WATTLE 2023 Annual Report

2023 in Review

WATTLE
WOLLONGONG ACADEMY FOR TERTIARY TEACHING & LEARNING EXCELLENCE

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG AUSTRALIA

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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 University of Wollongong (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 critical. In August 2016, a new UOW WATTLE Executive Committee model was formed under a distributed leadership model with the objective of galvanising the Academy and reengaging with the teaching and learning community.

Since then, the Academy has grown to its current membership of over 400 Principal Fellows, Senior Fellows, Fellows, and Associate Fellows committed to enhancing the learning experience of all our students. Every member of staff across all of the university's campuses nationally and internationally, 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 UOW. WATTLE's key objectives are:

- 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 UOW.
- Building networks of knowledge fostering national and international relationships with respect to teaching and learning.
- 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 academics and professional staff. This in turn supports the Strategic Enablers of People and Culture.

A Word from the Chair

In 2023, WATTLE experienced noteworthy growth as an Academy governed by and for its thriving community of over 400 members at the University. WATTLE continued to grow its membership, strengthened L&T connections onshore and offshore, and provided a space to explore, discuss, and reflect upon issues related to learning and teaching.

The year 2023 began with the anticipation of face-to-face teaching on campus blended with online delivery to boost engagement and flexibility in a post-pandemic era. We were faced with new challenges associated with the launch of ChatGPT, academic integrity concerns, and global challenges such as climate change and environmental sustainability. With all the changes and uncertainty occurring, WATTLE members started the year with a workshop, Students as Partners: The Game!

Throughout 2023, WATTLE effectively organized a diverse array of events, workshops, special interest groups, and activities on a consistent basis. The successful hosting of 15 workshops engaged approximately 500 participants from various units, faculties, and campuses within the University and beyond. These events were conducted through various modes—online, in-person, and dual delivery—focusing on pertinent topics that resonated with WATTLE members and aligned with the University's strategic priorities. Some highlights include our first hybrid WATTLE forum on Generative AI; “We are all UOW”, a cross-institutional partnership event across three GE campuses; Environment sustainability and the climate change curriculum symposium; ChatGPT vs engineering education assessment workshops; a reflection and assessment workshop series; and the Conversation Starters series, WATTLE’s new initiative in response to member survey feedback. These initiatives have cultivated a vibrant and secure environment for members to exchange experiences, expertise, and knowledge and contribute to the enhancement of university teaching and learning. Another key initiative of WATTLE, mini grants for conference participation, supported 11 members to present their work at L&T national or international conferences, showcasing their achievements as the representatives of UOW.

WATTLE continuously contributed to university governance for rewarding and recognizing staff achievements to enhance UOW's high profile in teaching and learning. In 2023, WATTLE executive members continued supporting the University's awards and recognition processes, emerging as advocates for national and university teaching awards. They provided mentorship to *Australian Awards for University Teaching* (AAUT) and *Outstanding Contribution to Teaching and Learning* (OCTAL) awards applicants while aiding in the evaluation of L&T Innovation Grants and providing review of Continuing Professional Development processes. The year marked a significant accomplishment for WATTLE, with three executive members receiving the 2023 OCTAL awards, underscoring the Academy's commitment to excellence in teaching and learning.

The WATTLE Executive Committee is dedicated to fostering a vibrant community of expertise, scholarship, and research to lead discussions, collaborations and innovations in teaching and learning, a critical aspect of the UOW strategic plan. WATTLE will continue to share practice through focused events and through events of interest to its members.

In 2024, we will persist in facilitating and engaging L&T events, showcasing excellent teaching practices, nurturing interdisciplinary partnerships to shape the landscape of best practices in teaching and learning. Furthermore, we are actively establishing connections with external communities to promote our best practices to wider audiences and amplify their impact on both national and international platforms. A key focus for the year ahead is the inclusion of student representatives in the Executive Committee to strengthen student-staff partnership in teaching and learning. Your input, support, and involvement are pivotal as we continue our pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning.

Associate Professor Xiaoping Gao
Chair, WATTLE Executive Committee

2023 WATTLE Executive Committee

WATTLE continues to be an Academy run by, and for its members. It is a leadership community dedicated to providing space for teaching and learning passion and dialogue. The Executive Committee volunteer their time, and individual strengths, to further the learning and teaching mission at UOW.

2023 saw the departure of several long-standing Executive Committee members for a variety of reasons and welcomed new members as replacements. The committee also experienced a reduction in numbers through workforce changes during the previous global pandemic period. In March, a call was issued to the WATTLE membership for expressions of interest in joining the Executive. This received a terrific response and new replacements, which resulted in eight members being inducted into the committee.

