

WATTLE 2020 Annual Report



2020 in Review | WATTLE Online

WATTLE Profile

The Wollongong Academy for Tertiary Teaching & Learning Excellence (WATTLE) is a leadership community dedicated to providing space for teaching and learning recognition, development, passion and dialogue. WATTLE aims to create a community of practice where a diversity of expertise can be recognised and utilised to further teaching and learning locally, nationally and internationally.

Under the guidance of the then DVC(E) and LTC Director, the WATTLE Academy was established in May 2014 with an initial induction of 60 UOW staff members, who had received recognition for excellence in teaching and learning. With the closure of the government's Office for Teaching and Learning in June 2016, the need for institutions to deeply embed an Academy into their structure became more of an imperative. In August 2016, a new UOW WATTLE Executive Committee model was formed with the objective of galvanising the Academy and reengaging with the T&L community.

Since then, the Academy has grown to its current membership of over 300 Principal Fellows, Senior Fellows, Fellows, Associate Fellows and Honorary Fellows committed to enhancing the learning experience of all our students. Every member of staff, whether they are teaching, research or professional; employed as casual, part-time or continuing can become a member of this Academy.

<https://www.uow.edu.au/about/learning-teaching/wattle/>

Purpose

The broad purpose of the Academy is to: Promote excellence and leadership in teaching and learning at the University of Wollongong (UOW). WATTLE's key objectives are:

1. Building a higher education-focused community of expertise, scholarship and research to lead discussion, collaboration and innovation in University teaching and learning, within and outside of the University of Wollongong.
2. Building networks of knowledge fostering national and international relationships with respect to teaching and learning.
3. Increasing UOW's national and international reputation with respect to teaching and learning.

Links to UOW Strategic Plan

WATTLE aligns with the following Values of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan Intellectual Openness; Excellence and Dedication; Empowerment and Academic Freedom; Mutual Respect and Diversity and Recognition and Performance.

WATTLE aligns with Goal 1: Empowering Students for their future, specifically Goal 1.5 Delivering excellence.

We will support ongoing staff development through proactive communities of practice, and enhance career progression opportunities for teaching excellent academics. This in turn supports the Strategic Enablers of People and Culture.



A Word from the Chair

Wow what a year 2020 was. For WATTLE, we started the year with our annual February forum ‘Enabling Students: Pathways, Experience and Influence’ with members from Student Equity & Success and Woolyungah Indigenous Centre, and then like everybody else, had to adapt to an online model of delivery. Based on feedback from our members and the increased workload our members were experiencing, WATTLE continued to offer a place for connection with colleagues around the institute, offering monthly Zoom ‘Connect’ sessions, along with themed events and a mid-year Showcase ‘Transitioning to Remote Teaching and Learning: Showcasing Best Practice’ in consultation with LTC. This event included a student panel, where we were able to share the insights from some of our students during the midst of an altered learning experience.

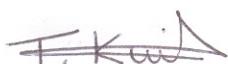
2020 saw a number of new members join WATTLE and participate in our activities as learning and teaching became an even bigger focal point for discussion and development. In no other year have we seen so much development in teaching and required ongoing places for sharing. We welcome all new members and thank our existing members for their ongoing support.

In 2020 WATTLE members continued supporting the University’s awards and recognition processes providing mentoring for Australian Awards for University Teaching (AAUT) applicants, along with supporting internal and external review processes, whilst providing mentoring for applicants and review for Continuing Professional Development processes.

During early 2020 the WATTLE Executive welcomed new members from a successful UOW-wide recruitment process, whilst at the same time, at the end of 2020 we said good bye to a few members due to departure from the institute or taking on new roles within the organisation. The WATTLE Executive thanks outgoing members Prof Anthony Williams, Associate Professor Ann Rogerson and Associate Professor Montse Ros. In 2021, the Executive are: Associate Professor Tracey Kuit (Chair), Dr Belinda Gibbons (Deputy Chair), Dr Sue Downie, Dr Tam Ha, Dr David Porter, Dr Holly Tootell and Mrs Jacinta McNamara.

In 2021 we look forward to continuing to provide opportunities for colleagues to share best practice, learn from experts and develop professionally, whilst supporting the ongoing mentoring of colleagues and reviewing processes for rewarding and recognizing the work being done by educators at UOW. We look to strengthen our connections with our UOW campuses within Australia, with UOW College and our global partners.

WATTLE continues to be an Academy run by, and for its members. We thank the WATTLE membership for your inspirational dedication to L&T at UOW. We look forward to welcoming new members and connecting with you all in 2021. As always, we welcome your input and involvement in 2021 as we continue to strive for Excellence.



Associate Professor Tracey Kuit
Chair WATTLE Committee
<https://www.uow.edu.au/about/learning-teaching/wattle/>

WATTLE February Forum



Every year WATTLE bring our members together to showcase UOW teaching and learning before the year begins. We were lucky to hold this forum face-to-face prior to the Pandemic lockdowns.

