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Leap into WACE physics

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Abstract

To mitigate a shortage of qualified senior physics teachers, the Western Australian Department of Education, through the SWITCH and more recently LEAP programs, have been funding short refresher courses in WACE ATAR physics. These intensive five day courses have been conducted at the Joondalup campus of ECU since November 2015. They are aimed at teachers who have done senior physics in the past, but did not continue with physics at university level. The Department of Education funds course fees, textbooks, travel and accommodation for participants as well as relief teachers for schools during their absence. After two years of successful year 11 courses [Swan, 2017], the program was expanded to include year 12 physics.

Each course gives 30 hours of professional learning, and consists of lecture, tutorial, and laboratory work. While the content is predominantly based on the science understandings in the WACE ATAR Senior Physics Syllabuses [SCSA, 2014], the courses also develop curriculum and pedagogical content knowledge and go beyond the syllabus in parts to give teachers a more comprehensive understanding of the material. End of course surveys of the teacher participants consistently show high overall satisfaction ratings. This presentation will report on the year 12 course specifically, as well as reflecting more generally on short courses and opportunities for universities in providing professional learning to school teachers.

References

- School Curriculum and Standards Authority. (2014). *Physics ATAR course: year 11 syllabus*. Government of Western Australia: Perth. <http://wace1516.scsa.wa.edu.au/syllabus-and-support-materials/science/physics>
- Swan, G. I. (2017). Physics in a week. In *Innovation: Multiple dimensions in teaching and learning. Proceedings of the 26th Annual Teaching Learning Forum*, 2-3 February 2017. Perth: Curtin University. <http://ctl.curtin.edu.au/events/conferences/tlf/tlf2017/refereed/swan.pdf>