



Academy of Early-Career Engineering Educators

Participant information

Background

The general mission of AAEE is to improve the quality, relevance and performance of engineering education in Australasia. More specifically, the objectives of the Association include promoting the development and use of new teaching techniques and tools; providing assistance to engineering educators, especially to new members of the teaching staff; and promoting the professional development of engineering educators.

Academic work is typically categorised into the following three primary areas of activity, which are not viewed as exclusive, but rather as having areas of overlap:

- teaching and educational development,
- research, scholarship, creative works and/or the advancement of knowledge, and
- engagement and partnership, academic management and service.

Many Australasian universities have realised that it is in their interest to offer attractive academic careers that recognise the diversity of backgrounds and career aspirations of academic staff. To this end, they have recognised the need to enable academic staff to have access to career profiles that emphasise the education focused domains of academic work. The career profile for these teaching/education focused academics is of teaching and education specialists, with requirements for evidence of high quality contributions to, and leadership in, teaching and education development. While performance excellence is still understandably a requirement, the exemplars, support and empowerment to successfully follow these newly defined career pathways are not so obvious.

Objective

The Australasian Association for Engineering Education (AAEE) has therefore introduced the **Academy of Early Career Engineering Educators (AECEE)**. The Academy is an innovative leadership program with a primary focus on early career education focused academics. The Academy will inspire, motivate and educate these academics about the opportunities available for employment and leadership in engineering education.

The AECEE aims to:

- communicate to early career engineering academics the diversity of opportunities available for them in the university sector and the personal advantages of achieving job satisfaction;
- provide an opportunity for these early career academics to work with and be mentored by experienced engineering academics in AAEE;
- provide early career academics with access to a network of experienced engineering academics in AAEE; and
- provide early career academics with an environment which will encourage active decision making about their careers.

The mentoring relationship

Selecting & matching

Mentors are selected on the basis of their expertise and experience in engineering education and willingness to share their time and skills with an early career academic.

Each year AAEE will invite nominations for academy places from participating institutions. The appropriate designate from each institution (*such as Dean, Associate Dean L&T, etc.*) will nominate who they believe to be their most promising early-career engineering educator, in terms of their teaching performance and their potential to champion the pursuit of educational excellence. Each nominee will then provide a Curriculum Vitae and a one-page statement of what they hope to gain from their immersion into the AAEE community, and how they believe that they will ultimately contribute to this community. Applicants indicate areas of professional interest and these, along with geography, are matched as closely as possible with the mentor's. For the purposes of this Academy an early career educator is anyone who has been in an ongoing permanent academic position in an engineering department/school/faculty for less than five years. Casual/ sessional contract positions are not counted in the five year timeframe.

AAEE undertakes the final selection of both early career academics and mentors.

Role of Academy member

An Academy member actively seeks career development and feedback, is open to opportunity and willing to learn new skills. Early-career academics should be aware of the commitment involved in being a member of the Academy and consider this before lodging an application. Academy members should appreciate that mentors volunteer their time and experience and that there may be occasions when they are not immediately available.

The responsibilities of an Academy member include:

- being proactive in the mentoring relationship,
- accepting responsibility for their own goals, decisions and actions,
- completing agreed tasks (e.g. completing a portfolio) and actively participating in AAEE activities especially the annual conference, and
- appreciating the professional commitments of mentors.

Academy members are also encouraged to network with other academy members outside the official AAEE activities to share experiences and exchange ideas.

Academy members will benefit from:

- exposure to a network where there is support in facing new and challenging opportunities,
- role models at a senior level,
- exposure to professional networks,
- being guided, and given direction in career development, and
- having a sounding board to discuss ongoing plans.

Membership of the academy will last for ten years, during which accepted members will each receive an award, direct professional guidance, professional development opportunities, publication opportunities, access to a wide network that focuses on educational excellence and a route to Chartered Engineer status.

The Award shall comprise of **one fully paid AAEE conference** registration, flights, and accommodation during their inaugural year¹, with **student conference rates offered in the subsequent two years** for full paper presentations (*with an expectation that the member's host institution will meet all remaining transport and accommodation costs*). The purpose of this supported **three-year period in a ten-year plan** is to encourage long-term interests with the community, for the sustainable support of the academy member.

If you are interested in becoming an Academy member please download and submit the nomination form available from the AAEE website: <https://aaee.net.au/academy/>

Role of the Professional Development Mentor

The role of the Professional Development mentor is to actively support early career academics while they are members of the Academy. The mentor will share knowledge and experience to equip the early career academic to meet the challenges often experienced by education focussed academics in the university environment. Academy members may wish to change their mentors occasionally to gain broader perspectives or access different types of expertise.

While specific mentoring activity is negotiated between the mentor and early career academic, some likely activities could include:

- observation of & feedback on teaching activities,
- identification of developmental goals and strategies to achieve them,
- advice on the design of learning activities and assessment tasks,
- design of evaluation processes of teaching and learning activities, and
- advice on preparing submissions for AAEE conferences.

¹ These costs must be deemed as reasonable by AAEE.

Mentoring Agreements

Mentoring Agreements ensure that both parties' expectations are realistic and achievable and each has a similar understanding of the mentoring role.

Each mentoring partnership will negotiate a personal agreement about objectives and operation of their relationship and the degree of formalisation that is mutually suitable.

To ensure both mentors and Academy members are clear on their respective responsibilities the Mentoring Agreement should address:

- objectives and expectations,
- activities and projects,
- structure and frequency of meetings,
- estimated duration of relationship,
- assurance of confidentiality, and
- conclusion of the relationship.

When planning the meetings, consideration should be given to:

- **Availability:** Time commitment and frequency of meetings – consider schedules and when you can both reasonably meet. It is a good idea for mentors and Academy members to use the first session together to diarise future meetings together.
- **Venues:** Will meetings be held at the mentor's workplace and/or in other locations?
- **Communication:** Will communication occur via the phone, Skype, email as well as face- to-face meetings? How will problems be resolved between parties?

It is important to maintain maximum flexibility within the mentoring partnership.