UQ Summer Research Experience

Project title:	**Strengthening Academic Teaching through Professional Learning: Evaluating Outcomes from Professional Learning Initiatives at UQ**
Project duration:	20 – 23 hours per week for 6 weeks Between 12 January and 20 February 2026
Description:	The University of Queensland (UQ) has a long history of investing in professional learning initiatives to enhance teaching quality and strengthen academic capacity. Activities such as workshops, communities of practice, mentoring and peer observation schemes, and recognition pathways such as HEA@UQ and the new Grad Cert in University Teaching Practice have been designed to support academics in developing their teaching expertise. These initiatives align with national priorities, including the *Universities Accord*, which highlights the importance of ensuring excellence in teaching as central to student success and institutional reputation. While participation in these programs has been substantial, there is limited systematic evidence of their impact on academics' teaching practices and on UQ's broader teaching culture. This project will provide a comprehensive evaluation of UQ's professional learning programs, examining how they contribute to building teaching capacity and advancing teaching quality. **Aim** The project aims to evaluate the outcomes of professional learning initiatives implemented at UQ and their contribution to enhancing teaching capacity. Specifically, it will: • Examine how participation in UQ's professional learning programs influences academics' approaches to teaching, reflective practice, and innovation. • Analyse the extent to which these initiatives contribute to UQ's institutional culture of teaching quality. • Identify strengths and areas for enhancement in the design and delivery of professional learning programs to maximise their impact. **Approach** The project will employ a mixed-methods design, focused on UQ's professional learning programs. Key activities include: • **Literature review**: A targeted review of the scholarly literature to establish definitions and frameworks for teaching quality and professional learning in higher education. • **Course materials analysis**: Systematic review of the content, learning outcomes, and pedagogical approaches embedded in UQ's professional learning programs. • **Tracking participation**: Mapping and analysing who has undertaken UQ professional learning programs over the past five years, with attention to demographics, disciplines, and career stages. • **Interviews**: Two project researchers will conduct semi-structured interviews with program participants to gather insights into the impact of professional learning on their teaching practices and career development.

	• **Overview analysis**: Integration of findings from literature, course review, participation tracking, and interviews to evaluate the outcomes of UQ's professional learning initiatives.
	What Students Will Do Students will be expected to:
	• Conduct a focused literature review.
	• Assist with the collection and analysis of interview data.
	• Review course materials.
	• Track and analyse participation data.
	• Contribute to writing up findings, including a final report.
	• Present their findings in an oral presentation at the conclusion of the project
Expected outcomes and deliverables:	The project will generate robust, evidence-based insights into the role of professional learning at UQ in strengthening teaching capacity. Findings will inform the ongoing enhancement of professional learning design and delivery at UQ and contribute to institutional strategies for advancing teaching quality. **Deliverables:** • Overarching report • Publication: Journal article and **W*hat's Needed Now*** article • Oral presentation of findings to ITaLI staff **What Students Will Gain** Students participating in this project will develop valuable skills and experiences, including: • Research skills in literature review, data collection (interviews), and qualitative/quantitative data analysis. • Experience with educational evaluation and the application of teaching quality frameworks. • Skills in synthesising findings and producing evidence-based recommendations. • Opportunities to contribute to scholarly outputs, such as conference presentations or publications. • Insights into academic development, professional learning, and higher education policy.
Suitable for:	**Qualities Sought in Applicants** Supervisors are seeking students who: • Are currently enrolled at UQ in their **third or fourth year of undergraduate study**, or enrolled in a relevant **honours or postgraduate program**. • Have strong skills in **written communication, critical reading, and analysis**. • Are interested in higher education, teaching quality, or professional learning. • Can work independently and collaboratively as part of a research team.

	• Have some experience or willingness to develop skills in **qualitative research methods** (e.g., interviews, thematic analysis) and/or **document analysis**. • Show attention to detail and the ability to manage data responsibly. This project is open to applications from students across a range of disciplines; prior experience in education research is not required, though an interest in teaching and learning in higher education is desirable.
Primary Supervisor:	Associate Professor Deanne Gannaway https://about.uq.edu.au/experts/12363
Further info:	Please contact Deanne Gannaway by email (d.gannaway@uq.edu.au) prior to submitting an application.
Positions available	This project is recruiting 2 students