

# Professional Learning and Development Accreditation

The following summary of practice provides a personal profile and a summary of your expertise.

## Personal Profile

First name and Surname	Samantha Vardanega
Your iwi (optional)	
Personal statement (optional)	<p>I am an enthusiastic and skilled technology trainer and change specialist based in Victoria, Australia. As part of my role with Using Technology Better, I work with schools, universities and business across Australia and abroad.</p> <p>I have a proven record of delivering enjoyable, inspiring and effective professional development in the education sector. I have the communication and leadership skills needed to build strong, productive relationships with schools; and the vision and creativity to help them deliver innovative solutions.</p>

## Professional Learning and Development Overview

Please describe the area(s) of specialist professional learning and development expertise you have in relation to quality teaching practices.

I've spent nine years working with educational institutions to deliver professional development solutions that enhance the way teachers and students teach, learn and work together. My key areas of expertise are the integration of collaboration, communication and cloud technologies into education settings, specifically Google Apps for Education.

I have more than six years experience using, supporting and providing training for the Google Apps for Education suite and associated Google tools. I have excellent knowledge of Gmail, Google Calendar, Google Drive, Google Sites, Google Classroom, Blogger, YouTube, Google Maps and more. I am particularly capable at assisting school leaders and administrators to make use of Google tools to increase their productivity, improve school-wide communication and collaboration, and streamline business processes.

In addition, I have had extensive exposure to other educational tools, technologies and applications during my ten years working in ICT roles in the education sector. This includes learning space design and technologies, learning management systems, student management systems, BYOD programs, video conferencing platforms, other communication and collaboration tools, mobile apps and devices.

## Professional Information

Please provide qualifications/academic study/areas of original research/current research interests (as applicable) relevant to the area(s) of professional learning and development expertise you have.

- Master of Education (Digital Learning), Monash University (current)  
This study involves heavy engagement with research into ICT in educational contexts and will cumulate in an original research project in 2017.
- Bachelor of Business & Commerce, Monash University (2014)
- Google for Education Certified Trainer (2014)
- Google for Education Certified Innovator (2013)
- Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (2007)
- Diploma of Network Engineering (2006)

Please state your experience in the delivery of professional learning and development in relation to your professional learning and development expertise.

- Nine years experience designing, developing and facilitating technology training workshops for educators and administrators.
- Delivery of more than 170 workshops in 2015-2016, including:
  - Customised small-group introductory Google Apps workshops for teachers, students and administrators at five Catholic secondary schools in a large Australian Diocese. I have visited three of these schools numerous times to provide ongoing support and development.
  - A variety of workshops for numerous departments at a large Australian university, on both Google tools and wider education technology topics. These workshops were all booked as a result of recommendations by previous workshop participants.
  - Workshops at government, Catholic and independent primary and secondary schools across Victoria. These included introductory and advanced Google tools workshops as well as learning-area focused sessions encompassing a broader range of educational tools and applications.

### **Conference presentations**

#### **EduTech (2013, 2014 & 2016)**

- Google@Uni
- Connect & collaborate with Google+
- Social learning with Google+ Communities & Google Classroom
- Using Google Classroom to streamline the assessment workflow

#### **Teach Tech Play Conference (2016)**

- Aarrh! Ye be pirates! Avoiding the Copyright noose
- Peer & self-assessment with Google Forms
- Explore the world with Google tools!

#### **Using Technology Better Conferences (2014 & 2015)**

- Google Maps & virtual field trips
- Google+ for social learning & formative assessment
- Learning management made easy

#### **EdTechTeam Summits featuring Google for Education (2013, 2014, 2015)**

- Google+ - Monash University's journey to release
- Gmail & Calendar: from vanilla to choc-chip with sprinkles!
- Come blog with me!
- Organise your life with Google Calendar
- Supercharge your Gmail

#### **Positive Schools Conference (2014)**

- Stories of student connection with Google tools

#### **Digital Learning & Teaching Victoria Conference (2014 & 2015)**

- Explore the world with Google tools
- Power up Google Apps

#### **Schoolstechoz Melbourne (2014)**

- Get going with Google+ & Hangouts
- Google Apps – what, how and why?