This year the forum had a focus on UOW students and equity and student-staff partnerships. The theme of Enabling students: pathways, experiences and influence was timely, not only as staff turn a focus on the Government's performance-based funding scheme but also the pandemic that was about to hit us and the impact on our international students.

Presentations by staff and students highlighted how the university is working with students to support their pathway and transition into university, their experience whilst at university and their influence beyond university. Topics included HEPP Equity Students and Initiatives and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students and Initiatives, with members from Student Equity & Success and Woolyungah Indigenous Centre.



Over 90 WATTLE members registered for this years' forum with attendees enjoying '*the discussion panel with Woolyungah Indigenous Centre staff. Fantastic insights*' and gaining '*a deeper understanding of the challenges and barriers that our students can face in "succeeding" at Uni*' (Forum attendees).



An overwhelming successful collaborative that '*was great to learn that there are others at the university that have passion for students and methods of instilling equity in large cohorts. That sharing stories not always necessarily from industry, but stories from education can help to support students*' (Forum attendee).

Connect Sessions



WATTLE CONNECT HOUR

The WATTLE Executive Committee invite you to gather and connect with colleagues online



Due to lock downs and the Pandemic affecting face-to-face sessions, every month, the WATTLE executive held an online zoom session to bring the teaching and learning community together during unpreceded times. Recognising the need for staff to stay connected while isolated from each other and adapting to teaching remotely, approximately 200 WATTLE members attended sessions throughout the year.



"It is great to have the online meetings during the pandemic, and I believe it is a good method to strengthen the relationship within WATTLE, and the personal growth of our Associate members can be seen through this' (WATTLE survey participant).



Focused Sessions

'Tips for Avoiding Burnout' in collaboration with PODS and UOW well@work as part of Mental Health Month. Attendees listened and discussed:

- Resources which are available for staff regarding stress and mental well-being.
- How to easily access the Lifeworks information and counselling service and
- Recognising stress within one's self and how to manage it.



'Teaching about Climate Change' in collaboration with UOW wide climate advocates as part of Global Climate Change Week. UOW interfaculty speakers included:

- George Takacs (EIS)
- Karen Charlton (SMAH)
- Keith Horton (HASS)
- Sarah Wright (BAL)
- Anne McMahon (SMAH)



'Remote WIL at UOW in 2020 and Beyond' in collaboration with UOW Work Integrated Learning Advisory Committee. Experienced practitioners Herb Groeller (SMAH), Tracey Glover-Chambers (GCD&E), Fazel Naghdy (EIS), Catriona Taylor (LTC) and Meeta Chatterjee Padmanabhan (LTC) reflected on their transition to remote WIL in response to COVID-19.

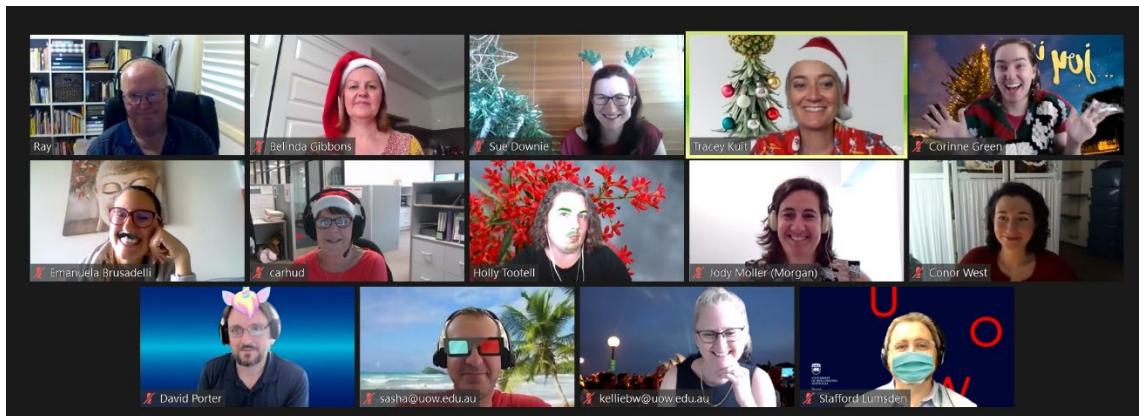


Christmas Celebration

Our Christmas celebration was our last connect session for 2020 that was enjoyed by all. Members shared messages of thanks and inspiration via our ‘Stars Message Board’.

‘While this year has not been what I expected by any stretch of the imagination, it has been a great chance to grow in teaching and learning. I’m pleased to work alongside colleagues who value excellent teaching and learning, and demonstrate generosity!’

