

Casual Academic Staff Hiring Practices in MQ Department of Physics and Astronomy – Lab Demonstrators

The Department of Physics and Astronomy offers a range of undergraduate units to students completing programs in the Faculty of Science and Engineering, and service and elective units to students from all across campus. We employ casual academic staff to support the teaching of the practical lab-based component of these programs. Expressions of interest (EOIs) from appropriately qualified individuals are invited before the commencement of Sessions 1 and 2 each year. Successful applicants will be appointed as demonstrators or supervisors.

Expressions of Interest

The EOI will be open for no less than two weeks, opening for Session 1 in December of the year prior, and for Session 2 in June. The EOI will be published to the Department [intranet](#) and posted on the public MQ Job Opportunities [page](#). An email will be sent to HDR students and recent casual academic staff of the Department when the EOI opens. The deadline for EOIs is non-negotiable and will not be re-opened for late applicants. Should there be a need to invite further EOIs after the deadline, all eligible applicants will be notified.

Selection Criteria

Successful applicants will meet the selection criteria as listed for each role. New applicants (those who have not previously performed sessional teaching in the Department) are required to provide a CV and will be invited to attend a short interview.

Allocation to classes

Typically, the number of submitted EOIs exceeds the number of available positions and allocating large numbers of casual academic staff is challenging. A range of considerations are used in allocating successful applicants to available timeslots, including but not limited to:

- the needs of the unit and the qualification/field of expertise of the successful applicant;
- casual academic staff availability for any given timeslot;
- previous experience by the successful applicant of sessional teaching within the Department;
- workload balance across the available casual academic staff;
- providing opportunity for casual academic staff to advance from new hire to experienced demonstrator, and where appropriate onto supervisor;
- balancing skill levels and providing mentorship for new hires by pairing them with experienced demonstrators

Supervisors will typically be allocated to more available classes than demonstrators; this is to facilitate the sharing of their expertise and mentorship to junior demonstrators and new hires.

Allocations will be made in the first instance on the basis of 'preferred' timeslots as indicated by successful applicants, and then on the basis of all remaining availability.

Casual academic staff will be directly notified of their class allocations, and the complete roster will be published to the Department staff intranet in anonymised form.

Induction and Familiarisation

All appointed casual academic staff will be required to attend an induction session held by the Department prior to commencement of the session. Attendance is compulsory and casual academic staff will be paid for their time in attendance.

Familiarisation with the experiments being demonstrated in lab sessions is essential. All appointed casual academic staff are expected to familiarise themselves with all new or changed experiments each session, or any experiments with which they are yet to have experience demonstrating within the Department. Time taken for familiarisation will be paid.

Duties

Regular duties and responsibilities for demonstrators and supervisors are as listed for each role. Supervisors are expected to perform additional duties to demonstrators, for which they receive additional pay.

Remuneration

Casual academic staff will be paid in accordance with the academic staff Enterprise Agreement and the marking schedule indicated below.

Professional Development

Employment as a casual academic staff member for lab demonstration activities in the Department of Physics and Astronomy provides opportunity for professional development. New demonstrators will be mentored by experienced demonstrator supervisors, and by technical and academic staff. Familiarisation sessions enable demonstrators to build their practical knowledge in the use of a range of equipment, devices and digital interfaces, and to hone the application of theory in a real-world environment. Casual academic staff may also have opportunity to build leadership and supervisory skills as their experience with demonstrating develops. Opportunities for formal feedback for interviews and informal feedback for performance of duties also exist. Casual academic staff employed in the Department will be provided with a letter of reference upon request.

The hiring practices detailed here have been established in the Department of Physics and Astronomy in accordance with relevant Macquarie University policy and the Academic Enterprise Agreement. These practices aim to ensure equitable, representative allocation of available casual academic staff is achieved within the Department each session, and to ensure that the learning outcomes of the units and the students are both fully supported. A gender diverse panel of at least two members of staff are involved in conducting each step of the process (review of EOs, interviews, allocations). Outcomes are reviewed by the Learning and Teaching Director or the relevant Laboratory Director.

The Department of Physics and Astronomy is committed to ensuring genuine equality of opportunity for all people; this same commitment applies to the hiring of casual demonstrators and demonstrator supervisors. Data about the relative gender mix of allocated casual academic staff will be published to the Department Equity and Diversity page after the commencement of each session.