#### **Victorian Commercial Teachers Association Comview Conference (2014)**

- Google Apps for everyday learning

### **Networks and communities**

Google for Education Certified Trainers  
Google for Education Certified Innovators  
Google Educator Group - Melbourne

### **Awards**

Monash University Vice Chancellors Award for Exceptional Performance by Professional Staff (2013)

## Summary of examples of practice

### **Working with teachers and leaders to achieve school-wide adoption of Google Apps for Education**

During 2015 and 2016 I have had the opportunity to spend nine days working with teachers at a mid-size Catholic secondary school. This training was organised and funded by a district Diocese as part of a Dioceses-wide implementation of Google Apps.

When I first visited the school in late 2015, I was greeted by an apprehensive audience of teachers. It quickly became evident that there were a number of factors hindering the adoption of Google Apps for Education at the school:

1. Teachers had minimal understanding of the tools and their benefits.
2. A previous professional development effort had been largely unsuccessful, resulting in confusion and negative perceptions.
3. Teachers were feeling pressured by the Diocese to adopt Google tools, but felt unsupported in doing so.

During the two days I had at the school, I ensured that I spent time with every teacher (either individually or in small groups). During each encounter I focussed on helping them understand the key functions of high-value tools in the suite (particularly Google Docs & Forms) and how these could benefit them and their students. A key strategy was to make sure that each teacher left with at least one idea they could implement immediately in their classroom or administration.

I also spent time with the school's leadership to explore their environment and its challenges more deeply. From this I ascertained that the school leaders were ready and willing to see change, but needed significant support to do so. I provided reassurance that widespread use of Google tools was achievable in their environment, sharing stories of success from other schools in their region. I also made suggestions as to the next steps I believe they needed to take in their Google Apps journey.

After the training engagement I was asked to provide feedback to the Diocese about the progress of the school and outcomes of the training. In doing so I outlined the challenges that had previously impacted adopted, the newfound enthusiasm of both teachers and leaders and recommended further extensive training to help them catch-up to the rest of the Dioceses.

### **Providing an ongoing professional development program to tertiary educators**

Over a twelve-month period I built and maintained an excellent professional relationship with a school of vocational education located within a large Australian university. This engagement entailed ongoing training and assistance to approximately twenty-five tertiary educators.

After discussing situational context and professional learning goals with the School's leaders, I commenced the engagement with an introductory workshop that was attended by all staff. As part of this workshop, the School's leaders shared their vision for using Google tools to increase collaboration and online learning opportunities for students. Due to the varying skill levels of the cohort, I broke participants into smaller groups for explorative activities. This was guided by illustrative learning materials and participants were encouraged to 'buddy-up' and support each other through the activities. After participants were familiar with each Google tool covered, I showed a real example of how it was being used in the University environment. This led to much discussion among the group as to how they might adapt the idea to suit their own subjects.

In the months after the workshop I focussed on ensuring the educators were able to translate their learning into action. This was achieved through on-site 'Google Guru' sessions where I provided one-on-one assistance, the development of a Google Sites template for an online course, the creation of written and video learning materials and the facilitation of two review sessions. A key focus of these sessions was for the educators to share their challenges and successes with each other.

The success of the above professional learning led to the School's leaders asking me to deliver a customised full-day workshop to a group of educators who had previously declined participation in the Google professional development program, believing the tools to be of no value to them or their students. Their attendance at the custom session was made mandatory. Hence, I was warned that I was likely to meet with strong resistance from the group and should be prepared for a difficult session.

With this context in mind, I entered the session with the goal of establishing rapport and trust with the educators. I first shared a little about myself and my background, then asked each of them to explain the courses they taught and the main tasks they asked their students to do. This gave me valuable insight into

their unique teaching situations. Rather than jump straight into using Google tools for teaching, I instead began the rest of the session by sharing tips and tricks that would help them manage an administrative burden common to all educators – their email. This was met with immediate interest by the group and they began to warm up to the idea that Google Apps may have some useful features. From here we explored other Google tools, all of which I linked directly to their courses and student activities. Surprisingly, I met with none of the expected resistance – only enthusiasm. It quickly became clear that the group preferred, and were very capable at, self-exploration. This led me to adapt my session plan on the fly, reducing the quantity of demonstration and instead challenging the participants to figure out particular functions or tools as a team.

