**TALKING ABOUT TEACHING: WHAT’S THE POINT?**
The nature of informal academic discourse on university teaching

Can conversations about teaching provide opportunities for informal professional development? Does talking about teaching help you learn about teaching?

**APPROACH**
Identified the ways staff engage in conversations about teaching through a thematic analysis of interviews with academic staff working in different departments at an Australian research-intensive university.

**OUTCOME**
Four themes that reflect the qualitative different ways academics draw on colleagues’ expertise to develop their teaching.

1. **REASSURE**
“We find it mutually very beneficial as well as supportive... you reassure yourself that you’re not doing a terrible job by talking to a colleague.” Patrick

“...like to have advice on how to deal with or be reassured they’re dealing with things in the right way, the appropriate way.” Michael

2. **MANAGE**
“...either talking about operationalising it, evaluating it, or planning, and then to some degree delivering... survival conversations... ‘get the job done’ conversations rather than how creative can we be in the doing of it?” Chris

“There are many, many, many conversations about what you need to do, what you need to know, when you need to do it by and so on.” Patrick

3. **IMPROVE**
“If they see a cute idea for a way of explain something then they’ll come by and say hey did you see that? You could do that in your course, and vice versa...we talk about little snippets of things that might be relevant to each others’ courses.” Lily

“a colleague [is] teaching a compulsory unit and she’s got students who really don’t want to be there and so it was a question of how do we get students like that engaged in the class.” Meghan

4. **EVOLVE**
“... happens at different levels at different times. How much you discuss the course depends on how much experience you’ve had and how many times you’ve refined it. As we refine things further, there’s probably less issues that you have but then you go more into the developing new things side.” Kasia

**CONCLUSION**
Conversations may present opportunities to exchange resources and ideas and can allow academics to enhance teaching practice and the quality of learning.

**NEXT STEPS**
- Explore connections between informal academic discourse and formal professional development strategies.
- Identify factors associated with variation in conversations.