

# Embedding the Australian University Teaching Criteria and Standards at Curtin: A Case Study

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## Background

In 2013, Curtin University established an ambitious teaching and learning plan designed to enhance the student experience. This context provided a clear imperative for the development of teaching criteria and standards at Curtin. As part of the plan, Curtin University developed its *Teaching Excellence* framework designed to define the capabilities and skills of excellent teaching academics and guide the successful recruitment, development, recognition and retention of quality teaching academics.

The *Australian University Teaching Criteria and Standards (AUTCS)* project provided timely and critical input into the **Teaching Excellence at Curtin** criteria which were contextualised to reflect the University's individual character and activities. **The Teaching Excellence at Curtin** framework includes:

- a. A clear aim
- b. Teaching excellence criteria
- c. Dimensions of teaching excellence for each academic level (A-D)
- d. Evidence of achievement for each dimension.

The Curtin Teaching Excellence Framework provides a single set of criteria to underpin all relevant reward and recognition processes, so that teaching excellence is clear and consistent with the University's strategic goals, and supported by a comprehensive framework which can be systemically and consistently implemented. The teaching criteria are designed to assist individual academic staff, particularly new and early career staff, in clarifying expectations, as well as providing guidelines to assist in the process of supporting academics and establishing guidelines for promotion and awards.

### Curtin's Teaching Excellence Criteria

#### Teaching

1. Design and planning of learning activities, units and courses
2. Teaching and supporting student learning
3. Assessment and giving feedback to students
4. Developing effective learning environments, student support and guidance

#### Scholarship of teaching

5. Integration of scholarship, research and professional activities with teaching and in support of student learning
6. Evaluation of practice and continuing professional learning

#### Service and Leadership in Teaching and Learning (including Community Engagement and Professional Practice)

7. Professional and personal effectiveness

A full description of the Curtin Teaching Excellence Criteria, a definition of scholarship of teaching and learning, dimensions and evidence for each academic level are available at [http://ctl.curtin.edu.au/teaching\\_learning\\_practice](http://ctl.curtin.edu.au/teaching_learning_practice).

## Purpose

This document outlines how the criteria have been embedded at Curtin. It identifies initiatives that support academic staff and professional learning programs that assist academic staff to achieve teaching excellence. This document also identifies how the criteria inform work plan and performance review, promotions and are embedded within recognition and reward schemes at Curtin.

## Approach to implementation

A collaborative approach was undertaken to embed Teaching Excellence into policies and activities undertaken as part of Curtin Teaching and Learning, the Curtin Learning Institute, and Human Resources. Professional development gaps were identified. Work undertaken as part of the Transforming Practice Program 2014: Reward and Recognition; Promotion Process and Policy informed the following activities:

1. Embedding peer review of teaching process and procedures within staff workloads to enable them to review, reflect and refine their practices leading to reward and recognition of teaching excellence;
2. Integrating clear and achievable criteria for teaching excellence aligned with academic roles and promotion policies and processes into the peer review of teaching process;
3. Building staff capacity to review, reflect and refine their practices through the identification of champions and an aligned professional learning program.

Strategic documents (including policies) were presented to the University Teaching and Learning Committee and were/are currently being approved at Academic Board. Consultation with the wider university committee was undertaken including through email broadcasts and faculty teaching and learning committees.

## Achievements

Teaching Excellence at Curtin has been embedded within Curtin through the following key activities.

### Policies and procedures

The following documents have been developed or revised to support the implementation of Teaching Excellence at Curtin.

- The Student Evaluation of Learning and Teaching Policy
- Peer Review of Teaching Procedures
- Professional Development in Tertiary Teaching for Staff Policy

### Governance

Teaching excellence is a quality dimension within Curtin's Framework for Quality and Excellence in Teaching and Learning. This Framework details the quality teaching and learning dimensions, indicators and measures that align with strategic priorities and vision (Transforming Learning and Teaching at Curtin) and the Curtin Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Plan 2013-2017. Governance of the Framework ensure teaching excellence dimensions are reported to the University Teaching and Learning Committee and

Academic Board on a quarterly basis and include strategies for improvement and closing the feedback loop for students.