‘A year of many challenges is coming to a close, but working with inspiring educators is always a privilege and pleasure! Wishing everyone the best for the festive season; may those you love stay safe and well. Whatever the challenges that next year brings we have a wealth of knowledge, experience and passion within WATTLE to help us and our students meet them!’



WATTLE Mid-Year Showcase



With such a rapid transition to remote learning and teaching due to the Pandemic, WATTLE held a mid-year showcase to provide a platform for sharing practice and initial learnings. ‘Click –

‘The student panel, as always, was so useful. It was great to hear of their experiences both good and bad. Particularly loved hearing about some simple things that could be implemented to make their lives easier (e.g. an introduction to Moodle for first year students’.

Transition to Remote Teaching and Learning: Showcasing Best Practice was presented by staff and students showcasing how subjects were successfully adapted for delivery for remote teaching in Autumn session and Trimesters 1 and 2 in 2020. More than 130 staff and students attended the event. Themes included site design, assessment & feedback, experiential learning, learner engagement and group work. The full list of presentations can be found overleaf.

‘Students’ perspectives on how to ease their stress during COVID such as being even more aware of bandwidth problem (someone shared in the chat a story about a student who had very limited data)’.



List of presentations:

Welcome - Theo Farrell, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education)

Student Panel: Students' experience of remote learning - Paul Isaac, Katie Mordue, & Stephanie Rankin

LTC- Preparing to Teach Online: Impact and future initiatives - Alyce Mason • LTC

The importance of social connectivity in the online learning environment: using your Moodle site to engage with students and enhance student learning - Jody Moller • SMAH

Delivery and assessment of hands-on biology skills without hands-on practical classes - Bethany Hoye, Johanna Turnbull & Melinda Waterman • SMAH

A respite to COVID-19: Finding opportunities in the transition to remote learning - Zein Saleh & Emma Heffernan • EIS

Real time quiz for real time learning - Tam Ha • ASSH Tim Boniface and Josh Hummel • LTC

Making life easier through the use of the 'Progress Bar' - Kellie Buckley-Walter • ASSH

'Kitchen Oceanography': Hypotheses and experiments in the COVID-19 Isolation Kitchen - Helen McGregor • SMAH

Ideas for improving online learning: A student's perspective - Atheer Alghanmi • ASSH

Increasing learner engagement online: Using small group Webex meetings to get students actively involved – Nikki Curthoys • SMAH

2020 Member Feedback

Attendance at WATTLE events in 2020 was challenging for many participants as everyone rallied behind moving teaching online to support our students learning. The image is a vivid depiction of 2020 for our members.



responses to WATTLE Survey 2020

Source: Word cloud

Comments and feedback from staff required the WATTLE executive to change the usual program of activity to suit our members 2020 needs which were changing daily, as you can see from the events offered in 2020. Refer to Appendix One for Schedule of WATTLE Supported Events and Activities.

‘Workload overload and commitments to support our students and staff before myself’

'I attended one event through Zoom but I am new to UOW and the structure assumed you were already familiar with the people and the format. I would be more interested in attending a F2F event'

We asked our members where they would like us to put our focus in 2021. Suggestions included opportunities to share best practice, continuation of online meetings, bring in experts from UOW and beyond, champion reward and recognition programs and mentoring and support for continued professional development and communities of practice.

Source: Word cloud responses to WATTLE Survey 2020



How to get involved

WATTLE is an academy run by its members and relies on their involvement. There are numerous ways members can get involved including responding to annual surveys, emailing the WATTLE Executive (academy-wattle@uow.edu.au) and suggesting future events <https://www.uow.edu.au/about/learning-teaching/wattle/event-criteria/>.

To become a member go to <https://www.uow.edu.au/about/learning-teaching/wattle/membership/>

APPENDIX ONE: Schedule of WATTLE Supported Events and Activities

<https://www.uow.edu.au/about/learning-teaching/wattle/past-events/>

MONTH	EVENT
February	WATTLE Forum Enabling Students: Pathways, Experiences and Influence
April	WATTLE Connect x 2
May	WATTLE Connect
June	WATTLE Connect
July	WATTLE Mid-Year Forum: Click'—Transitioning to Remote Teaching and Learning: Showcasing Best Practice Webinar: The future is here: Remote WIL at UOW in 2020 & beyond Hosts: Bonnie Dean and Michelle Eady Presenters: Herb Groeller, Tracey Glover-Chambers, Fazel Naghdy, Catriiona Taylor and Meeta Chatterjee Padmanabhan
August	WATTLE Connect
September	WATTLE Connect: Forming communities of practice to improve quality of teaching.
October	Seminar: Tips for Avoiding Burnout - Tori Parker(WHS) and Deb Tetley (PODS) WATTLE Connect: Teaching and Learning 2021 and beyond WATTLE Connect: Global Climate Change Week, - Teaching about Climate Change
November	WATTLE Connect
December	WATTLE Christmas Connect