Associate Professor Xiaoping Gao (ASSH) Chair

Dr Sue Downie (SMAH) Deputy Chair

Ms Eileen Bodey (UOWC)

Dr Zeenath Khan (EIS | UOWD)

Mr Grant Kinghorn (LTC | DVCA&SL Portfolio)

Dr Alyce Mason (LTC | DVCA&SL Portfolio)

Dr Karina Murray (BAL)

Dr Mercedez Hinchcliff (BAL)

WATTLE Executive Committee December 2023
Administrative Support: Kim Martin

Thank you and Farewell

After several years of contributions to the executive committee and driving WATTLE's support of learning and teaching (L&T) across UOW as Deputy Chair since 2022, Dr Sue Downie (SMAH), stepped down from the role by the end of 2023.

> Dr Sue Downie has been a member of the WATTLE committee since 2000 and assumed the role of Deputy Chair in 2022. Sue's active engagement began when she was serving as the TEL Hot Topic Group Leader in 2017 and 2019. Throughout her tenure, Sue has played a pivotal role in various capacities, overseeing WATTLE memberships, promoting events, and organising and facilitating collaborative workshops and forums. Her leadership stands out for steering a dynamic executive team that consistently creates opportunities for colleagues to stay connected within an environment which are instrumental in fostering ongoing collaborations to promote learning and teaching, thereby contributing to the vitality and growth of the Academy.

The committee also farewelled Prof Cassandra Sharp (BAL) and Ms Juliana Peloche (ASSH), a student representative at the end of 2022. The current Executive Committee acknowledge and thank all the outgoing members for their unwavering dedication and many contributions to the Academy.

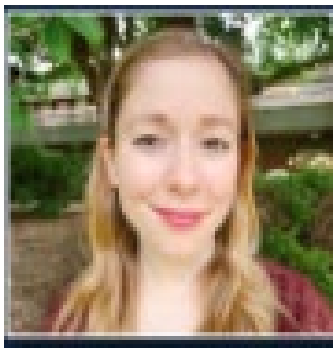
WATTLE Events

With much delight, WATTLE **welcomed back face-to-face events in 2023** but also continued to embrace blended delivery where possible, to provide collaboration opportunities across all UOW locations. Throughout the year **over 400 WATTLE members and UOW colleagues** engaged in discussion and sharing activities around the following learning and teaching topics.

Materials from all of our events can be found at https://uow.padlet.org/WATTLE/2023

Students as Partners: The Game!

February Workshop:
The WATTLE event schedule commenced in February, with an opportunity for colleagues to learn how to better support our students by playing interactive games. The workshop was a cross collaboration facilitated by Dr Mollie Dollinger, a Senior Lecturer in the Learning Futures Team at Deakin University. She shared her research expertise in exploring equity and inclusion of higher education, participatory design methods and students as partners. The goal of the game is to build deeper understanding of the nuances within SaP approaches and share good practice across participants.

