

# Education: an ASBMB Special Interest Group

Hello from the Education Special Interest Group (SIG) of ASBMB. It has been a while since we provided a profile for the *Australian Biochemist*, and what a few years it has been! We have all experienced major disruptions to the way we teach Biochemistry and Molecular Biology globally due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our community rose up and met them head on, with some fantastic achievements along the way. Over the past three years, the Education SIG has:

1. Created an Education Committee to support SIG activities
2. Added educational resources to the ASBMB website to support educators in the transition to online learning
3. Updated the ASBMB Education Award criteria
4. Held an online symposium in 2020, Teaching Remotely: Sharing Practice
5. Held an online symposium in 2021, Sharing Practice: A Focus on Assessment and Academic Integrity
6. Coordinated an Education Day at ComBio2022
7. Managed the Education Feature of the *Australian Biochemist*

1. To support and expand the Education SIG activities, a broader Education Committee was established, welcoming Dr Amber Willems-Jones (University of Melbourne), Dr Matthew Clemson (University of Sydney) and Associate Professor Maurizio Costabile (University of South Australia) to work alongside Associate Professor Nirma Samarawickrema (Monash University) and Associate Professor Tracey Kuit (University of Wollongong). The committee meets regularly to discuss changes in the education sector and plan SIG activities. All ASBMB members are welcome to contact the Education Committee regarding ideas or feedback.

2. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Education Committee curated resources to assist members in the transition to teaching online: [www.asbmb.org.au/education](http://www.asbmb.org.au/education). The webpage remains a place to share resources across the membership and suggested updates are welcome at any time.

3. In 2021, the ASBMB Education Award criteria were updated to clarify and expand the selection criteria and ways to evidence impact: [www.asbmb.org.au/the-sdr-scientific-education-award](http://www.asbmb.org.au/the-sdr-scientific-education-award).

4. With the pandemic impacting educators far and wide, the Education Committee decided to deliver an online Education Symposium in 2020 with the theme Teaching Remotely: Sharing Practice. This online event was well attended, with 131 participants from across Australia and a further 119 participants from overseas, many of whom were members of the FAOBMB. The symposium

provided a platform to share insights and experiences to recognise good teaching practice. With the inclusion of a student panel for the first time, the symposium highlighted how educators nationwide were embracing online teaching during the pandemic and transforming the student learning experience.



*The 2020 ASBMB Education Symposium Organising Committee.*

5. Building on the success of the 2020 online symposium, a second online symposium took place in 2021, with the theme [Sharing Practice: A Focus on Assessment and Academic Integrity](#). The online symposium showcased the quality and commitment of our educators, revealing how resilient and strong the biochemistry education community is. Over 160 educators, professional staff, researchers and students from Australasia and beyond connected virtually to share good practice, focusing on assessment and academic integrity.

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*The 2021 ASBMB Education Symposium Organising Committee.*

6. In 2022, educators joined ComBio2022 in person with great enthusiasm to showcase the lessons learned from the pandemic and how education practice was being advanced post-pandemic. The [Education Day](#) was studied with highlights demonstrating our educators' teaching excellence, innovation, talent and creativity. As always, our student panel discussion invoked much thought and deep reflection as our undergraduate students eloquently shared their experiences. A highlight was the inaugural Education Plenary lecture presented by Professor Merlin Crossley, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Student Life), UNSW Sydney.

7. The Education SIG coordinates the Education Feature of the *Australian Biochemist*, published three times annually. In 2023, we updated the guidelines for authors and welcome submissions on contemporary topics. Notably, with the pandemic impacting education across the globe, a special issue was published in August 2020, with 13 stories of how biochemistry educators transformed their teaching during 2020. This feature included shared reflections from students and educators on how they adapted in response to the global emergency – one inspiring the other. Educators balanced asynchronous

and synchronous online approaches to promote collaboration and teamwork, built virtual communities to provide peer feedback, simulated practicals and laboratory work and assessed presentations via Zoom to train the next generation of biochemists. Contributions to the Education Feature of the *Australian Biochemist* are welcomed at any time: [www.asbmb.org.au/education](http://www.asbmb.org.au/education).

## What's happening in 2023?

In 2023, the Education SIG welcomed new leadership, with Associate Professor Tracey Kuit taking on the role of Chair and Education Representative on the ASBMB Council, and Dr Amber Willem-Jones taking on the Deputy Chair role. We thank Associate Professor Nirma Samarawickrema for her stellar leadership as the Education SIG Chair from 2019–2022.

In July, we hosted an online forum with *Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Education* Editor-in-Chief, Professor Phillip Ortiz, titled Publishing in *BAMBE*d.

[ASBMB2023](#) will be held in Canberra in November and will include an Education session. We look forward to sharing ideas in the newly-built Kambri building at the Australian National University. Following on from the online forum held in July, we will hold a writing workshop with a member of the *BAMBE*d Editorial Board, Emeritus Professor Susan Howitt, ANU.

A working group – representing every state and territory – has recently been formed to develop Nationally Accepted Core Concepts for the Discipline of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, with the aim of publishing the concepts as they pertain to an Australian context.

[Biomolecular Horizons 2024](#) will be held in Melbourne in September next year. This event will include a strong education focus.

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*The ComBio2022 Education Day Organising Committee, from left: Matthew Clemson, Amber Willem-Jones, Nirma Samarawickrema, Tracey Kuit and Maurizio Costabile.*