



# Profile: Dr Fran Waugh

Faculty of Education and Social Work

## Leading up to becoming an Associate Dean

I would describe myself as a lifelong learner who has had many challenges and opportunities through my educational experiences, employment experiences and interactions with peers, colleagues, students, service users, family and friends. As with many of my colleagues I strive to seek a balance in my life so as to fulfil my various roles including teaching and learning, research, and management, with integrity, creativity and enjoyment.

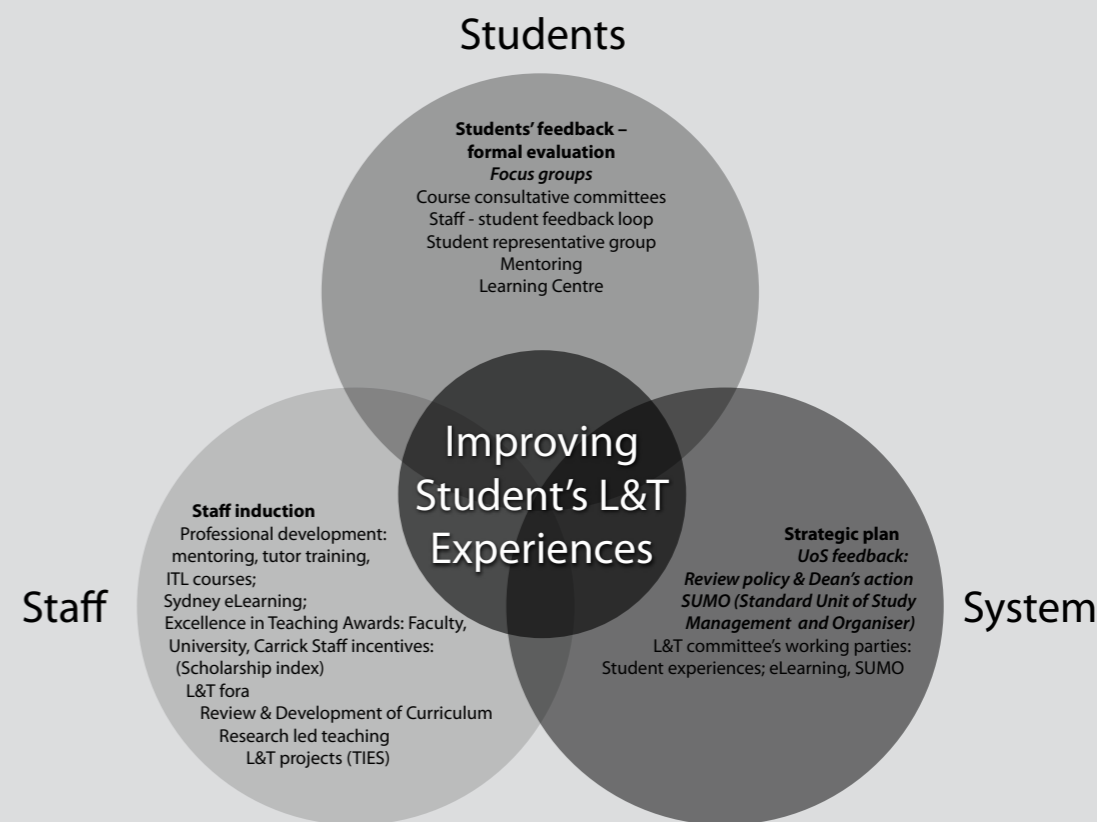
Prior to my employment at the University of Sydney I had extensive practice experience as a social worker and as a former triple certificate registered nurse. I worked with marginalised service users in community health, family support and child protection, in both health and welfare settings for over 20 years. I was awarded an APA from the University of Sydney in 1994 and completed my PhD on 'Policy in Action' which related to NSW statutory child protection workers' responses to child emotional abuse notifications. I then obtained employment as a researcher on a domestic violence and child protection ARC project for approximately 2 years. These experiences highlighted for me the importance of understanding the wider social and political context and realising that for change to occur in any organisation the processes are just as important as outcomes. I base my teaching in these practice and research experiences which increase my credibility with undergraduate and postgraduate students, academic peers and professional colleagues.

