

Bulletin April – May 2022



Are you thinking about next semester already? While you may be focused on creating a better learning experience for your students, you must not neglect yourself. In this edition, we explore wellbeing and how you can “fill your own cup” so that you are nourished, and therefore able to nourish others.

We also offer you other practical ways the LTO can help you prepare for the end of semester and get off to a great start to engaging students.

One important way to celebrate our educators and to spend some time amongst a community of educators is to participate in the 2022 LTO Educator Scholar Summit. Abstracts are now open – read on to learn more about how you might craft your teaching into a scholarship of teaching and learning opportunity.

Perhaps you are thinking of extending your knowledge and skills in a more formal way? The LTO’s program in Learning and Teaching for Higher Education is a nested suite with multiple exit points. Just in time and just when you need it, is the Learning Technologies series of webinars. Read on or [get in touch with us](#) for a more tailored approach.

Academic staff wellbeing – Expressing your full potential

Professor David Burke

The University of Notre Dame Australia, Sydney

Associate Professor, Discipline of Psychiatry

The Learning and Teaching Office had the wonderful opportunity to meet Professor David Burke as part of its work with Higher Education Academy Fellowships (Advance Higher Education). He has generously reciprocated by writing the following article.



The Learning and Teaching Office is committed to supporting academic staff in their delivery of high-quality teaching, and part of this commitment is concern for academic staff well-being, particularly around academic staff mental health, which is key to expressing one's full potential.

The past few years of lockdowns, fires, floods and politics have left many in our academic community feeling drained. So, how can we look after our mental health and the mental health of our colleagues and our students?

There's a lot of information out there around mental health (1), and some of the prominent buzz words are 'agency', 'reflection', 'connection' and 'purpose' – with good reason.

A sense of agency is the feeling of control over one's environment, through the ability to make decisions and/or take reflective and creative action that achieves a purpose and provides meaning. Conversely, an absence or loss of agency can lead to a sense of helplessness or powerlessness, and can lead to disappointment or despondency. The ability to recognise and understand the circumstances that can impair or remove one's sense of agency is the key to managing the negative outcomes that might be felt.

So, how can we look after our mental health and the mental health of our colleagues and our students?

Reflection is a useful tool in recognising and understanding the circumstances that can reduce one's sense of agency. If you develop a feeling that things are not going the way you wanted or expected, stop and pay attention to the circumstances around you, and/or the emotions within you. For example, you

might be feeling stressed, anxious, despondent or irritable. Try to identify the stressful circumstances and/or the triggers for what you're feeling, and try to problem-solve an alternative way to navigate through your circumstances to achieve your purpose; or perhaps adjust your purpose slightly, and re-set your goals accordingly.

Coping with the anxiety you feel when stressed, in the immediate term, can be facilitated by taking time to engage in controlled breathing, or conscious muscle relaxation, or mindfulness – all techniques with which many of you will be familiar. Then, when the uncomfortable feelings have settled a little, take time needed to reflect and problem-solve as described above.

Bruce McEwen (neuroendocrinologist) coined the term 'allostatic load' (2) which is a concept used to explain how physiological stress enhances survival and coping in multiple systems in the body – most importantly in the brain, in relation to thoughts, emotions and behaviour. We also know that high, sustained ('toxic') levels of stress cause neuronal atrophy in crucial memory and learning pathways in the hippocampus and temporal lobe, and can interfere in a negative manner with diurnal patterns of sleep and mood, as well as metabolism and immunity. However, it's also important to recognise that stress and anxiety are not always bad - there is a growing literature on 'good stress'. So, going back to McEwen's allostatic load, we know there's a window within which some stress can enhance your brain function. In other words, in which a little bit of anxiety is 'good' for 'performance', but too much is bad.

However, it's also important to recognise that stress and anxiety are not always bad - there is a growing literature on 'good stress'.

In concert with McEwen's work, Richard Davidson (neuroscientist and psychologist) has identified how emotional well-being, through meditation and mindfulness, effects the whole body - most importantly, the brain - in ways that can influence how we cope and adapt to stress, and in ways that can change how we view ourselves and our world. His early work on the components of emotional well-being (3) led to a model of four pillars: awareness (being able to attend to and focus on one's goals); connection (successful interpersonal interactions through empathy and respect); insight (developing a healthy sense of one's narrative); and purpose (having core goals that provide meaning).

