

HITTING THE GROUND RUNNING

Advice from some of the 2005 and 2006 Orientation Participants

Spend time getting to know people

- Go to the Staff Club on Friday nights – the drinks are cheap and it's a good way to get know people from outside your School
- Take time to go to School morning teas or just have coffee and conversation with your colleagues
- Collaboration is important – maintain networks that you had before you came to Victoria and build networks within the university
- Seek out “kindred spirits” or supportive colleagues who think similarly to you
- Play touch rugby or some other team sport or social activity. It's fun and will help keep you sane!

Make an effort to connect with your students – get to know them as early as you can

- Teaching is a big part of your job and the majority of Victoria students are fabulous people. No matter what happens, it's good to keep that at the centre of your thinking about your teaching.
- Don't let the only contact you have with students be complaints about grades.
- Show up for class 5-10 minutes early and just spend some time chatting with students.
- Be confident about your strengths, but don't bullsh*t about your weaknesses: students will trust and respect you a lot more if you are also willing to admit you're aren't quite so sure of something

Read the Strategic Plans for your School and University really early on

- These provide an insight into how your university, faculty and school tick

Begin preparing for teaching early

- Go and meet the librarians in charge of your field and encourage your students to meet them too
- Start preparing your assessment early – it's often harder to put together than you realise, and poorly designed assessment will have a big (negative) impact on your year

Look after yourself

- You don't have to say “yes” to everything that's asked of you: not all requests from your colleagues will be in your best interests, so work out how to prioritise your time and energy appropriately. The mentoring scheme can set you up with a more experienced Victoria academic who can help you work out how to do this without offending anyone.
- You can get your eyeballs checked for free! The occupational health nurse can hook you up so that you don't have to pay for an optometrist.
- EAP (the Employee Assistance Programme) offers free counselling that can help you deal with work-based issues, problematic colleagues or managers, or just to thrash out with an objective person how best to cope in your first year at Victoria

If you're not from “here” (Victoria and/or New Zealand), don't constantly compare “here”, either the context or the students, to “there”.

- There's nothing more offensive and boring than having foreigners come in and tell you how much New Zealand doesn't measure up to X, Y or Z standard
- Other things to avoid: only using foreign examples in lectures, assuming a set of cultural knowledges that may or may not be here, never referring to local cultural knowledges.

Update your CV every month

- Document everything you do that might be useful for probation, promotion, PBRF or an excellence award in teaching or research
- Some examples include: guest lectures you give; radio interviews you're asked to do; UTDC workshops you attend and/or present at; requests for use of your research at other institutions; successful postgraduate student completions, etc.