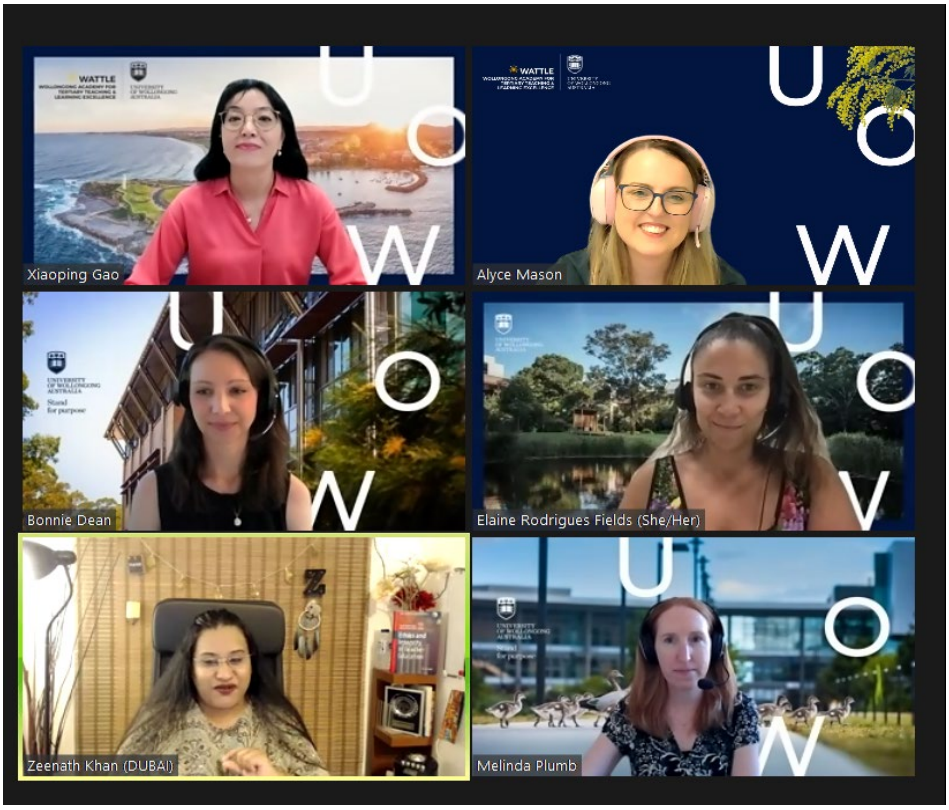


In this interactive workshop:

- The speaker presented the pedagogical approach that repositions students as co-designers of their educational experiences.
- Participants were given opportunities to work in small groups to work through several case studies or scenarios of SaP in a gamified version of the concept.
- They then discussed what principles or barriers are present in each scenario and brainstorm ideas to improve the quality of SaP followed by reflections and discussions.

Chatting about ChatGPT and Generative AI

March Workshop: With the release of ChatGPT in late-2022 came a flurry of media attention and critical reflections on what the implications might be for higher education learning, teaching, and assessment. This interactive WATTLE & LTC co-facilitated session took place to allow for the UOW community to come together to reflect on the emergence and potential impacts of GenAI for the year ahead. It also provided an opportunity for authentic and supportive sharing of ideas and current experimentations with GenAI across disciplines.



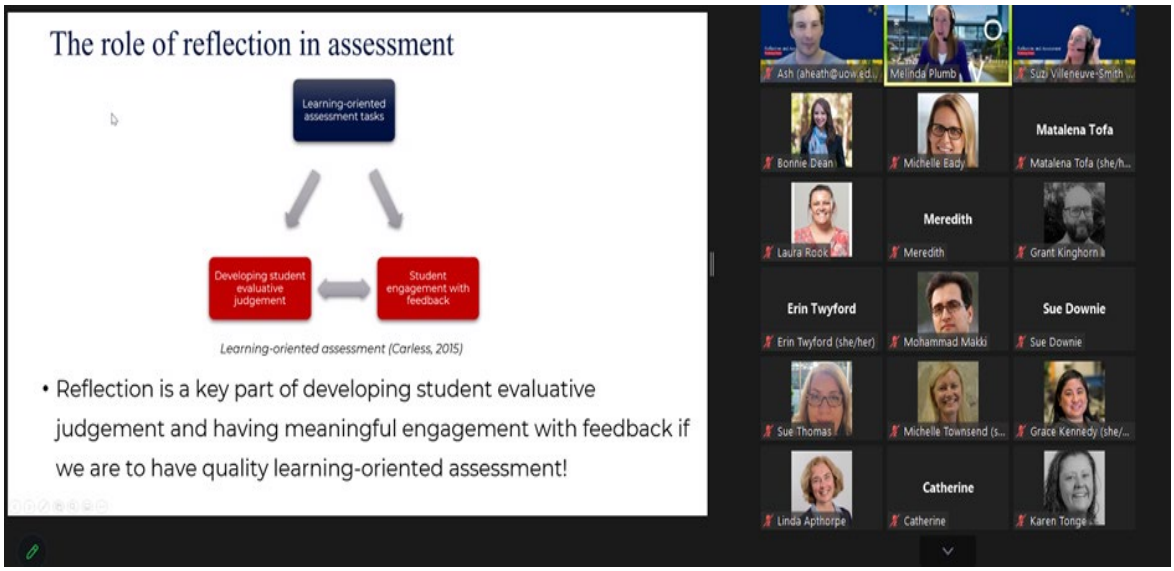
WATTLE & LTC presenters and facilitators pictured above.

Reflection on Assessment Workshop Series

March Workshop series: In March, WATTLE facilitated three workshops on reflection and assessment to explore and share ideas for staff reflections on assessment in diverse learning environments. Reflection is well known to promote critical thinking and delve into deep learning, playing a vital role translating experiences into meaningful knowledge. The three workshops were facilitated by a group of facilitators. This pane of presenters came together to Dr Michelle J Eady (A/Prof, Curriculum and Pedagogy, School of Education), Dr Bonnie Dean (Head, Academic Development and Recognition, Learning, Teaching & Curriculum), Dr Erin Twyford (Lecturer, Faculty of Business and Law), Dr Ashely Heath, Dr Matalena Tofa, Dr Grant Ellmers, Dr Laura Rook, Dr Matt Moores, Dr Meredith Kennedy, Dr Suzi Villeneuve-Smith.

