



Curtin University

voice
project

ENGAGING SESSIONAL STAFF: CURTIN UNIVERSITY CASE STUDY

Dr Jane Scott & Dr Peter Langford

17.10.2012

Agenda

- **Dr Peter Langford** will present research from Voice Project spanning multiple universities exploring the drivers of engagement for sessional staff.
- **Dr Jane Scott** will present data collected at Curtin University in 2010 and 2012 from a survey designed specifically for sessional staff, detailing what sessional staff like and don't like, and discussing how Curtin has attempted to improve the engagement levels of sessional staff.

Voice Project's Research: Method

- **Feedback from 993 sessional staff taking part in Voice Project's engagement surveys**
- **From 15 universities**
 - Representing a broad cross section of States and rankings
 - Incl Go8s and lower-tier unis
- **Results weighted evenly across universities**

Voice Research: Top 10 % Fav

High	≥80%	≥+10%
Med	50<80%	-10<+10%
Low	<50%	≤-10%
	Sessional Staff % Fav	All Uni Staff % Diff

1	Job Satisfaction	I like the kind of work I do	92%	+5%
2	Teamwork	I have good working relationships with my co-workers	88%	-2%
3	Role Clarity	I understand my goals and objectives and what is required of me in my job	86%	0%
4	Job Satisfaction	My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment	86%	+6%
5	Mission & Values	I believe in the work done by this university	84%	+2%
6	Diversity	Sexual harassment is prevented and discouraged	83%	-4%
7	Teamwork	My co-workers give me help and support	82%	-2%
8	Mission & Values	I believe in the overall purpose of this university	82%	-1%
9	Organisational Commitment	I am willing to put in extra effort for this university	82%	-1%
10	Role Clarity	I understand how my job contributes to the overall success of this university	81%	-6%

Voice Research: Top 10 % Diff

High	≥80%	≥+10%
Med	50<80%	-10<+10%
Low	<50%	≤-10%
	Sessional Staff % Fav	All Uni Staff % Diff

1	Workload	My workload is manageable	62%	+14%
2	Wellness	I feel in control and on top of things at work	65%	+11%
3	Wellness	I am given enough time to do my job well	65%	+11%
4	Workload	There are enough staff employed to meet work demands in my work unit	48%	+10%
5	Change & Innovation	Change is handled well in this university	42%	+10%
6	Research	I am given enough support to achieve my research goals	47%	+9%
7	Workload	Sufficient time is available to work on high priority projects and activities	47%	+8%
8	Change & Innovation	This university is good at learning from its mistakes and successes	44%	+8%
9	Entrepreneurship	I am given enough support to enable me to be entrepreneurial/engage in commercial work	43%	+8%
10	Technology	This university makes good use of technology	59%	+7%

Voice Research: Bottom 10 % Fav

High	≥80%	≥+10%
Med	50<80%	-10<+10%
Low	<50%	≤-10%
	Sessional Staff % Fav	All Uni Staff % Diff

1	Involvement	I have input into everyday decision-making in this university	24%	-17%
2	Career Opportunities	Enough time and effort is spent on career planning	31%	-3%
3	Cross-Unit Cooperation	There is co-operation between different sections in this university	31%	-3%
4	Cross-Unit Cooperation	There is good communication across all sections of this university	32%	+4%
5	Career Opportunities	There are enough opportunities for my career to progress in this university	34%	-5%
6	Involvement	I am consulted before decisions that affect me are made	35%	-5%
7	Cross-Unit Cooperation	Knowledge and information are shared throughout this university	38%	+5%
8	Leadership	Senior management listen to other staff	39%	-1%
9	Processes	Our policies and procedures are efficient and well-designed	39%	+1%
10	Career Opportunities	I am given opportunities to develop skills needed for career progression	40%	-8%

