

Thriving in higher education: Raising our voices to promote staff wellbeing

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We all work in one capacity or another to help students develop their voice: their writing style, their presentation skills, their argumentation and their social engagement. We rightly care about their ability to thrive in higher education, and we are even assessed ourselves on how well we retain students and how satisfied they are with their university experience. However, we do all this in an institutional and industrial context that does not value our work.

Drawing on research conducted at national and international levels, this presentation identifies the connections between the student experience and the staff experience in Australian universities. Focus questions include: what can we learn about ourselves from how we support our students, and how do we learn to support – and advocate for – ourselves?

Conclusions from the literature review indicate that current approaches to the evaluation of academic work are flawed, and that they have a damaging effects on staff well-being that will ultimately flow through to student well-being, to the detriment of all.

There is an urgent need for a new culture in academic work that values the well-being of staff as well as students. The presentation will end with an exploration of ways such a culture could be developed and strengthened so that we can uphold a vision of universities as places of learning, discovery and growth.