The three workshops engage teachers and collaboratively advance our practices for planning, facilitating, and assessing reflection by focusing on different topics.

Workshop 1 Purposes and Models of Structured Reflection is designed for staff across all disciplines who wish to enhance their knowledge and add to their toolkit for implementing reflection in the classroom.



WORKSHOP 2: Reflection as Assessment showcased examples of scaffolding reflection as an activity and assessment. We invite debate and conversation around reflection rubrics and shared examples from practice.

WORKSHOP 3: Reflecting, Sharing, and Planning were facilitated through a Yarning Circle, inviting participants to consider making small, but significant changes to their teaching.

"Thank you all for such great presentations! Lots of food for thought, especially with the Padlet content." (WATTLE Survey Participant)

Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education

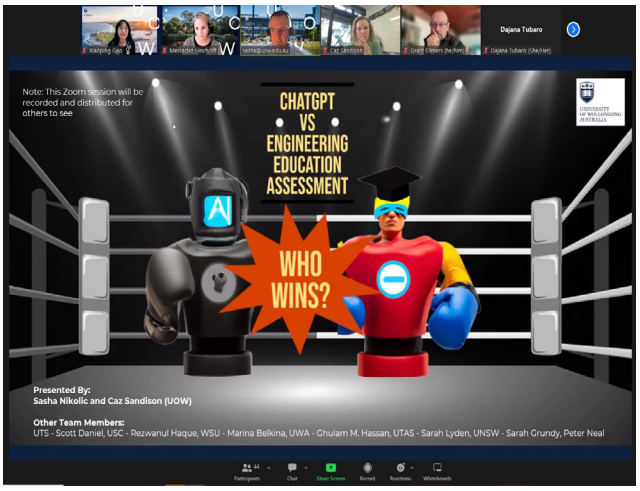
May workshop: This workshop was presented by an external speaker, Dr Lina Strubbe, an educator from Canada to talk about how to develop staff multicultural perspectives to enhance equity and inclusion in higher education.

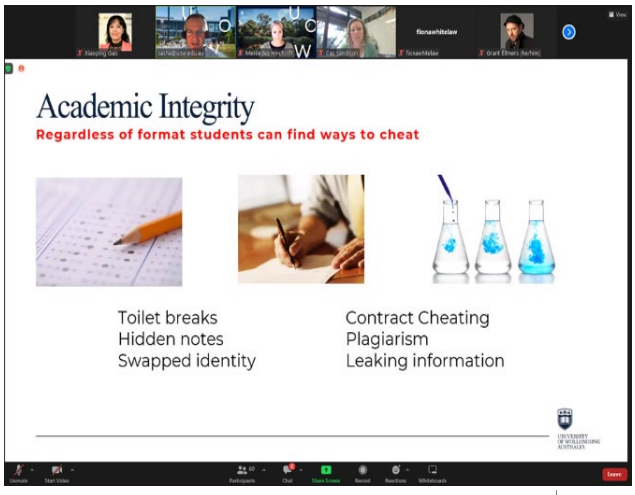
"Thank you so much for the opportunity to listen to these amazing academics talk about such an important topic for UOW staff and students" (WATTLE Survey Participant)

Images by Gerd Altmann and Arek Socha from Pixabay

ChatGPT vs Engineering Education Assessment: Who Wins?

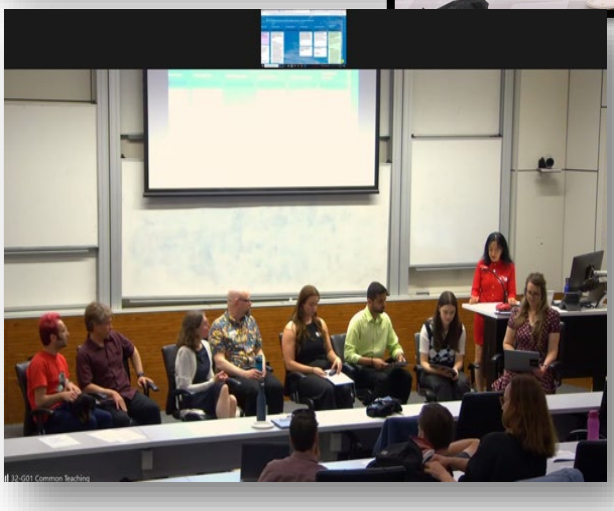
June Workshop: This workshop run by Dr Sasha Nikolic and A/Prof Caz Sandison, to meet the urgent needs of understanding the effectiveness of newly launched ChatGPT, a generative AI tool. GenAI is a rapidly evolving space. While GenAI has been around for many years, with the release of ChatGPT in late 2022, it has become a flurry of media attention and critical reflections on what the implications might be for higher education learning, teaching and assessment.





