

**Title:**                   **Excellent/Inspiring/Well Organised/Kind: exploring teaching excellence with staff and students**

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## Abstract:

### Session Outline

The term '*Excellence*' denotes something that is superior, outstanding, and of exceptional quality, but colloquially speaking, excellence signifies that one has surpassed those who are comparable. However, although the dictionary may be able to supply us with generic definitions of 'excellence', once submerged within a particular field or discipline, this clarity deteriorates. Higher Education (HE) is one such field that is of no exception to this deterioration in context.

With tuition fees set to triple, an increasingly diverse range of students continuing into further and higher education, and emphasis on public accountability, today's UK University has an increasingly mechanistic ethos. In a climate in which traditional pedagogic philosophy and vocabulary is being replaced by a more business orientated discourse, students are increasingly seen as 'consumers' (Wojtas, 2001) and their tutors' as 'transmitters of information' so that an end product (degree/position on a league table) can be acquired. The current move to unitisation of the HE curriculum (Yorke, 2003) in order to support the complexities of widening student diversity seems to contradict the humanistic considerations of the Government's most recent Green Paper (DfEE, 1998), which aims to '*foster love of learning*' (Bachkirova, 2000). Within this climate, many within Universities are being called upon to claim or evidence or strive for 'excellence'. We felt that it was essential that we attempt to unravel the components of 'excellence' in learning and teaching in HE and gained project funding to provide workshops to do this with both staff and students during 2005.

The issues this workshop will address are:

- How excellence is defined by academic staff and students
- Critiques and issues with regard to the concept of excellence in relation to teaching in HE
- The role of educational developers in creating safe and effective space for discussion and debate around 'excellence' and standards
- investigating conceptions of excellence

### Session Activities

Timing (mins)	Activity	Notes
1 - 5	Introduction to the w/shop aims Setting the context	
5 - 15	Presentation of lit search findings - the tensions in discussing excellence in L & T	
15- 25	Small group discussion - reflecting on tensions in participants' institutions	

25 -40	Presentation - setting up the knowledge café's - aims and objectives and key findings	
40 -45	Some key learning points	

## References

- Bachkirova, T. (2000) How Much would Love of Learning Cost? Humanitarian Versus Pragmatic Views on Lifelong Learning. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 24 (3), 293 – 300.
- DfEE (1998) The Learning Age: a Renaissance for a New Britain. Taken from the Department for Education and Employments website ([www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/greenpaper](http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/greenpaper)) on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2004.
- Wojtas, O. (2001) Feedback? No, just give us the answers. *Times Higher Educational Supplement (THES)*, edition printed on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2001 and located online (<http://www.thesis.co.uk:80/tp/1/PRN/SEARCH/indexa.html>) on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004.
- Yorke, M. (2003) Formative Assessment in Higher Education: moves towards theory and the enhancement of pedagogic practice. *Higher Education*, 45, 477 – 501.