### **Partnering with teachers to develop technology-rich curriculum**

In 2015 I was asked to work closely with an Australian secondary school teacher to assist with integrating technology into the curriculum of a brand new Year 10 chemistry and psychology course. The teacher had expressed an interest in delivering the unit using a self-directed blended learning approach.

Prior to considering the technology components of the unit, the teacher and I worked together on devising a suitable curriculum structure. We decided that at the heart of the unit should be an extended investigation that brought together everything the students learnt during the course. The teacher wanted the investigation to reflect the practices of the scientific community. As such, we developed a project that required students to write and publically publish their own academic journal article on the key question “What are the effects of drugs on the brain and therefore X?” (with X being a social issue of their choice). To ensure students had multiple ways to express their learning, the article would be accompanied by a creative public education piece. The teacher then designed the curriculum around the extended investigation, ensuring the content was purposefully linked to the assessment and provided the essential knowledge students would need to answer their key question.

The design of this unit required the integration of technology for both delivery and assessment. For delivery, the teacher needed a content platform that students could use for self-directed learning both in school and at home. After some exploration of different options, we settled on a Google Site coupled with embedded YouTube videos. A key part of the extended investigation was the publishing of student’s journal articles to an authentic audience. As such, we wanted a publishing tool that could be customised to look like an e-journal, opened up to the world and easily promoted via social media. Blogger was selected as the most suitable platform for this purpose.

While I supported this teacher in their pursuit of a blended learning environment, I did explicitly raise the potential downfalls of this model in meeting some learner’s needs. I was particularly concerned about the additional learning burden the self-directed nature of the course could place on those students with poor self-regulation skills or limited access to technology at home. I provided the teacher with several strategies for tackling this and suggested they gather formal feedback from students at the end of the unit.

### **Delivering culturally-appropriate professional development**

My facilitation role has taken me to a culturally diverse range of schools, each of which has required me to tailor my facilitation style to the unique needs of the school. One such school which I have been working with consistently over the last six months is a large Jewish secondary college.

I was first engaged by the school to provide a full-day Google Apps professional development session for teachers, as part of a larger training effort. During this training session I was required to demonstrate the features of Google tools as they related to both English and Hebrew language. This included assisting staff to configure their calendars for dual dates, changing input languages and configuring search settings. I was also required to contextualise my examples for teachers of Jewish Studies.

After this session I was invited back to the College for a further six professional development sessions, this time for administrative staff. Again, each session required me to incorporate culturally-specific demonstrations and examples. As a result of this training I was engaged to assist with the automation of a permission process for an overseas cultural-immersion program.

In all cultural contexts outside my own, I strived to ensure I demonstrate the utmost respect for the practices and beliefs of the community in which I have been invited into. This has included proactively seeking information on dietary practices I need to abide by, making time for prayer or acknowledgements at the beginning of sessions and utilising session activities which give all participants an opportunity to draw on their own unique backgrounds.

## **Referees**

Where possible, at least one of your referees should be a principal or tumuaki directly related to your example of practice. Where this is not practical, for example in a secondary schooling scenario where you have been working with a middle leader or deputy principal, you can supply a more appropriate reference. Both referees supplied below should come from a school, kura, or community of learning where you have provided services.

By supplying this information you're confirming that the referees listed below are aware and consent to their details being available on the accreditation list.

### **Referee One**

Referee Name	Geoff MCMANUS
Contact Number	+61 2 6761 0800
Contact email address	gmcmamus@mccarthy.nsw.edu.au

### **Referee Two**

Referee Name	Deborah SULLIVAN
Contact Number	+61 2 6772 7388
Contact email address	dsullivan@arm.catholic.edu.au