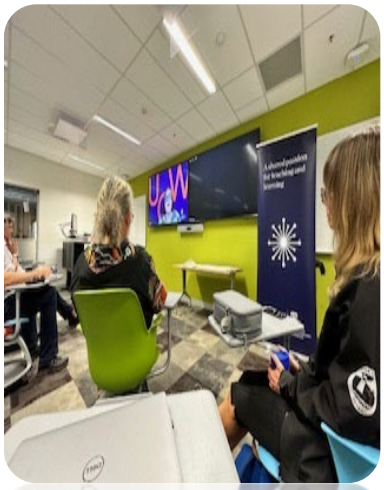
WATTLE Hybrid Forum

September Showcase: This half-day WATTLE forum, entitled InspireEd Horizons: Embracing education Innovation and Generative AI was provided to showcase 2022 and 2023 Learning and Teaching Innovation grant recipients and explore the education horizons for Generative Artificial Intelligence with staff and student presentations and keynote speaker Prof Michael Sankey, Director of Learning Futures and Lead Education Architect at Charles Darwin University, president of the Australasian Council on Open, Distance and eLearning (ACODE) and Director of the ACODE Learning Technologies Leadership Institute. The hybrid event engaged around 100 participants across multiple UOW campuses and beyond the University.



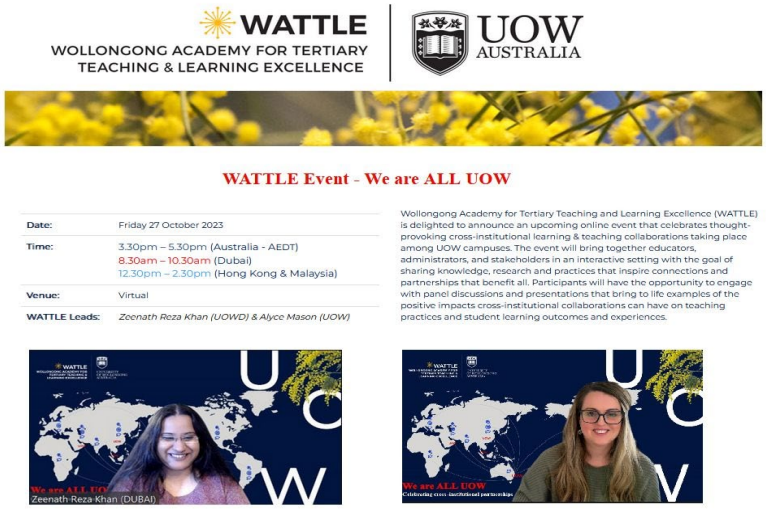
Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Curriculum Symposium

November Symposium: The symposium was an opportunity to respond to the recent review of environmental sustainability and climate change curriculum at UOW. It showcases existing practice, bring interested parties together and consider future needs of UOW graduates with respect to carbon neutrality. A/Prof Pauline Jones chaired the program and VC shared a message at the beginning of the program. Academics from various disciplines and faculties, that is, Nick Gill, Adam Lucas, Stephanie Beaupark and Laura Hammersley, Troy Heffernan, Peter Freebody, Lorna Jarratt, Belinda Gibbons, and Marianne Peso, presented their studies on the topic.



We are All UOW

October Symposium: On World Teachers' Day, University of Wollongong educators from across the world came together to celebrate cross-institutional teaching collaboration and excellence at the "We are ALL UOW" WATTLE symposium. This WATTLE-first event showcased and nurtured connection and community among University of Wollongong in Dubai, UOW Malaysia KDU, UOW College Hong Kong, UOW Australia & UOW Global Enterprises. Academic presenters and panelists shared inspiring successes, lessons, and ideas for strengthening cross-campus partnerships.



End of Year Celebration Party

The End of Year celebration party was a highly successful milestone for 2023 WATTLE events. It marks the resumption of in-person gatherings following another challenging year. The event was held on the main campus and served to recognize and celebrate the involvement and contributions of our members. Professor Eileen McLaughlin, Interim DVC (Academic & Student Life) presented certificates to new WATTLE colleagues, and acknowledged the hard work and dedication of members, especially appreciating the contributions of our outgoing Deputy Chair. Our incoming Deputy Chairs and Executive Committee introduced themselves to the members. The event also provided valuable networking and collaboration opportunities. A lucky draw activity engaged approximately 50 members, providing them with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences in 2023 and share their ideas for teaching and learning in the year ahead. Overall, the End of Year celebration resilience of the Academy and its members. It was a fun and rewarding experience that highlighted the strength and resilience of the Academy and its members.

