

OLIVIA JOHNSTON - CURRICULUM VITAE

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Nationality: Australian & Canadian

CAREER PROFILE

- Well-rounded academic with successes across teaching, research, and service
- Research increases equity in education and breaks cycles of disadvantage by challenging mainstream ideas and practices and supporting change, advocating for children's rights so that they have a say in their education
- national and international scholars on equity and student focused research
- Teaching background also keeps students at the center, drawing on decade of experience teaching secondary HASS and English in a range of WA private and public schools
- I model a classroom environment that is inclusive and celebrates diversity, built on a foundation of positive student-teacher relationships, so that students can succeed
- Service contributions create opportunities for staff at ECU and improve ECU's reputation, for example co-chairing the organising committee for the 2024 ECU EMCR Symposium; contributions to local school boards and national research association executive school board

EDUCATION / ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

2021- Doctor of Philosophy – The University of Western Australia

- Supervisors: Emeritus Professor Helen Wildy and Dr Jennifer Shand
- Title: ['Students' experiences of reconciling with their teachers' expectations of them: A grounded theory'](#)
 - Winner of multiple awards and prizes (list follows in award/prize section)
 - Examiners nominated thesis in top 5%, exceeding expectations for all aspects
 - Ranked as 'excellent' progress at every annual report with high level organisation, self-management, and administration of research project

2014 – Master of Education by Research – The University of Western Australia

- Supervisors: Emeritus Professor Helen Wildy and Dr Simon Clarke
- Title: *'Teachers' perspectives of streaming in the lower secondary school: A Western Australian case study'*

2007 – Bachelor of Arts/ Bachelor of Education – The University of Western Australia

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Overview – my passion for teaching and learning has brought me to academia; university teaching aligns with my research interest in social equity and background as a secondary school teacher

2020 to present – Edith Cowan University – Lecturer

- Generated opportunities for research collaboration and employment with researchers in the School of Education through my research projects, including my longitudinal National Class Ability Grouping Practices study (2023-2025)
- Developed, updated, and executed courses in initial teacher education and education studies at both undergraduate and post-graduate levels, innovating with a team of academics to lead improvements and maintain accreditation through change including COVID-19 and the Curriculum Transformation Project
- Proved merit and potential as an academic by moving from sessional lecturer (2020) to a one-year contract (2021), then winning full-time substantive position (2022)

2014 to 2020 – The University of Western Australia – Sessional Lecturer

- Innovated and delivered new units to address student feedback as part of an academic team, such as *General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum*
- Excelled in teaching and learning, evidenced through outstanding student reports, including a Citation for Outstanding Teaching and Learning (2020)

2008 to 2018 – Private and Public Perth Secondary Schools – Teacher of Humanities and Social Sciences/ English

- Impacted teenagers by developing their academic capabilities and confidence
- Acquired skills and experience for educating future teachers in ECU's initial teacher education program by gaining experience teaching in secondary school contexts

PUBLICATIONS

Overview

Career total	17 outputs (15 peer-reviewed journal articles; 1 monograph; 1 book chapter)
Citations	488 (Google Scholar (GS) as of 29-5-25)
H-Index	10
Combined Field Weighted Citation Index	2.719 (Scopus)
Journal quality	87% Q1; 13% Q2 (2) (Scimago)
Author Position	94% first author

Sources: Google Scholar: scholar.google.com/citations?user=aZOeBTAAAAAJ&hl=en

Scopus: www-scopus-com.ezproxy.ecu.edu.au/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57188737408

