehensive professional development across all facets of academic life. VECAP offers both independent and collaborative learning opportunities, focusing on:

- **Enhancing teaching practices:** Activities and workshops to strengthen teaching effectiveness.
- **Developing scholarly networks:** Facilitating connections and professional relationships for collaborative growth.
- **Teaching service, engagement, and leadership:** Encouraging participation in service roles and community engagement for teaching.

Through VECAP, early career academics engage in reflective practice, supported by a community of peers and mentors. This fosters a collaborative culture and promotes career-long learning and teaching excellence.

Institutional context

Established in 1897 and located in New Zealand's capital city, Victoria University of Wellington has a distinguished history and reputation for academic excellence and research impact. Named in honour of Queen Victoria, the university is recognized for its strong

contributions to public life, government policy, and international discourse. Its integration with global institutions and public sector engagement positions it as a key academic leader in the region.

Overview of Reward and Recognition of Teaching and Learning Expertise

Policies and processes

Victoria University of Wellington has established clear pathways and policies for recognizing and rewarding teaching and learning expertise. Academic staff are supported through processes such as probation, progression, and promotion, underpinned by an institutional academic career framework intended to ensure transparency and consistency. Policies for promotion and workload allocation are being revised and simplified in 2025 to further build on this strong foundation.

Pathways

There are two key pathways for academics at Victoria University of Wellington:

1. Principal Academic pathway, which has a presumptive 40/40/20 workload allocation for teaching, research, and service (internal and external).
2. Teaching intensive academic pathway, which has no research allocation and no access to research and study leave. Academics on this pathway are on academic contracts that focus on teaching and learning service and practice.

Structures Supporting Development

The CAD serves as the primary structure facilitating academic development activities.

Place of HEA Fellowships in Reward and Recognition

The **Te Arawai Ako: Pathway to Learning and Teaching Fellowship** program is an integral part of the university's commitment to teaching excellence. This professional development initiative encourages staff to reflect on their teaching practices and achieve recognition through the award of an HEA Fellowship. The fellowship aligns with internationally recognized professional standards, affirming the quality and impact of the recipient's teaching.

Reflections

The CAD's efforts in fostering a supportive and enriching environment have been instrumental in promoting teaching and learning excellence. CAD's tailored VECAP initiative

is highlighted as a significant success, providing a structured yet flexible approach to early career development and fostering confidence and capability among new academics.

Ensuring sufficient time for academics to engage meaningfully in teaching development is a tension when balancing research and teaching obligations, which sometimes limits the focus on teaching enhancement. Strategies to overcome these challenges include the forthcoming changes to the promotion requirements and promoting awareness of the importance of a focus on teaching at different career stages for Principal academics.

Conclusion

The initiatives led by CAD (e.g. VECAP) underscore Victoria University of Wellington's commitment to nurturing teaching and learning excellence. These efforts not only enhance individual academic careers but also contribute to a vibrant, high-quality educational environment. The structured approach to professional development and recognition at Victoria University of Wellington offers valuable insights for other institutions seeking to strengthen their academic development frameworks.

Contact us

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