Conversation Starters

Conversation Starters are a series of informal learning and teaching lunch time conversation sessions designed to connect teachers from different disciplines and faculties at UOW (Wollongong Campus). The aim is to create a supportive community where teachers can come together in person to share experiences, develop cross- disciplinary relationships, and learn tips and tricks for improving learning, teaching, connection, and wellbeing.

2023 Conversation Starters - *some examples*

Inaugural Conversation Starters – May 2023

Dr Tracey Woolrych, Dr Peter Leeson and Dr Anna Sidis guided the first Conversation Starters meeting on the following topic:

'Embedding Aboriginal Knowledges –
tackling the awkward with acceptance'

This Conversation Starters' topic came from another WATTLE initiative, that of Teaching Circles. This group discussed their findings and their own personal reflections. After a 15–20-minute time of sharing, audience members discussed key questions in small groups, and key points of discussion were shared with the larger group. All of this was done within an hour at lunchtime and a light lunch was shared. The meeting was followed by a brief survey for participants to complete, and this feedback was shared with the presenters.

Conversation Starters- July 2023

Byron Frencham and Lara Warwick:

'Reflections on the student learning experience
from those straddling both worlds'

This Conversation Starters' event included a panel of two mature aged UOW students, who were also working as tutors or peer leaders. They discussed their own teaching and learning journey in a post-Covid era and what worked well in encouraging student engagement. A healthy discussion was had over the benefits and drawbacks of online learning with staff sharing resources and ideas with each other. These two individuals were uniquely positioned being both current students at UOW, and teaching or assisting in teaching at UOW or UOW College. In the follow up email to those attending, resources were shared that participants had volunteered and as such greater networking happened amongst UOW staff. Survey results indicated that participants were keen to discuss ideas in this space of encouraging student engagement and hearing from students.

Conversation Starters- August 2023

Lucinda Crossley Meates – Student Experience Project Manager
Melissa Zaccagnini – Senior Manager, Student Experience & Projects
Michael Valceski – SAC Chair and PhD Candidate

'Conversation Starters: Students as Partners at UOW – From Agreement to Authentic Practice'

The presenters provided an update on the exciting point in UOW's journey with embedding Students as Partners (SaP) in the culture and practices to date. This was followed by a series of questions related to the topic, which enhanced small group conversations amongst those in attendance and allowed the sharing of insights and perspectives about all things SaP.

The future for Conversation Starters...

Outreach to regional campuses

- It is hoped that Conversation Starters will incorporate UOW regional campuses to include them into the broader more informal discussions of best teaching and learning practice whilst encouraging collegiality.