Healthy lifestyle factors, that are the cornerstones of mental health – exercise, sleep and diet – need to be optimised; and relationships and interpersonal connections, that are the building blocks of good mental health, need to be nourished.

We know your mental health will be influenced by what happens around you at work, at home and in your broader world. Your partners, family and friends can play an important role in your ability to experience positive interpersonal interactions and feel supported; your work can play an important role in contributing to your sense of purpose and meaning; and a positive experience within our academic community can play a role in developing a healthy self-narrative through expressions and exchanges of kindness, appreciation, gratitude and compassion.

Lastly, when do you need to go beyond partners, family, friends and colleagues, to get the support and help you might need?

The 'red flags' are avoidance, anger, alcohol and affective dysregulation: if stress makes you consciously avoid certain people or situations; if it makes you irritable with little things and feeling angry; if it prompts you to use alcohol or other drugs 'to cope'; or if it causes an affective dysregulation characterised by acute mood swings or lability. If you recognise a 'red flag' see your GP or contact the LTO.

Assoc Prof Kathie Ardzejewska teaches EDUC5014 Learning and Teaching for Optimal Wellbeing as an elective of the Graduate Diploma of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (see further below for information about the nested suite available to staff)

Sources:

1. Wilhelm, K. (2021). Staying Sane. Presentation to St Vincent's Hospital Senior Medical Staff. (unpublished)
2. McEwen, B. (2017). Neurobiological and systemic effects of chronic stress. *Chronic Stress*, 1, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2470547017692328>
3. Huppert, F.A., Baylis, N., Keverne, B., & Davidson, R. J. (2004). Well-being and affective style: neural substrates and biobehavioural correlates. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 359(1449), 1395–1411. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2004.1510>

You can't pour from an empty cup

Nurturing ourselves to support our students

Patty Kohler-Evans investigates the ways in which you can focus on taking care of yourself (keeping your cup full) as we are only able to truly support our students once we have nourished ourselves. She focuses on ways that are free or inexpensive, time efficient, and do not require you to gather too many resources.

[You Can't Pour from an Empty Cup: Nurturing Ourselves to Support our Students | Faculty Focus](#)



Dr Jenny Pizzica leaving the LTO Team

Dr Jenny Pizzica, Senior Academic Developer and a valuable part of the LTO Team, has made the decision to take a well-earned career break and leaves the University on Friday 20 May 2022.

Jenny has been an integral member of the LTO team and has contributed in so many ways that have benefited the University as a whole. We have admired Jenny's deep understanding of good learning and teaching practice and how best to support academic staff. Jenny's insights and advice on a variety of matters have been invaluable.

We wish Jenny all the very best in her new adventure!



Five ways to re-imagine exams for inclusive assessment

Exams can disadvantage many students including those living with disability, neurodiversity, or health conditions and those managing challenging personal circumstances such as significant carer responsibilities or online learning in remote locations.

The article [Five ways to re-imagine exams for inclusive assessment](#) explores ways you could make your exam or high-stakes time-limited assessment more inclusive.



Learning Technology Update

Padlet

[Padlet](#) is an easy-to-use collaborative learning and sharing platform. It enables the creation of interactive, virtual online "walls" for educators and students to collaborate. It can also be used as a bulletin board, Q&A space and reflective research tool, that is, it is a blank slate for everything, from videos and images to documents and audio.

Any device with a web browser can access Padlet and the basic version is free.

The LTO's guide to using Padlet can be found [here](#).



Educator Scholar Summit: Sharing Practice - Call for Abstracts



The Educator Scholar Summit provides the opportunity for staff to share research, ideas and practices. This year's theme 'Partnerships for Student Success' will focus on developing partnerships, tools and strategies and the longevity of learning and teaching through these partnerships.