Currently drafting and under review

- Johnston O.** & Perry, L. (in draft). 'Ghost schools' – Empty secondary institutions for international applicants in Ontario
- Johnston, O.**, Perry, L., Sinclair, M. & Gooby, B. (in draft). School fees charged by Australia's independent schools.
- Johnston, O.** (in draft). A longitudinal study of changing class ability grouping practices in Australian schools.
- Johnston, O.** (in draft). Why do schools decide to change their class ability grouping practices? A 3-year study of schools' changing practices in Western Australia and Queensland.
- Johnston, O.** (under review). Evaluating impact of educational research on teachers' practice: A Teacher Expectations Intervention. *Educational Research*.
- Johnston, O.**, & Palamara, P. (under review). Changes in class ability grouping practices in Australian schools.
- Johnston, O.**, Norris, C., & Palamara, P. (under review). Class ability grouping in secondary schools and its influence on literacy scores on Australia's NAPLAN tests.
- Johnston, O.** (under review). Differentiating teacher expectations – Educators' conceptualisations of teacher expectations in two Western Australian secondary schools
- Johnston, O.**, Norris, C., Palamara, P. & Hatisaru, V. (under review). Class ability grouping for Mathematics in Australian secondary schools – Does it influence students' numeracy achievement?
- Hatisaru, V., **Johnston, O.**, & Roodt, B. (under review). New insights into beliefs of secondary pre-service teachers about mathematics.

Monograph

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- Johnston, O.** (2024). *Constructing composite narratives: A step-by-step guide for researchers in the social sciences*. Routledge.

Journal articles

*Citation metrics are from Google Scholar; journal Quartile rankings from Scimago

1. **Johnston, O.**, Macqueen, S., Zhang, W., Spina, N., & Spooner-Lane, R. (2025). If, and how, to group by 'ability' – Considerations about class group formation. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2025.2511914> (Q1)
2. **Johnston, O.**, Norris, C., & Zhang, W. (2025). Rigidity of class ability grouping practices in Australia. *Research Papers in Education*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2025.2479674> (Q1)
3. **Johnston, O.**, Spooner-Lane, R., Macqueen, S., & Spina, N. (2025). Why do schools continue to use between-class ability grouping? *Prospects*. 54, 559-576. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-024-09710-y> (Q1)
4. **Johnston, O.**, Wildy, H., & Shand, J. (2024). A grounded theory about how teachers communicated high expectations to their secondary school students. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*. 39, 211-235, <http://www.doi.org/10.1007/s10212-023-00689-2> (Q1, 11 citations)
5. **Johnston, O.**, Spooner-Lane, R., Zhang, W., Macqueen, S., & Spina, N. (2024). The equity of

- class ability grouping practices in Australian education: Findings from a survey in Western Australia and Queensland. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 33(6) 1287-1301. <http://www.doi.org/10.1007/s40299-023-00801-6> (Q1, 4 citations)
6. Johnston, O., & Taylor, B. (2023). A systematic literature review of between-class ability grouping in Australia: Enduring tensions, new directions. *Issues in Educational Research*, 33(1), 91-117. <https://www.iier.org.au/iier33/johnston-abs.html> (Q2, 6 citations)
 7. Johnston, O., Wildy, H., & Shand, J. (2023). Students' contrasting their experiences of teacher expectations in streamed and mixed ability classes: A study of Grade 10 students in Western Australia. *Research Papers in Education*, 38(4), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2022.2030396> (Q1, 19 citations)
 8. Johnston, O., Wildy, H., & Shand, J. (2023). Teenagers learn through play too: communicating high expectations through a playful learning approach. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 50(3), 921-940. <http://www.doi.org/10.1007/s13384-022-00534-3> (Q1, 30 citations)
 9. Johnston, O., Wildy, H. & Shand, J. (2023). Student voices that resonate: Constructing composite narratives that represent students' experiences in classrooms. *Qualitative Research*, 23(1), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941211016158>. (Q1, 84 citations)
 10. Johnston, O., Wildy, H., & Shand, J. (2022). 'That teacher really likes me' – Student-teacher interactions that initiate teacher expectation effects by developing caring relationships. *Learning and instruction*, 80(1), 101580. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2022.101580> (Q1, 53 citations)
 11. Johnston, O., Wildy, H., & Shand, J. (2021). 'Believe in me, and I will too': A study of how teachers' expectations instilled confidence in Grade 10 students. *Social Psychology of Education*, 24(6), 1535-1556. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-021-09668-1> (Q1, 31 citations)
 12. Johnston, O., Wildy, H. & Shand, J. (2021). Projecting student voice by constructing grounded theory. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 48(1), 543–564. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-020-00410-y>. (Q1, 9 citations)
 13. Johnston, O., Wildy, H. & Shand, J. (2019). A Decade of Teacher Expectations Research 2008-2018: Historical foundations, new developments, and future pathways. *The Australian Journal of Education*, 63(1), 44-73, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0004944118824420> (Q1, 126 citations)
 14. Johnston, O., & Wildy, H. (2018). Teachers' Perspectives of Lower Secondary School Students in Streamed Classes -A Western Australian Case Study. *Educational Studies*, 44(2), 212-229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2017.1347494> (Q1, 26 citations)
 15. Johnston, O. & Wildy, H. (2016). The effects of streaming in the secondary school on learning outcomes for Australian students - A review of the international literature. *Australian Journal of Education*, 60(1), 42-59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0004944115626522> (Q1, 83 citations)

