WATTLE Teaching Circles Guide

Thank you for your interest in the WATTLE Teaching Circles Initiative. This initiative aims to provide teaching staff with a safe space to explore, discuss, experiment and reflect upon issues related to learning and teaching.

ABOUT TEACHING CIRCLES

Teaching circles (also called faculty learning communities) are an established practice in higher education institutions. They provide opportunities for teaching staff to engage in sharing, discussion and critical reflection about topics of importance in learning and teaching.

Each WATTLE Teaching Circle consists of 3-5 members—at least two of which are WATTLE members. A teaching circle may be discipline-based or cross-disciplinary and as formally or informally structured as its members would like it to be. Therefore, it is up to each teaching circle's members to determine the structure and their ways of working. The tips in the following section provide guidance and considerations for structuring the teaching circle. Each teaching circle will be responsible for providing a final report and will be invited to present and share its outcomes at our December end-of-year event.

For inspiration and ideas, the appendices of this document provide examples of topics explored in previous WATTLE Teaching Circles and at other institutions.

BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAM

We envisage the program to achieve the following benefits for staff and students:

- Development of strategies to address learning and teaching challenges

- Enhancement of learning experiences for students

- Construction of evidence that can used for Continuing Professional Development Learning & Teaching and probation and promotions

- Innovation of learning and teaching across the institution

KEY DATES

The current cycle of WATTLE Teaching Circles will run through December 2022. The table below outlines key dates and activities:

Date	Activity
26 April	Expressions of interest open
2 May	Virtual Q&A session held to answer queries
9 May	Expressions of interest close
3 June	Teaching Circles Agreements deadline
17 June	Mini-grant application deadline
1 July	Notification of grant awards
17 August	Sharing Session 1*
2 November	Sharing Session 2 (mid-term check-in)*
9 December	WATTLE year-end recognition of Teaching Circles*
9 December	Teaching Circles Final Reports deadline

*Individual participants are encouraged to attend as they are able, however at least one representative from each group should plan to attend to present the group's work.

TEACHING CIRCLE MINI-GRANT

Teaching circles formed by **3 June 2022** will be eligible to apply for a mini-grant up to $500 to support the goals of the teaching circle. The grant may be used to purchase books, materials, or software for the completion of teaching circle activities.

TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

❑ Establish some ground rules/community standards for how you will work together. What will be your approach to confidentiality? How will you create a space that is psychologically safe?

❑ Identify the key goals or outcomes that you wish to accomplish through the process. The outcomes can be an exploration of a topic or could have tangible outcomes, such as an annotated bibliography, a set of teaching resources, or a research project.

❑ Determine the frequency and method of your meetings. Depending upon your outcomes, how often will you meet? Will you set up a Moodle site, OneDrive folder, Webex Teams space, or other area for discussing and or sharing resources?

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- ❑ Establish roles for each member of the teaching circle. Perhaps, someone is responsible for organising meetings, another is responsible for capturing action items, etc.

- ❑ Consider aligning your activities to the UOW Academic Performance and Continuing Professional Development (Teaching & Learning) frameworks. You may be able to use teaching circles activities and outputs as part of your teaching portfolio.

- ❑ Think about activities or ways in which you might share the work of your teaching circle. For example, consider presenting a WATTLE Connect & Create session or another event.

TEACHING CIRCLE MEMBER AGREEMENT

Each teaching circle will be asked to complete a Teaching Circles Agreement Form. The agreement serves two purposes:

1. It will help you organise your group.

2. It will assist you in clarifying and establishing goals for what you want to accomplish in your teaching circle.

As part of the agreement, you will establish the purpose and objective of your group, outline your activities, and plan your ways of working and your anticipated outcomes. At a minimum, you will be expected to provide a teaching circle final report.

TEACHING CIRCLE FINAL REPORT

At the completion of a cycle of teaching circles, each group must submit a brief Teaching Circles Final Report Form. The form requires you to briefly outline what your teaching circle has accomplished and to reflect upon its activities.

Groups are welcome to supplement this report with other media and to provide links in the report.

COMMON QUESTIONS

Is there a limit to how many people we should have in a group?

WATTLE encourages participants to keep their teaching circles to 3-5 members, as larger groups tend to make collaboration a bit more difficult. However, groups may elect to include as many members as they wish.

How much time can I expect to commit to the teaching circles?

Each teaching circle will be responsible for setting its own goals and objectives for what it wishes to accomplish and will, likewise, determine the time required to achieve those

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goals. Groups should consider what they can reasonably accomplish by the final reporting deadline set out in the Key Dates.

Can I join more than one teaching circle?

WATTLE will not preclude anyone from joining multiple teaching circles. However, participants are strongly encouraged to only participate in one teaching circle at a time to enable you to focus on your topic and to ensure you do not overcommit.