Outreach to UOW global campuses

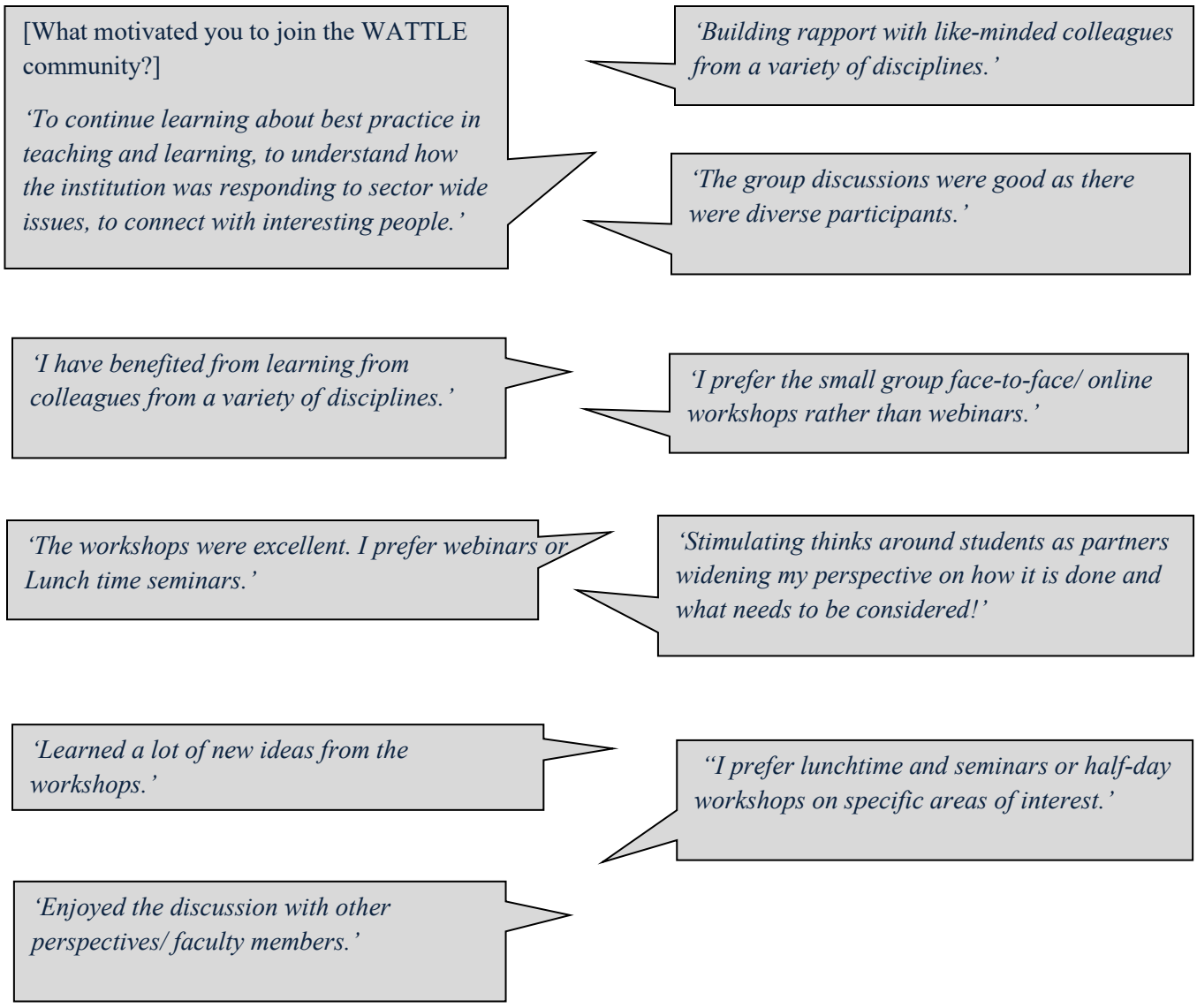
- Discussion and initiatives are already underway with the UOW global campuses with another WATTLE executive member- Zeenath Khan- from the UOW Dubai campus, having an inaugural event over there in early 2024.

Conference Funding

As part of WATTLE's ongoing commitment to UOW staff professional development in educational research and scholarship of teaching and learning, WATTLE once again offered funding to assist members to present their research or attend teaching and learning conferences nationally and/or internationally. Given the challenging fiscal position and tightening of funds in many areas, this initiative provides much needed support for WATTLE members to disseminate their teaching practices and strengthen their networks and build their scholarship of teaching and learning. Following an application and review process, we were pleased to be able to fund eleven (11) WATTLE members, who received funding of up to $500 per grant. (Appendix 2)

2023 Member Feedback

Attendance at WATTLE events in 2022 was challenging for many participants as everyone rallied behind blended and dual delivery modes of teaching. In 2023, we were able to connect colleagues at Wollongong, regional, metro and global campuses, with most attendees unsurprisingly still aligned with the Wollongong campus. Our members remain predominantly academics, however we see an increasing number of professional and casual sessional and fixed-term staff joining the Academy. Throughout 2023, Academy members were asked to outline events of interest. We embraced a dual delivery model alongside a blended delivery model to ensure our events were accessible both synchronously and asynchronously. All events included some element of web conferencing, and session recordings and resources were made available via Padlet, Qualtrics surveys, and the WATTLE website where appropriate. During our end of year survey, the participants reflected on what they enjoyed, and the workshop topics are that of interest to them: Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), Blended learning, Work-integrated learning, Staff-students' partnerships, Student career preparedness and employability, Environmental sustainability & Climate Change curriculum, Cross-campuses collaboration, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.



