

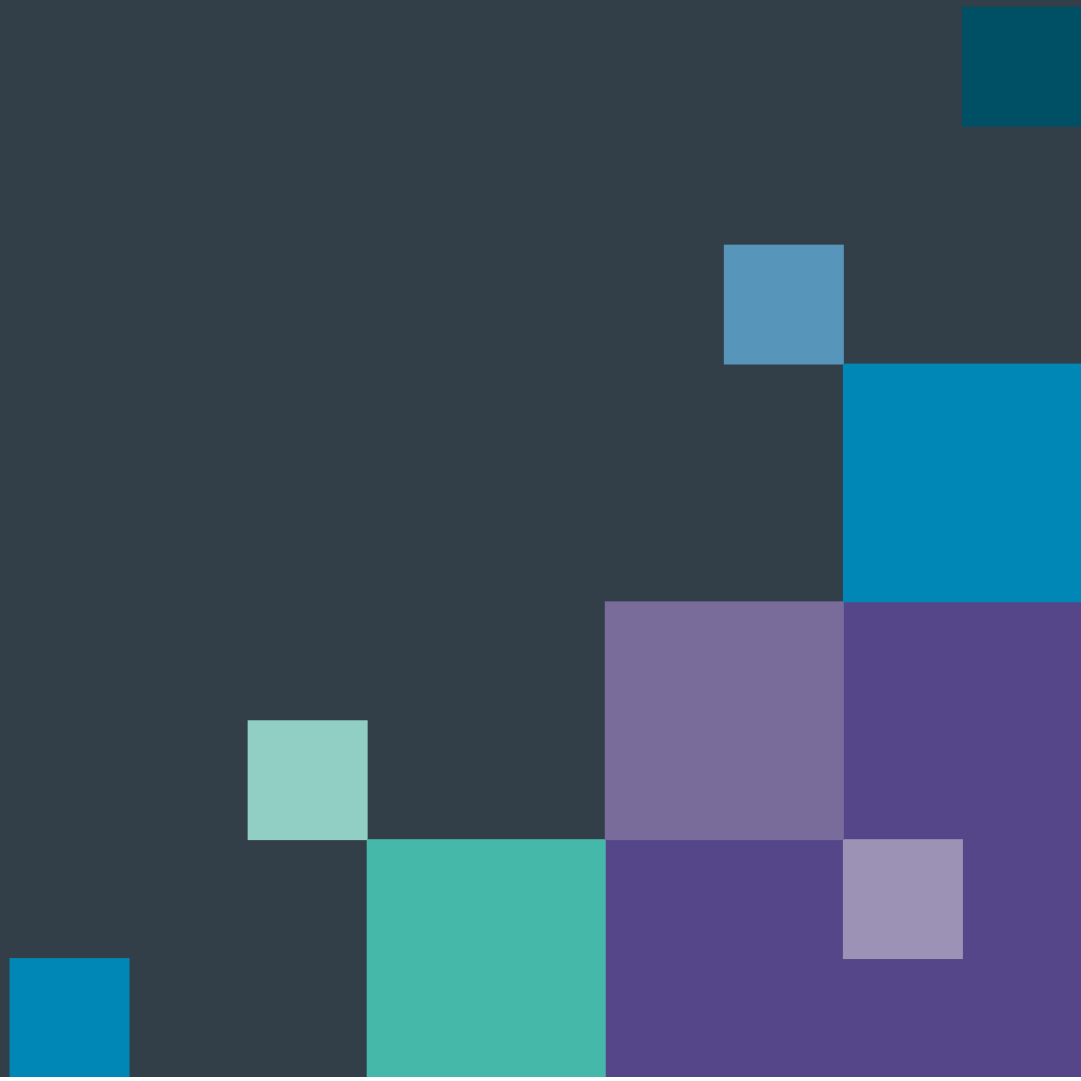
“AdvanceHE



Windows into practice

Developing and Growing Learning and Teaching

Western Sydney University



Overview

Western Sydney University (WSU) has committed itself to fostering an environment where teaching and learning excellence is prioritised through a comprehensive, developmental approach. At the heart of this approach are key initiatives such as the Teaching Excellence Awards, the Western Educational Fellowship Scheme (WEFS), and opportunities to showcase innovative teaching practices. These initiatives are designed not only to recognise high-quality teaching but also to promote continuous development among academic staff. Central to this developmental framework is the practice of coaching and mentoring, which enables academic staff to engage in reflective and introspective processes about their teaching. This reflective practice helps academics critically evaluate their methods, student engagement strategies, and overall teaching effectiveness, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Rather than solely focusing on recognition tied to promotion criteria, WSU's approach emphasizes the importance of developing quality teaching as the ultimate goal. This philosophy is woven into the fabric of the university's teaching culture, with a clear focus on building the capacity of academics to enhance their teaching methodologies and adapt to the evolving educational landscape. The programs and structures in place provide a supportive environment for staff at all levels to grow in their teaching roles. These efforts reflect the university's broader commitment to delivering a high-quality, student-centered educational experience that prepares graduates for success in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Institutional context