### **Recruitment, work planning and performance and promotions**

- Standard **position statements** consistent with the teaching criteria for each academic level and role have been included in Position Description templates for the recruitment of teaching focussed academics (see <http://hr.curtin.edu.au/forms.cfm>).
- Development of **new professional roles** (Teaching Support Officers and Teaching Support Coordinators) to provide administrative support related to unit and course administration and activities thereby supporting academics in unit and course coordination roles.
- The **iPerform Work Planning and Performance Review** guidelines for evidencing teaching refer academic staff to the Teaching Excellence at Curtin Criteria. A Teaching Development Plan template is a tool which incorporates the Teaching Excellence at Curtin Criteria and can be used in the WPPR process.
- The **Promotions guidelines** for evidencing teaching refer to the Teaching Excellence at Curtin Criteria. The Teaching and Learning criteria for Academic Promotion reflect those criteria within Teaching Excellence at Curtin [http://hr.curtin.edu.au/local/docs/career\\_dev/academic\\_promotions/2012\\_Teaching\\_and\\_Learning\\_Criterion.pdf](http://hr.curtin.edu.au/local/docs/career_dev/academic_promotions/2012_Teaching_and_Learning_Criterion.pdf) .

### **Professional Learning**

Professional Learning<sup>1</sup> offered by the Curtin Learning Institute to support the development of teaching excellence includes:

1. Foundations of Learning and Teaching (FOLT)
  - FOLT 1: Transforming learning, teaching and assessment
  - FOLT 2: Learning Design
  - FOLT 3: Teaching excellence and scholarshipWithin the FOLT program, participants are asked to complete a teaching portfolio comprising reflections and responses in relation to Teaching Excellence Criteria.
2. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Design – a practical, research-based program for teachers to translate the ideas of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning into their classroom practice.
3. Open Your Mind – a program showcasing Curtin ‘champions’ and their teaching and learning achievements.
4. Peer-based Professional Learning Program. This program provides teachers with a suite of collegiate activities underpinned by peer review of teaching procedures and guidelines and includes formative and summative components and Open Door Classroom. (see [http://www.curtin.edu.au/cli/peer\\_review\\_teaching/process\\_guidelines.cfm](http://www.curtin.edu.au/cli/peer_review_teaching/process_guidelines.cfm) ).

Professional learning modules include:

- FOLT 3: Teaching excellence and scholarship
- Open Door Teacher Induction

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<sup>1</sup> see [http://www.curtin.edu.au/cli/professional\\_learning/index.cfm](http://www.curtin.edu.au/cli/professional_learning/index.cfm) for details of each program

- Teaching Excellence Program; Expectations and Evidence. This module aims to build capacity to for shared understandings about Curtin’s Teaching Excellence Criteria and Expectations for Academic Performance.
- Leading Peer Review of Teaching. This module aims to build capacity to implement and embed a comprehensive approach to peer review of teaching within schools, faculties and the University.

Informal professional learning includes: coaching for reviewers and teachers; and Communities of Practice.

### **Curtin Academy**

The **Curtin Academy** has been established to recognise, reward, enable and extend excellence in teaching at the University, nationally and internationally. The Academy is an active honorary network of exceptional leaders committed to and passionate about the collaboration and dissemination of Teaching Excellence at Curtin.

Teaching excellence is also rewarded in the following **Curtin awards and grants programs**

- a. Teaching Excellence Development Fund
- b. Teaching Focused Seed Scholarship Grants
- c. eScholars grants
- d. Faculty and University teaching awards

### **Transforming Practice Program**

**Curtin’s Transforming Practice Program (TPP)** 2014 project has included the development of a 360° survey tool using the Teaching Excellence criteria to support peer review of teaching.

### **Reporting**

Outcomes of the Teaching Excellence at Curtin initiative will be evaluated and monitored using the teaching quality dimensions within Curtin’s Framework for Quality and Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

### **Next Steps**

Key tasks for 2014 and 2015 to support Teaching Excellence at Curtin include:

1. The support of academic staff in the development and achievement of teaching excellence.
2. Professional development for those in leadership or supervisory roles to ensure academics are supported and developed to achieve teaching excellence.
3. Guidelines and professional development for members of the Curtin Promotions Committee.
4. Development of a mentoring program for teaching staff to achieve promotions.
5. Achievements and dissemination of teaching excellence disseminated at Curtin’s Festival of Learning (see [http://www.curtin.edu.au/learningfortomorrow/future\\_of\\_learning/festival-of-learning.cfm](http://www.curtin.edu.au/learningfortomorrow/future_of_learning/festival-of-learning.cfm) ).