This is my ninth year working as an academic in the Social Work and Policy Studies program in the Faculty of Education

and Social Work. As a new academic I had the opportunity to complete the Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies (Higher Education) through the Institute for Teaching and Learning. This not only increased my thirst for providing the best possible learning experiences for undergraduate and postgraduate students but provided me with rich networking opportunities with academics across a number of faculties and ITL. I then continued my association with ITL as a mentor to other academics undertaking the Grad Cert. I also had the opportunity of participating as a project team member in the joint faculty Teaching Improvement Fund project on Leadership in Mentoring with Economics and Business and our faculty. One of the main lessons from this project for me was the importance of supportive faculty cultures where staff are valued and recognised through constructive collaboration with colleagues including faculty leaders.

As our Bachelor of Social Work program adopts an Issue Based Learning approach I have taught across most units of study in the undergraduate program including Field Education. Our program is based on team teaching enabling me to learn a lot from colleagues over the years. We seek feedback from students regularly through a variety of approaches such as our unit of study and course consultative committees, in addition to administering formal USE. In terms of 'closing the loop', we endeavour to communicate back to students how this is used in our review and development of the units of study.

In regards to our postgraduate program I have had the opportunity of coordinating the Social Research unit of study for 7 years. As I have a passion for practice research



and continue to be engaged in various research projects, (e.g. Safety Planning; Child Protection and Domestic Violence; Dementia and Community Care; Parents and Palliative Care of Children; eLearning) this has enabled me to share my research skills and knowledge with both coursework and higher degree research students. I am always amazed by the commitment and competing demands on students who are often expert practitioners in their various fields. It has been through my ongoing research on practice and teaching, and the dissemination of it at international and national conferences that I have had rich learning, networking and cultural opportunities in countries such as New Zealand, South Africa, Chile, Peru, Canada, South Korea, Japan, Scotland and England.

The key qualities I bring to my student-centred teaching and learning are respect, openness, listening ability, reflective ability, responsiveness, humour, enthusiasm, work planning and organisation. It is these same qualities plus a few more which I endeavour to enact in my current role as Associate Dean Learning and Teaching and in my role as eLearning Academic Convenor for the HASS cluster.

## The focus of my attention as Associate Dean Learning and Teaching

I commenced as Associate Dean Learning and Teaching at the beginning of this year after having acted in the position in semester 2, 2007. The wheels were well and truly in motion as I sought to clarify with our faculty's Learning and Teaching committee members what would be our faculty's three learning and teaching priorities. These were then ratified by our Faculty Management Committee which was key to ensuring that the necessary resources required to operationalise the priorities would be available. The three priorities are bolded in the diagram which outlines the areas of staff support and systems and processes in our faculty which are in place or being further developed as a means of

improving students' experiences.

In the operationalisation of these three priorities there has been a mixed response by staff. Nevertheless, three questions continually guide my assessment/ evaluation of the particular L& T activity or implementation of policies namely:

1. What worked well or not so well?
2. How could it be improved/ changed next time?
3. How can I as a leader contribute to a positive way forward?

There are a number of academics in our faculty working hard on a range of TIES projects. Some of these are in collaboration with other faculties such as Enhancing HASS Students' Experiences Through Blended Learning Opportunities in the faculties of Arts, Law, Conservatorium of Music and our faculty. Another project, Embedding Diversity: Towards a Culturally Inclusive Pedagogy project has provided staff with amazing opportunities which you can read in the article by Alyson Simpson and Jane Moore on page 4. These projects and our other TIES projects aim to enhance students' learning experiences.

In conclusion, supportive faculty cultures just don't happen but require resources, systems and hard work on everyone's part. At this point in time I have come to realise that taking on the role of Associate Dean Learning and Teaching is not for the faint hearted. I am grateful for the ongoing support of my colleagues in the Social Work and Policy Studies program; to colleagues in our faculty's Learning and Teaching committee including administrative support staff and project managers; to colleagues in the Faculty Management committee; to colleagues in ITL and to the university's community of Associate Deans Learning and Teaching who provide a listening ear and guidance, to ensure I keep on track in striving to improve students' experiences in the Faculty of Education and Social Work.