Book chapter

Coauthored with PhD student: Sanbrook, C., Lowe, G., Gray, C. & Johnston, O. (2024). "Paleo for

the mind.” Pre-service teacher mental health challenges during a pandemic practicum: How evolutionary biology can inform mental wellness. In J. P.-M. C. Phillips (Ed.), *Pedagogies Of Practicum: Post-Pandemic Reflections on Innovation in Practice Teaching*. Peter Lang Group.

CONFERENCE PAPERS & PRESENTATIONS

Overview

- I present research at local, national, and international conferences so that the research can be used by stakeholders such as other researchers and educators in schools
- All of these conferences have peer-review processes for presenting
- Peer-reviewed conferences have been vital for networking and disseminating my work, to extend reach to national and international audiences

Hatisaru, V., **Johnston, O.**, Collins, J., Harmon, W. (2024). Teacher Expectations of Student Strategies for Algebra Problems [Conference presentation and paper]. *Surfing the waves of mathematics education* (271-278). Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia Inc.

Johnston, O. (2023). *How are students being grouped by ability in Australian secondary schools? A snapshot of practices in Western Australia and Queensland* [Conference presentation]. Western Australian Institute for Educational Research Annual Research Forum 2023, Fremantle, Australia.

Johnston, O., Spina, N., Macqueen, S. & Spooner-Lane, R. (2023). *The equity of class ability grouping practices in Australian education: Findings from a survey in Western Australia and Queensland* [Conference presentation]. Australian Association for Research in Education Conference 2023, Melbourne, Australia.

Johnston, O. (2023). *Methods for constructing composite narratives that fulfil children's right to 'have a say' in educational research*. [Conference paper and presentation]. European Conference on Educational Research 2023, Glasgow, Scotland.

Johnston, O., Spina, N., Macqueen, S. & Spooner-Lane, R. (2022). *Why does streaming persist in Australian secondary schools? Evidence from the literature and a current research project* [Conference presentation]. Australian Association for Research in Education Conference 2022, Adelaide, Australia.

Johnston, O. (2022). *Investigating the effects and extent of between-class ability grouping in Australian schools* [Conference presentation]. Western Australian Institute for Educational Research Annual Research Forum 2022, Fremantle, Australia.

Johnston, O. (2021). *Characterizing Student Experiences of High Teacher Expectations* [Conference presentation]. European Conference on Educational Research. Emerging Researchers Conference 2021, Geneva, Switzerland. (online)

Johnston, O. (2021). *Teacher, I care that you CARE': Students' experiences of reconciling with high teachers' expectations* [online conference presentation]. Australian Association for Research in Education Conference 2021, Melbourne, Australia. (online)

Johnston, O. (2021). *Constructing composite narratives to convey participant students' voices*

[Conference presentation]. Western Australian Institute for Educational Research Annual Research Forum 2021, Fremantle, Australia. (online)

Johnston, O. (2021). *Listening to student voices about their educational experiences*

[Conference presentation]. Early and Mid-career Researcher Symposium 2021, Joondalup, Australia.

