

**Title:**                    **A Principled Ideal or a Flawed Reality? Unpacking our conceptions of UKPSF standard descriptor three**

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### **Abstract:**

#### **Session Learning Outcomes**

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

- Develop a deeper understanding of the scholarship around the nature of senior academic roles and the challenges of identifying and articulating those roles
- Develop different approaches to the application of SD3 in practice.
- Identify potential rationale for the use of SD3 within professional development structures and activities

#### **Session Outline**

Key issues to be addressed are:

The National Professional Standards for Teaching in Higher Education were launched in 2000 and institutions have incorporated SD1 and SD2 with relative comfort and are applying these in systematic and strategic ways to ensure that the outcomes are fit for purpose within the cultural context of the institution. Initial exploration suggests that institutions have developed a deep and meaningful understanding of SD1 and SD2, but it is apparent that they are encountering significant difficulties in both the interpretation and implementation of standard descriptor 3 (SD3).

This session will report on a small scale piece of project which has attempted to make linkages between the original intended purpose of the standard descriptor (SD3) and how they are being used, or not, in current practice. It will also consider research and thinking about learning, drawing on work in the areas of conceptions of excellence, professionalism and the role of standards, academic leadership and management, threshold concepts and the development of academic staff as teachers. The final outcome of the project is to produce guidance to support a deeper conceptual understanding of what we are trying to achieve through the use of SD3.

This project arose from identifying a number of different factors which generated confusion and frustration around SD3. These were about:

- the standard descriptor is written in a way that is open to a range of interpretations
- the lack of external validation of the descriptor through the Higher Education Academy Recognition Scheme
- the standard descriptor does not align to perceptions of higher level 'teaching'
- limited evidence of 'case law' outlining successful use of the descriptor
- the absence of any guidance or a forum for discussion about the descriptor

The overarching factor reported as problematic was the lack of any conceptual underpinning of SD3 as it is currently articulated. It is evident from observations and a number of small enquiries (Shrives, Poole 2007 unpublished) that with a deeper shared understanding individuals and institutions would be able to work with the descriptor in a more effective and constructive manner.

With the support of a SEDA Small Grant this project is able to report its findings and participants will have the opportunity to comment on and contribute to the emerging guidance on the interpretation and embedding of SD3. The final outcomes of the project will be used in collaboration with the Higher Education Academy and will inform new developments of SEDAs awards and qualifications.

### **Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

This session will begin with a short report outlining the findings of the project to date. This will be followed by interactive discussion sharing individual's personal reflections and considerations of the findings. The final part of the session will be to consider the potential value of guidance based on the findings, particularly in such a contested and challenging area.

### **References**

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