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: Summary of WATTLE Supported Events in 2023

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

Month	Event
Feb	Students as partners: The Game!
Mar	Chatting about ChatGPT and Generative AI
Mar	Reflection and Assessment Workshops 1
Mar	Reflection and Assessment Workshops 2
Apr	Reflection and Assessment Workshop 3
May	Equity and inclusion in higher education: Developing our multicultural perspectives together
Jun	ChatGPT vs Engineering Education Assessment: Who Wins?
July	#2 Conversation Starters: Reflections on the student learning experience from those straddling both worlds
August	#3 Conversation Starters: Students as Partners at UOW: From Agreement to Authentic Practice
Sep	WATTLE Forum
Oct	Conversation Starters- Student Engagement: its Proximal and Distal Consequences – evidence from the CABLE Program
Oct	We are all UOW
Nov	Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Curriculum Symposium
Nov	ChatGPT vs Engineering Education Assessment: Who Wins?
Dec	WATTLE End of Year Celebration

APPENDIX TWO: Conference Funding Grants (up to $500) awarded in 2023

Member	Conference	Paper
Tracey Kuit	Australian Conference on Science and Mathematics Education	The wicked problem of microplastics- an interdisciplinary solution
Mary Papakosmas	Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference (ANZMAC)	SDGs in marketing curriculum: A reflective process.
Jessica Bellamy	Ottawa: Assessment Near & Far	A peer evaluation approach to assessing communication skills of 2nd year Exercise Physiology students
Johanna Turnbull	Australian Conference of Science and Mathematics	The wicked problem of microplastics- an interdisciplinary solution
Xiaoping Gao	The 2nd International Conference on the History of Teaching Chinese as a Second language	Early Days of Chinese Language Education in Australia: A Brief History
Michael Mehmet	Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference (ANZMAC)	Integrating Canva into Marketing Education
Ramiz Ali	Australian Association for Research in Education Conference (AARE 2023)	Understanding influential factors for institutional adoption of blended learning in higher education
Kevin Huang	The 12th Academic Annual Conference of the Accounting History Professional Committee of the Chinese Accounting Society	Accounting History: Subject Design, Pedagogy & Reflections
Elaine Rodrigues Fields	2023 Neurodivergence Conference: 'Neurodivergence, Identity and Self-determination: Enhancing understanding and connections'	Conference attendance
Reece Sophocleous	The 67th Annual Meeting of the Australian Society for Biochemistry & Molecular Biology	Cells at War: A Global WIL-Based Partnership to Develop a Biology Game for Undergraduate Teaching
Alankaar Sharma	Australia and New Zealand Social Work and Welfare Education and Research (ANZSWWER) Symposium 2023	Let's talk sexuality: Bringing affirmative sexuality perspective to social work education'

The AI Tutor: Enabling 24x7 Student Support Across Engineering	**Dr Sasha Nikolic, Assoc Prof Caz Sandison, Assoc Prof Xiaoping Lu, Dr Dean Cutajar, Dr David Hastie, Dr Brad Stappenbelt, Assoc Prof Neaz Sheikh, Assoc Prof Shuqing Yang, Prof Muhammad Hadi, Prof Son Lam Phung, Assoc Prof Le Chung Tran, Md Rabiul Islam and Assoc Prof Montse Ros** *School of Electrical, Computer and Telecommunications Engineering (EIS), School of Mathematics and Applied Statistics, School of Physics, School of Mechanical, Materials, Mechatronic and Biomedical Engineering, School of Civil, Mining, Environmental Architectural Engineering (EIS), School of Electrical, Computer and Telecommunications Engineering (EIS) and Associate Dean Education*
AI4U: Enhancing AI Competency for UOW Non-CS Community	**Dr Jack Yang, Prof Wanqing Li, Prof Philip Ogunbona, Prof Lei Wang, and Assoc Prof Markus Hagenbuchner** *School of Computing and Information Technology (EIS)*
Innovative Automated Curriculum Mapping Tool to Assess Constructive Alignment	**Dr Lloyd White, Prof Helen McGregor, Assoc Prof Tracey Kuit, Assoc Prof Laurie Chisholm, Assoc Prof Jennifer Fisher, Prof Clare Murphy, Dr Dominique Tanner, Dr Alison Freeman and Justin De Rosa** *School of Earth, Atmospheric and Life Sciences and Future Education Division*
Anatomy for the Digital Age: Blended Learning and Authentic Assessments	**Mr Russell Young, Dr Sue Downie, Dr Jessica Nealon, Assoc Prof Junhua Xiao, and Mr Paul Isaac** *School of Medical, Indigenous and Health Sciences, Swinburne University of Technology and UOW College*

NEXT STEPS

These new projects commenced in January 2024 and will continue throughout the year. Project Leads will provide project updates demonstrating progress are due in July 2024, with final project completion expected by the end of 2024 and closing reports due February 2025.

The final reports and outcomes will be published on the Learning and Teaching Innovation Grants page on the L&T Hub, and shared via learning and teaching development events.

Author	• Coordinator Faculty Business Partner, Programs & Projects, LTC • Executive Assistant, LTC
Requests for further information	Requests for further information may be directed to Leanne Cambridge, Director, Learning, Teaching and Curriculum (lcambrid@uow.edu.au).