Western Sydney University (WSU) was established in 1989 through the merger of several regional institutions. WSU was founded with the aim of providing accessible higher education to the rapidly growing population of Western Sydney. The university serves a region marked by its diversity—socially, culturally, and economically. It is committed to social justice, diversity, and community engagement, and it offers a practical, career-oriented education, firmly grounded in partnership with industry and community stakeholders.

WSU operates multiple campuses across the region, ensuring that higher education is accessible to a wide range of students. The university offers undergraduate and postgraduate programs across a variety of disciplines, including health, science, engineering, business, and the arts. WSU is particularly recognized for its emphasis on research and innovation in areas such as urban planning, health, and sustainability. WSU has also been recognised for its commitment to, and global leadership in, sustainability with three consecutive #1 rankings (2022-2024) in the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings.

Overview of Reward and Recognition of Teaching and Learning Expertise

Policies

The university aims to develop well-rounded academics who contribute across three key performance domains: learning and teaching, research and scholarship, and engagement, governance, and service. Academics are encouraged and supported to build a strong profile in learning and teaching through the reward and recognition and professional learning structures at WSU that allows them to evidence sustained impact on student outcomes in the promotions process.

Structures

Teaching support structures are coordinated through the [Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning & Teaching](#). The staff within this portfolio specialise in helping academics innovate and excel in creating student-centred curricula and teaching practices, particularly within today's technology-rich learning environments. The [Foundations of University Learning and Teaching \(FULT\) Program](#) is a compulsory program for all new full-time teaching staff, covering key concepts such as student-centred teaching, constructive alignment, and reflective practice.

Place of HEA Fellowships in Reward and Recognition

The Western Educational Fellowship Scheme (WEFS) delivers the program of support for Advance HE Fellowships and provides an opportunity for both academic and professional staff to gain international recognition for their educational practice through Advance HE. The Scheme is delivered annually with a focus on mentorship, sustained reflection, and narrative exploration of learning and teaching practices.

Reflections

WSU's approach to teaching and learning recognition is rooted in a developmental strategy that emphasizes building capacity across the university. A key challenge is reaching staff across multiple campuses, ensuring that the benefits of these programs are available to everyone involved in teaching and learning.

Conclusion

In summary, Western Sydney University's developmental approach to teaching and learning recognition fosters a culture of reflective, student-centred pedagogy, supporting academics in their professional growth and teaching excellence. By focusing on comprehensive development and leveraging initiatives like the WEFS, WSU ensures that teaching remains

central to its mission. This approach not only enhances the quality of education at WSU but also provides a valuable model for other institutions seeking to develop and recognize teaching excellence in a holistic and supportive manner. The broader implication for other universities is that investing in the professional development of staff can significantly improve teaching quality and, in turn, student outcomes.

Contact us

All enquiries

Email: communications@advance-he.ac.uk

Advance HE helps HE institutions be the best they can be, by unlocking the potential of their people.

We are a member-led, sector-owned charity that works with institutions and higher education across the world to improve higher education for staff, students and society. We are experts in higher education with a particular focus on enhancing teaching and learning, effective governance, leadership development and tackling inequalities through our equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) work.

Our strategic goals to enhance confidence and trust in HE, address inequalities, promote inclusion and advance education to meet the evolving needs of students and society, support the work of our members and the HE sector.

We deliver our support through professional development programmes and events, Fellowships, awards, student surveys and research, providing strategic change and consultancy services and through membership (including accreditation of teaching and learning, equality charters, knowledge and resources).

Advance HE is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales no. 04931031. Company limited by guarantee registered in Ireland no. 703150. Registered as a charity in England and Wales no. 1101607. Registered as a charity in Scotland no. SC043946. Registered Office: Advance HE, Innovation Way, York Science Park, Heslington, York, YO10 5BR, United Kingdom.

© 2024 Advance HE. All rights reserved.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and not necessarily those of Advance HE. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any storage and retrieval system without the written permission of the copyright owner. Such permission will normally be granted for non-commercial, educational purposes provided that due acknowledgement is given. The Advance HE logo should not be used without our permission.

To request copies of this report in large print or in a different format, please contact the Marketing and Communications Team at Advance HE: communications@advance-he.ac.uk

advance-he.ac.uk

in **X** **f** @AdvanceHE