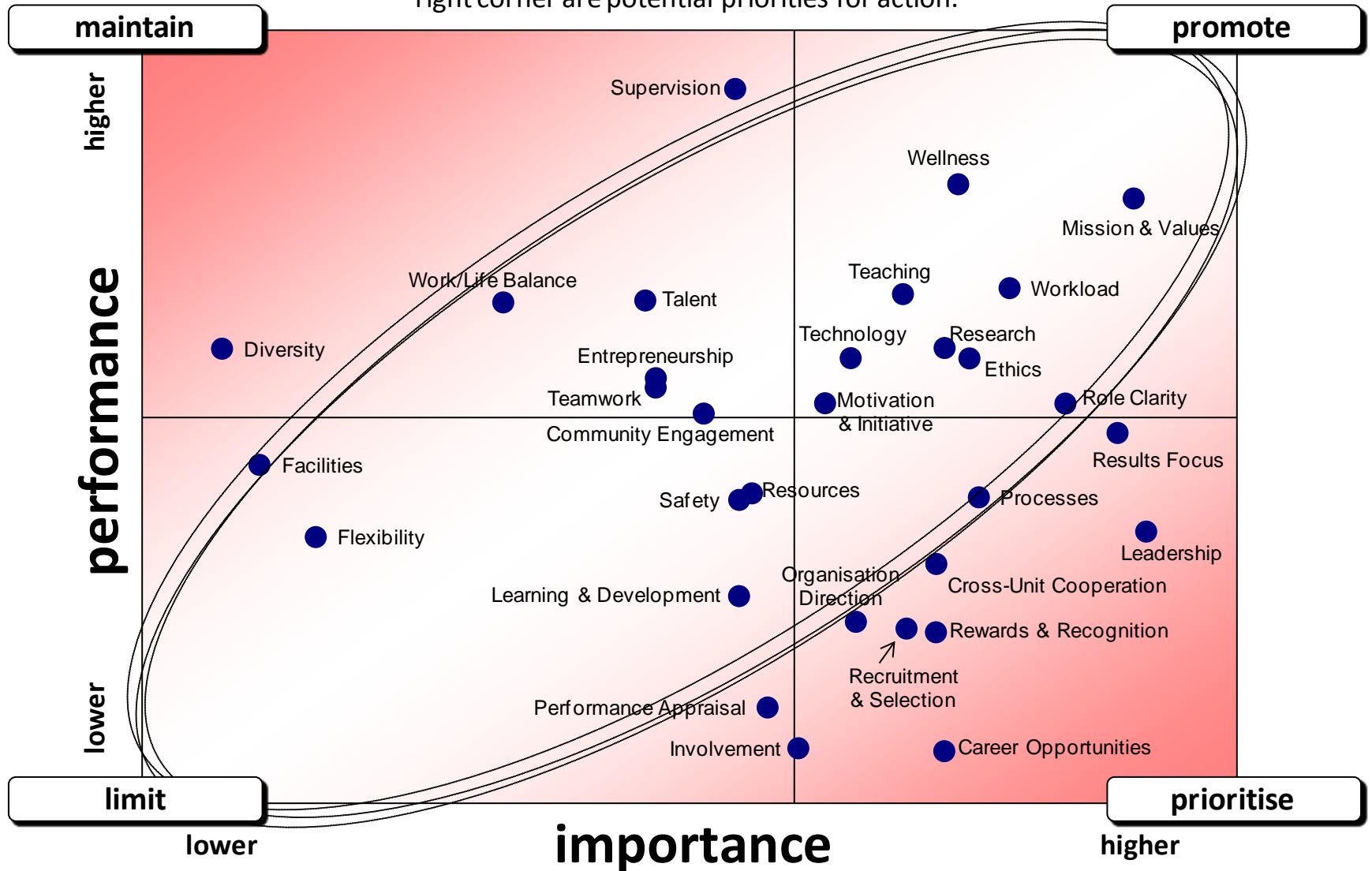
Voice Research: Bottom 10 % Diff

High	≥80%	≥+10%
Med	50<80%	-10<+10%
Low	<50%	≤-10%
	Sessional Staff % Fav	All Uni Staff % Diff

1	Rewards & Recognition	I am satisfied with the benefits I receive (super, leave, etc)	54%	-19%
2	Organisation Direction	I am aware of the vision senior management has for the future of this university	44%	-18%
3	Performance Appraisal	My performance is reviewed and evaluated often enough	47%	-17%
4	Involvement	I have input into everyday decision-making in this university	24%	-17%
5	Safety	We are given all necessary safety equipment and training	54%	-12%
6	Organisation Direction	I am aware of the overall strategy senior management has for this university	44%	-12%
7	Performance Appraisal	The way my performance is evaluated provides me with clear guidelines for improvement	41%	-12%
8	Teaching	I am encouraged to evaluate my teaching	62%	-10%
9	Flexibility	This university has enough flexible work arrangements to meet my needs	65%	-9%
10	Organisation Direction	I am aware of the values of this university	67%	-8%

Voice Results: Gap Analysis

Practices towards the right (higher “importance”) have a greater impact on Passion and Progress. Ideally, practices should rest in the oval where there is a good match between performance and importance. Practices in the bottom right corner are potential priorities for action.



