

Work-Life Balance in Academia: Myths, Realities and Strategies

Purpose and outcomes

Participants will

- Confront and analyse some of the myths about work-life balance in academia
- Discuss the findings of an international research project on early career experiences in academia
- Evaluate the efficacy and adaptability of some strategies for supporting new academics to achieve work-life balance
- Share their own experiences of effective time management tools and strategies

Content and scholarly basis

The expectation that academics will spend 40% of their time on their research, 40% on teaching and 20% on service is widely expressed, but seldom measured, and new academics are often mystified as to how they should actually be spending their time. It is not always easy for early career academics to navigate the expectations of the university, their discipline, their peers and their students, while also maintaining a healthy and happy home life. This workshop will share data from an international research project on the experiences of early career academics and will attempt to unravel some of the myths around how academics actually spend their time. Using data from the research project, and drawing on results from a successful professional development programme for early career academics at one university, the workshop will provide participants with an opportunity to discuss work-life balance in academia and come up with some strategies for supporting new academics as they enter the academic workforce. We will discuss the institutional and personal processes and support that need to be in place to support all early career academics as they enter the academic profession and learn to be successful teachers, researchers, academic citizens, friends and family members. Participants will leave the workshop having confronted the myths, pondered the realities, and reflected on some strategies for supporting early career academics, and/or for finding some semblance of balance in their own lives as (early career) academics.

Design

The workshop will include the following activities (adaptable depending on numbers and types of attendees – i.e., if all participants are academic/educational developers we will spend more time on strategies for supporting new academics; if they are predominantly academics themselves, we will spend more time critically reflecting on our own circumstances and various tools that might help improve our own work-life balance):

Reflective writing activity to open the workshop (10 mins+/-)

Work-life balance quiz (on what the research says about work-life balance in academia) and subsequent discussion (25-30 minutes)

Sharing and discussion of research project findings (30-50 mins)

Break (20 mins)

Time management strategies (a mix of practical workshop activities and sharing of participants' own experiences and strategies) 60 mins

Reflective activity to close (10 mins)

75 word advertising text

What are the myths and realities of work-life balance in academia, and how can we demystify these myths for early career academics? We will discuss the institutional and personal processes needed to support all academics to be successful teachers, researchers,

academic citizens, friends and family members. Participants will leave having confronted the myths, pondered the realities, and reflected on some strategies for supporting academics (or themselves) to find some semblance of balance in academic life.

Biography

Dr. Kathryn Sutherland is Associate Dean in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Prior to her appointment as Associate Dean, Kathryn worked for 11 years as a faculty member in academic development in the university's teaching development centre. She is an award-winning teacher and researcher whose primary area of interest, both in terms of research and teaching, is the experiences of early career academics. Kathryn won the University's Sustained Excellence in Teaching Award in 2007, has three times been awarded the most creative presentation award at the HERDSA Conference (Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia), received the "Best Article Award" from the international journal, *Mentoring and Tutoring*, in 2009, and is the recipient of several hundred thousand dollars in external grant funding. Her most recent research project, [*Success in academia? The experiences of early career academics in New Zealand universities*](#), is the most downloaded page on the Ako Aotearoa website. Kathryn has a BA and BA(Hons) from Waikato University, an MA from the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada, a Postgraduate Diploma in Tertiary Teaching from Otago, and a PhD from Massey University, NZ.