Fall 2020 EDC Grant Proposal

Title
Developing Effective Educational Development for Sessionals in Canada

Contact Information
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Project Mini-Description (50 words)

This project examines effective educational development for sessional instructors. Through an exploration of sessionals' approaches to teaching and previous development, the goal is to create a research-informed open educational resource (OER) of practices and considerations for designing sessional educational development and a set of SoED annotations on https://sotlannotations.com/.

Full Description (300-1000 words)

This project will explore the needs for educational development of Canadian sessional instructors. Canadian sessional instructors find themselves in various conditions of precarity based on the structure of their academic appointment. They disproportionately lack institutional supports and opportunities to connect with the institutional culture. The need for targeted educational development for sessionals is further necessitated by the shift toward longer-term sessional commitments. Contrary to popular belief, a growing number of sessionals rely on sessional work as their main source of income (Foster & Birdsell Bauer, 2018). In a report supported by the Canadian Associate of University Teachers (CAUT), Foster and Birdsell Bauer (2018) found that of 2606 sessionals, 59% were employed as sessionals for over 5 years, and the majority of those expressed the desire to find a tenure-track position within academia.

This research seeks to build a Canadian understanding of the considerations for sessionals' educational development. A study by Nairn (2020) from the York University Teaching Commons explored the systemic barriers preventing contract and teaching-stream faculty from accessing teaching and learning related supports. Nairn's (2020) study found that contract faculty are significantly less interested in attending new faculty orientation alongside full-time professors, and that contract faculty are significantly more often accessing teaching and learning professional development resources from outside of York University. This, coupled with the indication that contract faculty indicated that they were motivated by paid professional development opportunities, suggests that contract faculty require different approaches to teaching and learning support than members of the full-time professoriate.

I will take a phenomenographic approach to explore the qualitative differences in instructorss conceptions of teaching (Trigwell et al., 2005) and instructors' approaches to teaching (Trigwell & Prosser, 2004). In order to delve into this topic, I have already completed an initial systematic literature review on the topic of sessional instructor educational development in North America, spanning the decade of 2008-2018—

published in the *International Journal for Academic Development* (IJAD) (Sabourin, 2020). This work analyzed 27 studies that explored the effectiveness of educational development for sessionals, noting that in many cases, a useful approach was to design programming that allowed for the development of a community. More interestingly, there seems to be a connection between an educator's approach to teaching and their conception of teaching (Kember, 1997).

The data collected through this project will contribute to at least three deliverables. The first, focused on the relationship between sessionals approaches to teaching and their needs for educational development, will be a doctoral dissertation. However, in keeping with the requirements of the EDC grant, data collected will result in more than just a dissertation. The second deliverable will be a digital open educational resource (OER) documenting considerations and effective practices for designing effective educational development for sessionals. The OER will be accessible on the newly-developed STLHE site under EDC resources and promoted through social media and other EDC opportunities (i.e., STLHE and EDC annual conferences). The third deliverable will be a list of SoED annotations to contribute to a new category on https://sotlannotations.com, itself a product of a 2013-2014 EDC grant. The annotations build upon the initial systematic review in *IJAD* (Sabourin, 2020).

Connection to EDC Mission, Values, and Living Plan

One of the core values of the EDC is supporting a scholarly approach to educational development. Specifically, this project supports the following aspects of the EDC Living Plan:

> *Growth Area 1: Fundamental faculty and course development*
> *Aim 1.9: Work with instructors from a variety of disciplines & contexts, including faculty, post-doctoral fellows, graduate student instructors, teaching assistants contractual and sessional instructors.* This project seeks to define specific parameters for working with sessional instructors in light of labour dynamics and institutional hiring practices.
>
> *Growth Area 3: Enhancing, Supporting, & Advocating for Teaching and Learning Quality*
> *Aim 3.3: Supporting valid, meaningful, and appropriate assessment of teaching and learning processes, practices and programs for the purpose of continuous quality enhancement.* Some centres across Canada are offering support to sessionals, either targeted or as a part of comprehensive programming. The results of this project can act for the former as calibration and for the latter, a framework—especially those who aspire to offer such support.
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> *Growth I: Reflective/Principled Educational Development Practice*
> *Aim iv.: Engage & contribute to scholarly descriptions & exploration of educational developers' practice (what, why, how, what works etc.) called Scholarship of Educational Development.* As a SoED project, this work will

address the notion of supporting sessional instructors from an evidence-based approach by triangulating data from research participants, existing literature on the topic, and documentation on existing Canadian practices.