What is an acceptable outcome or product for our teaching circle?

The minimum requirement is to complete the Teaching Circles Final Report Form at the end of the teaching circle cycle. Otherwise, it is up to each teaching circle to determine the products and/dissemination plan for their teaching circle. Examples of possible products might be a literature review, a video, a poster, a guide, a WATTLE Connect and Create session or workshop. This is your opportunity to be creative. You may also want to think about evidence that you can include in your CPD and promotion applications.

Can grant money be used to pay individuals to support teaching circle activities?

Yes, however, due to the current timeframe to appoint new casuals, it is recommended that you engage/extend the hours available for existing casuals/research assistants. Faculty-based staff handling casual authorities are good contacts to assist you in identifying research assistants/casuals who may be available for some extra hours.

What happens if I don't match with a teaching circle?

If you are expressing interest as an individual, it is advantageous to provide a couple of topic suggestions to assist us in matching you with a teaching circle. If we are unable to match you with a teaching circle in your areas of interest, you may have the option of joining one of the existing teaching circles in a cycle.

NEED ASSISTANCE

Teaching circles questions and inquiries should be directed to academy-wattle@uow.edu.au

APPENDIX: EXAMPLES OF PREVIOUS WATTLE TEACHING CIRCLES

Teaching Circle	Purpose
Building Learning Communities	To discuss strategies for building learning communities that contribute to learning and wellbeing, to disseminate how our students as partners approach creates these communities, and to develop research into the outcomes of this approach
Collaborative Online Teaching Spaces in Mathematics & Statistics	To investigate pilot Desmos for collaborative, online tutorials in mathematics and statistics
Embedding Work-Integrated Learning for International Students	To introduce an e-portfolio to enhance soft skills and employability for international students
Improving Learning for International Students	To explore how to provide high-quality learning experiences for students who are participating in onshore subjects, while located outside Australia
Interdisciplinary Learning (The Sustainable Homes Challenge)	To explore the pedagogical and employability benefits and challenges for interdisciplinary applied learning
Public Health	To explore strategies and methods to improve student engagement and learning outcomes in online teaching
Biostatical Modules for Medicine and Health Disciplines	To develop biostatistics resources that can be shared across the School of Medicine for students and staff
Student Engagement	To consider and reflect upon the opportunities and challenges of emergency remote delivery and to explore evidence-based strategies to increase student online engagement and collaboration
Ungrading	To explore the concept of 'ungrading' and to consider how it could be integrated into teaching practice at UOW
Alumni Engagement	To assess and foster student-alumni engagement in the field of Accounting, Finance and Financial Planning
Novel Technologies	To trial new technologies for learning and teaching, share experiences and provide critical review in applications of use
Blended Learning	To share in an interdisciplinary group learning and teaching practices used to optimise student engagement in the online platform
Group Work and Connection Online	To explore student experiences and preferences for online engagement in learning with a focus on group work activities and assessments
Video Transcription	To explore student equity and inclusion through the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) focusing on transcription of video recordings and related learning activities

APPENDIX: EXAMPLES OF TEACHING CIRCLES FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Teaching Circle	Purpose
Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Process in Higher Education	To inform institutional deliberations on issues of Black, Asian and minority ethnic student experience and attainment, as it relates to teaching and learning
Authentic Learning	To explore problem- and case-based learning
Exploring Open Educational Resources in the Classroom	To explore the theory and practical use of electronic resources to replace and/or supplement traditional textbooks
Improving Clinical Judgement	Identify teaching and learning activities to improve clinical judgement among Nursing students
Integrating Digital Design and Rapid Prototyping into the Classroom	To investigate strategies for integrating digital design and fabrication into the classroom, including the use of 3D software, #D printing, and laser cutters
Large Courses	To discuss the unique challenges faced when teaching large courses and share ideas and best practices
Learning from Crisis	To reflect on the measures taken during COVID-19 and to make recommendations for what to take forward
Online Teaching and Learning	To provide best practices, tools, tips, and pedagogy for online, blended, and hybrid teaching
Reading Group	To read Bain's *What the Best College Teacher Do* and discuss and trial items in practice
Small Teaching Practices for Big Gains	To reflect on current pedagogical practices, discuss models of small teaching in traditional and online environments and implement small activities
Trans & Queer Pedagogies	To explore gender-inclusive teaching and queer pedagogy, including exploring existing literature, sharing teaching and learning practices, and exploring the trans student learning experience
Ungrading	To discuss *Ungrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)* by Susan D. Blum and investigate and evaluate different approaches for our own classes
Wellbeing Pedagogies	To think about and explore how educational experiences can be designed to support positive student and staff wellbeing