

Title: **Educational Development and the CETL Assessment for Learning: visions for the future or a detour along the way?**

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Understand the principles on which CETL AfL bases its educational development work
- Identify approaches to educational development underpinned by these principles
- Evaluate the CETL approach and consider its wider utility

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

The CETL in Assessment for Learning (CETL AfL) is an institution-wide CETL in a university with significant long-standing educational development activity. We were therefore impelled to look from the start for alternative ways to do things and we drew on the principles and values encapsulated in our approach to AfL. We regarded educational development as a form of learning and therefore hoped that the approaches we used to help students to learn would also be effective in staff and organisational learning (McDowell, 2006). Some of our principles may seem to run counter to widely accepted logic about development and change. For example, we are more concerned to promote diverse and individual solutions to assessment problems rather than to secure the adoption of 'best practice'. We are concerned about the environment, from physical spaces to regulatory structures, and its affordances for teaching, learning and assessment. Our perspective fits much better with complexity models of change (Trowler, Saunders and Knight, 2003), than with techno-rationalist approaches common in HE. Not everything that we have tried has 'worked' but we have had successes and we are able to challenge some 'myths'. One myth is that staff are so busy that they will only be persuaded to do something if it saves time – not true! Many staff are persuaded by, and are actively seeking, ways to improve things for their students. Another myth is that CETL is just seen as somewhere to get ready funding to shore up existing activities – not true! Many staff value the opportunity to 'be part of something' and 'have like-minded people to talk to' more than access to funding. Experience has to some extent endorsed our approach but we remain self-critical. Is this a diversion, made possible due to the special circumstances of CETL or a contribution to the future of educational development?

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

0–10 mins Introductions. Presentation of the six core principles of AfL adapted for staff and organisational learning. Handout and guide provided. Discussion of examples from Northumbria and delegates' own institutions. Plenary.

10-20 mins Activity 1: Thought-shower of 'enablers and barriers' to the use of the CETL AfL approach. Prioritising the key enablers and barriers in the form of questions "How could we ensure that? How could we overcome? Group Activity

20-30 mins Response to questions in plenary discussion.

30-40 mins Activity 2: Responses to 3 key questions:

- can the CETL AfL approach engage the majority of staff? Is it scalable?
- is the CETL AfL approach dependent on special circumstances and funding? Is it sustainable and transferable?
- what are the values which underpin the CETL AfL approach? Is it a defensible approach?

Groups will discuss ONE of the above questions. A short briefing document will be provided to support the task.

Group activity

40-45 mins Sharing outcomes and round up.

Resources: In addition to prepared handouts, relevant materials e.g, case studies, signpost leaflets will be distributed to delegates

References

McDowell, L (2006) 'Putting principles in to practice: a change model for a Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching' *Educational Developments*, 7(2), May 2006, pp.18-20

Trowler, P., Saunders, M. and Knight, P. (2003) *Change thinking, change practices*. HE Academy, available at :

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/id262_Change_Thinking_Chan