Any questions or concerns about any of the above information or process can be directed to the Technical Team Manager in Physics and Astronomy – Ben Norton, to the Department Manager – Emma Hastings or to the Learning and Teaching Director – Prof Dave Spence.

The information provided above relates only to casual academic staff deployed in Department teaching labs. If you have questions or concerns about hiring practices or remuneration associated with any other casual academic staff employment within the Department (such as assignment marking, or tutoring) these can be directed to the Department Manager – Emma Hastings. *An additional document that addresses those areas will be released in early 2019.*

Demonstrator Role

Selection Criteria

- Bachelors degree with a major in Physics, Astronomy or Astrophysics, or equivalent experience
- Able to communicate clearly and effectively in English, both verbally and in writing
- Able to demonstrate understanding of physics concepts and theory as taught at MQ in first- and second-year undergraduate programs
- Able to demonstrate understanding of the theory of uncertainties and its application in a lab context
- Able to demonstrate understanding of equipment used at MQ in first- and second-year undergraduate physics programs, and to manipulate it correctly and safely
- Able to supportively teach students who have limited or no physics background
- Able to actively manage the safety of staff and students in a lab environment, including the identification of hazardous situations and their correction or appropriate reporting

Duties and Responsibilities

- Attend the demonstrator induction.
- Be familiar with all experiments that must be demonstrated during the session.
- Proactively guide students through their experiments providing clear and concise instructions.
- Mark all students work including their in-class work and lab books, and return marked books within 2 business days of the lab session.
- Ensure teaching lab spaces are kept tidy and safe. This includes promptly addressing or reporting any safety issues.
- Provide feedback to the supervising demonstrator, lab management team, laboratory academic director or unit convenor if and when required.
- Act professionally and in accordance with the Macquarie University code of conduct and Department of Physics and Astronomy Workplace Culture Statement

Remuneration

Demonstrators *without* a relevant PhD qualification will be paid at the 'Other Academic Activity: Normal' and 'Non-Contemporaneous Assessment: Routine' rates (Level A Step 2).

Demonstrators *with* a relevant PhD qualification will be paid at the 'Other Academic Activity: Normal – PhD/UC' and 'Non-Contemporaneous: Routine – PhD/UC' rates (Level A Step 6).

Demonstrators will be paid for

- rostered regular hours
- marking of lab books (non-contemporaneous assessment)
- Demonstrator induction session
- familiarisation session (approx. 30-60mins per experiment)

Marking of lab books is generally completed outside of lab times. Marking time will be paid in accordance with the following schedule:

- ASTR or CHIR or HLTH @ 5mins/book
- PHYS107 or PHYS140 or PHYS149 @ 7mins/book
- PHYS201 @ 10mins/book

Relevant Documentation

- MQ Academic Staff Enterprise Agreement (2018) > [website](#)
- MQ Staff Code of Conduct > [website](#)
- Department of Physics and Astronomy Workplace Culture Statement > [website](#)

Supervisor Role

Selection Criteria

In addition to meeting the selection criteria for demonstrators

- Previous experience demonstrating for the Department in teaching labs
- Demonstrated *advanced* understanding of physics concepts and theory as taught at MQ in first- and second-year undergraduate programs

Duties and Responsibilities

In addition to the duties and responsibilities listed for demonstrators

- Attend the additional supervisor induction
- Arrive 15mins before the start of their rostered class to assist with set up; and remain in the class for a further 15mins after to assist with pack down
- Manage demonstrators in-session to ensure all tasks are completed correctly; including ensuring that all lab books are returned at the end of the class
- Arrange a replacement if the rostered demonstrator is unable to attend
- Manage conflicts that may arise between students, or between students and demonstrators
- Act professionally and in accordance with the Macquarie University code of conduct and Department of Physics and Astronomy Workplace Culture Statement

Remuneration

Supervisors will be paid at the 'Other Academic Activity: Normal – PhD/UC' and 'Non-Contemporaneous: Routine – PhD/UC' rates (Level A Step 6).

In addition to the remuneration indicated for demonstrators, supervisors will be paid for

- 30mins set-up/pack-down time per class
- up to 60mins per week administration time
- Supervisor induction session

Relevant Documentation

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- MQ Staff Code of Conduct > [website](#)
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