MEDIA PUBLICATIONS, BLOGS, AND PODCASTS

Overview

- I worked with the ECU media team in 2022 on a release about my research project, which prompted wide attention including 2 blogs, 2 podcasts, and 2 radio interviews. Another release about a research project is planned for this year with MCERA
- My research has attracted media publications that extend reach for wide impact, with 16 school leaders contacting me for further information about how to use the research to improve student outcomes in their secondary schools as a result
 - for example, I was invited by the editor of *The Conversation* to write an article that attracted more than 38,000 reads in the first week of publication alone

Johnston, O. (2022). 'Is this really fair? How high school students feel about being streamed into different classes based on 'ability.' *The Conversation*. theconversation.com/is-this-really-fair-how-high-school-students-feel-about-being-streamed-into-different-classes-based-on-ability-180965

Johnston, O., Jackson-Barrett, E., & Cunningham, C. (2021). The truth about Terra Nullius and why First Nations people say Tudge is wrong to say we need optimism, *Education Research Matters* <https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=11045>

Liem, L. (May 10, 2022). *ABC Midwest Wheatbelt*. <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/wheatbelt/programs/mornings/midwest-and-wheatbelt-mornings/13806258>

Mitsopoulos, N. (April 16, 2022). *ABC Mornings Perth*. <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/perth/programs/mornings/>

Malcher, C. (2022). *Teacher Education Review*. [TER #199 – Effects of Class Streaming with Olivia Johnston – 22 June 2022 | Teachers' Education Review](https://www.teachereducationreview.com.au/2022/04/swimming-against-the-tide-streaming-students-may-not-be-the-best-option-podcast/)

Lauer, E. (2022). Swimming against the tide: streaming students may not be the best option podcast *Education Review*. <https://www.educationreview.com.au/2022/04/swimming-against-the-tide-streaming-students-may-not-be-the-best-option-podcast/>

Uzgun, D. (2022). 'Achievement was capped' – Pioneering study reveals harms of streaming.' *Education HQ*. <https://educationhq.com/news/achievement-was-capped-pioneering-study-reveals-harms-of-streaming-118860/#>

RESEARCH GRANTS & AWARDS

Under Review

- *Discovery Early Career Research Award* – 2026 - Improving class grouping practices to open educational pathways for youth (Requested - \$535,813)

Grants and Awards

- ECU Early Mid Career Researcher Grant 2023 – Kickstart Scheme (\$39,609)
- Western Australian Institute for Educational Research (WAIER) – Annual Research Grant, 2022 (\$2000)
- Nomination for the Australian Association of Educational Research’s Ray Debus Award for excellence in Doctoral Research in Education – 2021
- Cameron Prize for Education for best PhD in 2020 from UWA School of Education (\$1,000)
- Dr Teck Jin Lian Memorial Prize in Education for 2020 - Best track record of research achievements over period of PhD candidature (\$500)
- UWA Dean's List Award Recipient for PhD Thesis – 2020
- 3Minute Thesis: Matariki Network International Finals 2020 - Runner-up (\$1500)
- Fogarty Foundation Postgraduate Student Researcher Prize 2020 (\$5000)
- Government of WA Research Training Program Scholarship- 2017-2020 (\$90,000)

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH SUPERVISION

Completed

- Associate Supervisor (20%) - Doctor of Philosophy
Carli Sanbrook - A Tale of the Well-ness Monster: Examining the Mental Wellness Needs of Pre-service Teachers During the Assistant Teacher Program