We invite you to submit an abstract. We have expanded the sub-themes to provide more context:

i) **Developing purposeful partnerships:** Reimagining curriculum to enrich student learning experiences to meet student and community needs. This could include learning and teaching that focuses on:

underserved communities; pastoral care in a digital age; retention/first year experience (building a connection, pastoral care); engaging students/rich learning experiences; pedagogies that enrich student learning experiences.

ii) **Tools and strategies for creating sustainable partnerships:** This could include learning and teaching that focuses on: use of learning technologies to sustain student engagement and open new spaces for collaboration outside the University; digital platforms; pedagogies to facilitate collaboration and connection; connecting as a global village; quality of the student experience in the digital learning environment; learning in contemporary learning and teaching spaces; virtual placements, online and distributed teamwork.

iii) **Futureproofing learning and teaching through partnerships:** Practices and pedagogies to meet student future needs and future needs of the professions and employers. This could include learning and teaching that focuses on: partnerships for effective student/graduate transitions; digital connections to optimize student success; interdisciplinary, and professional partnerships to enrich

learning and teaching; micro-credentials and new program structures; partnerships with industry in development.

Abstracts are reviewed by an academic panel and successful applicants will present on Wednesday 21 September 2022.

For suggestions on writing an inspiring abstract see this [Writing an Abstract & Award Winning Abstracts](#) webpage.

Submit your abstract by **11 July 2022** through this [abstract submission portal](#).

Nested Programs in Learning and Teaching for Higher Education



Learn more about becoming an educator scholar, through studying the fully online asynchronous *Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education* (GCLTHE). Offered by the LTO, it has been incredibly popular and is part of a nested program that articulates into a Graduate Diploma and Masters (by coursework). The programs will help you become a more effective teacher of contemporary adult learners and enhance how you plan curriculum and assessment. In Semester 2, 2022 we will offer the following courses:

- EDUC 5011 Introduction to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
- EDUC 5116 Designing Curriculum for Effective Learning
- EDUC 5009 Global Learning in Higher Education

You can enrol in any offering as a standalone course. There is no cost for Notre Dame staff with the support of the Head of School.

Explore these options by [hearing what graduates have to say about the Program](#) and by contacting the [Learning and Teaching Office](#)

Continuing Professional Learning

Online/Blended Teaching Series – Workshop 9: Learning technologies - Creating student quizzes, polls and media assessments with Echo360



Tuesday 17 May 2022

45 minute webinar 10:00 to 10:45 am AWST/Midday to 12:45pm AEST

Presented by Alison Maloney from ECHO360

Building on from the media embedded in the LMS, we will explore;

- creating interactive media
- sharing and collaborating on media via collections
- student created content and assignment tool

[Please register here](#)

Click [here](#) for all webinar workshops in the Online and Blended Teaching and Learning Series.

Online/Blended Teaching Series – Workshop 10: Learning technologies. How did students access and engage with my course in Blackboard - using Blackboard Analytics for continuous improvement



Tuesday 31 May 2022

45 minute webinar 10:00 to 10:45 am AWST/Midday to 12:45pm AEST

Presented by Richard Stals from Blackboard

(Live and Recording)

Online Webinar Access URL:

<https://au.bbcollab.com/guest/0d4f5b79bdb94b96945e2fcade2b8d6d>

In this session you will:

- Discover how students actually accessed and engaged with the resources in your Blackboard site; and
- Use the data as a source of insight into course review and continuous improvement processes.

[Please register here](#)

Click [here](#) for all webinar workshops in the Online and Blended Teaching and Learning Series.

Previous Webinars

If you missed any of the previous webinars or would like to revisit the material, you can access them [here](#) on Blackboard.



Webinars for 2022:

1. **Learning technologies** –Echo360: Embedding video in your course and using analytics
2. **Curriculum** - Creating and using educational videos
3. **Learning Technologies** - How do I identify which students are using Blackboard - an overview of Blackboard Analytics
4. **Curriculum** - Creating your curriculum design using the planner for blended and online learning
5. **Learning technologies** - How are my students doing - what Blackboard Analytics can tell me
6. **Assessment** - Enhancing the effect of your feedback on students

7. **Learning technologies** – Brainstorming and group work using Padlet
8. **Teaching skills** – Creating engaging Zoom and Collaborate sessions
9. [Essential Sessionals Series](#)

Stay Connected



You can visit the [LTO online](#), or send us an email [LTO](#). We also invite you to follow us on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#). We also have a special [Facebook Group for Sessional Academics](#).

If you cannot see it here, would like some more support or just want to give feedback on this Bulletin, please [contact us](#).