Voice Project's Research: Conclusions

■ **What's working well:**

- Sessionals like their job, have good role clarity, like the people they work with, and believe in the importance of the work performed by themselves and their university
- Compared to ongoing university staff, sessionals feel their workload is more manageable, they report less stress, and are more comfortable with change and innovation

■ **Possible areas for improvement:**

1. Manage expectations regarding ongoing work at the university
2. Involve in decision making associated with their courses and roles
3. Greater frequency and quality of performance evaluation
4. Stronger sense of connection with senior management
5. More communication about the vision, values and strategy of their university, and what's happening in other parts of their university



Curtin University



Overall response rates - 2012 and 2010

2012	Total head count	Number of responses*	Male respondents	Female respondents	Response rate	Margin of Error
	1151	358	121	225	31%	3.9%

*12 respondents did not provide gender

2010	Total head count	Number of responses*	Male respondents	Female respondents	Response rate	Margin of Error
	2325	261	75	150	11%	5.2%

*36 respondents did not provide gender



Primary interest in working as a sessional staff member - 2012 and 2010

	2012		2010	
	No.	%	No.	%
To secure a full-time academic position	58	16%	43	16%
To make a contribution to my profession	99	28%	46	18%
To make a contribution to Curtin	24	7%	19	7%
Professional development	56	16%	40	15%
Income	77	21%	38	15%
Other	24	7%	34	13%
Not given	20	6%	41	16%

voice
project



top 5 % fav

High	≥80%	≥+10%
Med	50<80%	-10<+10%
Low	<50%	≤-10%
	CU 2012	CU 2010
	Sessional	Sessional
% N/A	% Fav	% Diff

Job Satisfaction	41	I like the kind of work I do	2%	97%	+2%
Teaching	2	Expectations about unit delivery are clearly set out in the unit guidelines	3%	86%	+1%
Leadership & Supervision	24	My unit-coordinator keeps me informed about what's going on	3%	83%	+3%
Teaching	1	The units I teach are well-organised	3%	81%	+4%
Flexibility	34	Curtin University has enough flexible working arrangements to meet my needs	7%	80%	+7%

voice
project



bottom 5 % fav

	CU 2012 Sessional % N/A	CU 2010 Sessional % Fav	% Diff
High	≥80%	≥+10%	
Med	50<80%	-10<+10%	
Low	<50%	≤-10%	

Career Opportunities	19	Curtin University recognises the contribution of long-term sessional staff	22%	25%	+4%
Job Security	20	I am confident that I will be offered ongoing sessional work at Curtin University	26%	26%	-30%
Involvement	21	I am consulted before decisions that affect me are made	10%	35%	-6%
Leadership & Supervision	22	The sessional staff voice is heard by senior management	17%	39%	+6%
Facilities & Technology	31	My school has good sessional staff accommodation	33%	39%	-3%

voice
project



top 5 changes

	CU 2012 Sessional	CU 2010 Sessional
	% N/A	% Fav
High	≥80%	≥+10%
Med	50<80%	-10<+10%
Low	<50%	≤-10%
	% N/A	% Fav
		% Diff

Career Opportunities	18	There are enough opportunities for a permanent role at Curtin University	4%	63%	+40%
Rewards & Recognition	14	My pay reflects the amount of work I carry out	0%	54%	+23%
Facilities & Technology	29	The campus facilities are easy to access (e.g., parking, library)	6%	60%	+19%
Marking & Assessment	7	I am recognised for the marking I do	7%	64%	+16%
Leadership & Supervision	23	I am given enough support in my role	1%	75%	+15%

voice
project



Curtin initiatives which could account for the top 5 changes

- Curtin University Academic Staff Enterprise Agreement 2009-2012 finalised:
 - Pay rates for sessional staff increased from 23% to 25%
 - Superannuation for sessional staff lifted to 9%
 - Sessional staff now paid separately for marking
 - Introduction of Early Career Development Fellowships for sessional staff
- STAR – Sessional Teaching Academic Register (online application system)
- *New Appointment of Sessional Academic Staff Procedures* introduced:
 - Selection process
 - Screening of applicants – National Police Clearance
 - Mandatory Induction program
 - Training/development requirements

bottom 5 changes

High	≥80%	≥+10%
Med	50<80%	-10<+10%
Low	<50%	≤-10%
	CU 2012	CU 2010
	Sessional	Sessional
	% N/A	% Fav
		% Diff

Job Security	20	I am confident that I will be offered ongoing sessional work at Curtin University	26%	26%	-30%
Involvement	21	I am consulted before decisions that affect me are made	10%	35%	-6%
Teamwork	33	There is sufficient contact between sessional staff and permanent staff	8%	53%	-4%
Facilities & Technology	31	My school has good sessional staff accommodation	33%	39%	-3%
Rewards & Recognition	16	The payroll system is effective in administering my pay	1%	71%	-2%

voice
project



Possible reasons for bottom 5 changes

- Introduction of the Academic Workload Management System has changed the way workload is allocated – continuing and fixed-term academic staff are now allocated teaching duties before sessional staff are appointed
- E-timesheets recently introduced which require sessional staff to complete and submit their own timesheets online

Moving forward to further improve the engagement levels of sessional staff

- Scholarly Teaching Fellows proposal – ongoing work for staff previously employed casually
- Advertising of Teaching Focussed academic role (up to 75% teaching and teaching-related duties)
- Improve accommodation for sessional staff
- Reduce reliance on sessional work going forward
- Reduce amount of face-to-face teaching