Current

- Associate Supervisor (49%) – Doctor of Philosophy
Jay Morris - Calming the chaos: A mixed methods study on how relief teachers manage student misbehaviour

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Overview

- “Enthusiastic”, “Passionate”, “Engaging”, “Clear” and “Organised” lecturer and tutor, according to student feedback – I have a reputation with my students for prompt, effective feedback and modelling a range of effective pedagogies in my classes
- Positively impacted thousands of ECU students’ experiences, many of whom are educators who can take their learnings to professional settings where their own students will benefit

UTEI Overall Averages – 2021-present

	My results		School Average		ECU Average	
	MEAN OS	% AGREE	MEAN OS	% AGREE	MEAN OS	% AGREE
Lecturer	85	97%	63	85	63	84
Tutor	81	95%	66	85%	65	85%
Unit	73	90%	51	78%	51	78%

Samples of Student Qualitative Feedback

- These samples exemplify some of the student feedback I have received over the last 3 years. A selection has been taken from the UTEI comments to represent a variety of units in which I have coordinated, lectured, and tutored:

2024

EDU6416 – Education for Social Justice (J89 – Master of Education Advanced)

- *“Helped me understand biases and privileges, fostering personal growth and commitment to equity”*
- *“The lecturer Olivia makes the content more relatable by linking theoretical concepts with real-world educational practices. Offering examples, case studies, or scenarios where students can apply their learning to classroom or policy settings strengthens the practical relevance of the unit. Her use of contemporary examples, policies, or recent social justice and education developments helps make the content timely and relevant.”*

HSS6711 - Humanities and Social Sciences Education Foundations (I91 – Master of Teaching)

- *“Olivia was clear and focused. She effectively communicated expectations and provided relevant material for study and application. Moreover, the feedback provided by the lecturer was consistently constructive, helping my learning and growth. Another commendable aspect was the prompt release of grades, enabling students to gauge their progress and make necessary adjustments in a timely manner.”*
- *“I found Olivia very clear in her guidance. She modelled many of the practices we were learning about, so there were lots of checks for understanding and recapping previous learning. She was diligent about clearing up any misunderstandings in regards to the content, and flexible in pacing or adapting her content to suit the needs of the tutorial group.”*

EDU6000- Changing practices in classroom management (H08 – Master of Education)

- *“A class you don’t want to miss”*
- *“The tutor’s adaptable teaching methods, clear communication, and supportive environment significantly enhanced my learning. The use of technology made lessons interactive and accessible, while continuous feedback helped me track progress. Real-world applications and encouragement of critical thinking deepened my understanding of the subject.”*

2023

HSS6712 – Secondary Humanities and Social Sciences (C92 – Graduate Diploma of Teaching)

- *“Olivia is an amazing mentor. The knowledge of the syllabus is amazing, and her understanding of different student approaches to teaching is very refreshing.”*
- *“The first part of the tutorial was conducted as a secondary school class which proved extremely useful for ideas and sources to then use in my prac”*

EDU6320 – Classroom Management and Instruction (I91 – Master of Teaching)

- *“I enjoyed hearing about her personal experiences/her approach to classroom management. She modelled everything really well and encouraged us to practice our approaches on our classmates.”*
- *“Olivia was great, i thoroughly enjoyed the tutorials, great energy, large variety of teaching styles and was fun classes.”*

CUR6210 – Curriculum Enrichment for the Major Secondary Area (I91 – Master of Teaching)

- *“(She) ensured (she) kept up to date with students work as well as wellbeing”*
- *“Organisation, delivery and relevance of content was first class. Assignment instructions were clear and concise”*
- *“Exceeded expectations as usual”*

2022

EDU6187 – Advanced Seminar (I95 – Graduate Certificate in Education)

- *“Lecture(r) was amazing. She was very passionate about her job and was very approachable for feedback and questions. The unit was actually relevant! I could go into work and start talking about the things I’d learnt.”*
- *“Other lecturers should take a leaf out of Olivia's book”*