Project Timeline

Phase 1: Project Development (November 2020-February 2021)
The development of this project has already begun and will continue with the recruitment and onboarding of the student partner(s). The new partner(s) will be invited to the Fall meeting of the Council of Ontario Educational Developers (COED) and the subsequent meetings of the Contingent Faculty action learning set, where discussions will help situate them in the context. The existing collection of literature on sessional ED will be shared.
- Finalize survey design: November 2020
- Build online survey in Qualtrics: December 2020
- Recruit, interview, and train student partner(s): November 2020-Jan 2021
- Finalize research ethics application and receive REB clearance: February 2021

Phase 2: Data Collection (February–April 2020)
- Launch online survey: February 2021
- Conduct Interviews: February-March 2021
- Transcribe interviews: March 2021

Phase 3: Data Analysis and Resource Creation
- Analyze results of survey: March-April 2021
- Analyze results of interviews: April 2021

Phase 4: Resource Sharing and Discussions
- Compile SoTL/SoED Annotations on sessional instructors: May 2021–June 2021
- Post final SoTL/SoED Annotations on https://sotlannotations.com/: June 2021
- Share results with participants: June 2021
- Deliver Interim report to EDC community: June 2021
- Share research results with broader community, including STLHE 2021 and EDC 2022 conferences: June 2021-Feb 2022
- Complete dissertation: August 2021
- Draft OER: September 2021
- Release OER to ED community: Nov.-Dec. 2021

References

Foster, K., & Birdsell Bauer, L. (2018). Out of the shadows: Experiences of contract academic staff. Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). Retrieved from https://www.caut.ca/sites/default/files/cas_report.pdf

Kember, D. (1997). A reconceptualisation of the research into university academics' conceptions of teaching. *Learning and Instruction, 7*(3), 255–275. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0959-4752(96)00028-X

Nairn, B. (2020, February 21). *Teaching support for contract and teaching stream faculty*. Poster presented at the 2020 Educational Developers Caucus Annual Conference, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS.

Sabourin, B. M. (2020). Sessionals' educational development: A review of North American research, 2008-2018. *International Journal for Academic Development,* 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2020.1831504

Trigwell, K. & Prosser, M. (2004). Development and use of the Approaches to Teaching Inventory. *Educational Psychology Review, 16*, 409–424.

Trigwell, K., Prosser, M., & Ginns, P. (2005) Phenomenographic pedagogy and a revised Approaches to Teaching Inventory. *Higher Education Research and Development, 24*, 349-360. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07294360500284730

Impacts of Ongoing Physical Distancing

The project is designed to be conducted without physical contact in an effort to minimize the impact of ongoing physical distancing requirements. As such, I do not expect ongoing physical distancing to impact the project.

Budget

Budget Item	Cost
Personnel	
Student research partner	$2000 (100 hours x $20/hr*) *This rate is comparable to the rate that is paid to Outstanding Scholars at the University of Windsor.
I will also recruit a second undergraduate student from my institution's Outstanding Scholars program to hire an additional student partner	In Kind ($2000; 100 hours x $20/hr)
Other Expenses	
Incentives for Survey Participants	$100
Incentives for Interview Participants	$500 (20 participants x $25 each)
Data collection tools: • Qualtrics survey platform • Microsoft Teams	In Kind
TOTAL BUDGET	**$2600**

Agreement Statements

[X] I/We agree to provide the EDC community, who funds this grant, with access to resulting information and resources for which the copyright remains with the author(s).
[X] I/We acknowledge that I/we will submit an interim report and a final deliverable (as described).