

**Concurrent Session F**  
**Tuesday 1 September**  
**11.45am – 12.35pm**



**Session 2**

**Current Practice in Academic Workload Allocation Processes in Australia**

**Richard Watson**

*University of Southern Queensland*

*The authors are lecturers in the School of Agricultural, Computational and Environmental Sciences (ACES) at the University of Southern Queensland. Both Dr Watson and Dr Dekeyser have been Heads of Department at USQ.*

Academic workload management is not only a hot-button topic in Australian universities today, it is also increasingly becoming a lynchpin issue for the academic leadership seeking to do more with less. There are many aspects of workload management that are highly interesting to study, spanning the philosophical, over the legal, to the technical. However, a solid basis of facts must be established first before such studies can be effective. Through a large number of interviews that we have conducted with academic managers, it is clear that a common baseline understanding does not exist at present. For example, terms such as workload model are ill defined, and even within single institutions there is a significant variation in meaning as well as implementation of management practices.

Embarking on a large-scale research project in the context of academic workload management, and recognising that we first needed to get a better idea of current practice in that context within Australia, we ran a pilot survey in 2013 that was targeted to Deans of Science on the one hand, and workload managers on the other. Survey questions covered three key areas related to workload management: models and rules; process and policy; and systems and software. Comparisons between different types of institution (Go8, ATN, RUN etc.), different allocation models for teaching, research and service components of academic workload, and different sizes of academic unit (School, Department etc.) were explored. While the number of responses in absolute terms was relatively limited, and hence the outcomes were not always statistically testable or significant, broad trends were readily identifiable.

In this paper we report on the method and outcomes of the survey, and describe how the information that was obtained has informed the development of an in-depth research project.