EDU6332 - Diversity and Inclusion: The Differentiated Classroom (I91 – Master of Teaching)

- *“Olivia was always approachable and open to a chat to unpack thinking on a topic or any questions we had. I enjoyed all of her tutorials and appreciate the way they were structured to allow us to explore topics and put skills into practice too. I also really appreciated some formative feedback given on my assessment before submitting it. Thanks Olivia for a fun year, I learnt a lot.”*
- *“Enjoyable well-thought out class activities and engaging teaching style. I really enjoyed the classes.”*

CUR3211 – Integrating Curriculum with Practice (Y68 – Bachelor of Education)

- *“Olivia was always encouraging and motivating in her approach. She implemented fun activities for us to learn but also activities that we could use on our practical experiences.”*
- *“Used a variety of teaching strategies and applied them to the tutorials to model how to integrate them in our own practice.”*

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

**Western Australian Institute for Educational Research (WAIER) – Executive Committee
(2024-present)**

- Increases opportunity for Western Australian educational researchers, including those at ECU, to network together, disseminating their research and professionally learning
- Coordinates association awards and prizes – acknowledges esteemed accomplishments of Western Australian educational researchers, including those at ECU
- Enhances ECU's reputation by contributing to leading state research association and hosting meetings/events
- Collaborates with educational researchers across Perth institutions to enhance career opportunities for educational researchers in Western Australia, including:
 - Organisation of the annual WAIER forum, which connects WA researchers in a supportive and academically rich conference
 - Developing educational opportunities for WA researchers, including the podcast 'WAIER on the Wire' and webinars with international researchers (for example, I recently proposed a webinar for 2025 with guest expert Professor Elisha Babad and US researcher Andrea Smith about supervisor expectations of postgraduate student research)

Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE)– Executive Committee (2022-2023)

- Represented Western Australian and ECU educational researchers at committee meetings held nationally at various universities in New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Queensland, improving national representation of our state and institution
- Led Constitutional Amendment Working Party, reviewing the AARE Constitution to increase governance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Members
- Improved awards portfolio including new presentation format and process for judging, introducing a merit-based judging panels of national experienced educational researchers, recognizing esteemed accomplishments of educational researchers nationally
 - Celebrated ECU achievements in these national awards including a nomination for Best Paper (Helen Adam); Best Paper from an Early Career Researcher (Amelia Ruscoe) and Best Paper from a Postgraduate Student (Karen Nociti)

Edith Cowan University Early and Mid-Career Researcher Network (2021-2024)

- Co-Chair of Edith Cowan University Early and Mid-Career Researcher Network Symposium Subcommittee (2024)
 - Led the organization of ECU's annual symposium, awarding \$10,000 in research funding to presenters selected by a panel of judges
 - Innovated a new video-abstract entry format to facilitate publicity and judging processes for the symposium
- Co-Chair of Edith Cowan University Early and Mid-Career Researcher Network Conference Prize Award Subcommittee (2024)
- Networking subcommittee member (2021-2023)

Ballajura Secondary College School Board (2023-present)

- Enhanced ECUs reputation in the local community by contributing to the executive board of this local high school
- Led staff development days to improve teachers' communication of high expectations to students
- Conducted research with the school to establish positive benefit of professional development sessions

School of Education Research and Research Training Committee (2021-2023)

- Represented Early Career Researchers on the board, contributing to education and funding decisions about research in the School of Education at ECU
 - Collected and presented data about new staff research training needs

Poseidon Primary School Board (2020-2022)

- Built school business plan together with school principal and other board representatives

REFEREES

Associate Professor Anne Coffey – Associate Dean of Secondary Education – a.coffey@ecu.edu.au

Emeritus Professor Helen Wildy – previous Dean of Education at UWA h.wildy@uwa.edu.au

Further references can be supplied upon request.