

Title: **Online Support for CPD in Learning and Teaching:
reaching a wider audience**

Presenter: **Mary McCulloch**
University of Glasgow

Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify the major educational development support requirements of their institution.
- Identify whether there might be mechanisms for supporting distinct groups of staff and others who teach and support learning.
- Analyse whether they already have some of the resources and expertise for the support requirements.
- Evaluate whether the on-line model described in the session could meet some of their requirements.

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

Resources to support academics to enhance the learning experience of their students are burgeoning. For some academics who view research as their primary focus, there is little appetite to navigate through these resources to answer questions regarding, for example, assessment or course design, or to engage in debates on the collection of feedback and how this might support the evaluation of their teaching (Caffarella and Zinn, 1999).

The cohort of staff, other than “mainstream academics” who support student learning in higher education is expanding, both in terms of numbers and in terms of their roles and responsibilities (Muzaka, 2009). In addition to graduate teaching assistants and other hourly paid teaching staff, there are increasingly centrally provided support centres for study skills enhancement including mathematical support. Many of these other staff are not invited to formal learning and teaching development programmes or may not choose to attend because of the contracts on which they are employed.

The provision of continuing professional development (CPD) in learning and teaching for all staff who support student learning is required, though their CPD needs may be envisaged as being different, according to their different roles and responsibilities. Re-purposing extant resources and expertise (workshops, e-learning content, staff resources etc) to be contained within a “Reflecting on Your Teaching” space in the university VLE has provided a one stop shop for issues around learning and teaching, and through links with an e-portfolio tool, a space for reflecting on practice (Kahn et al., 2008). The resources are structured using the United Kingdom Professional Standards Framework (UK PSF) as the guiding framework – which also allows for guidance towards individual recognition from the Higher Education Academy. Experience from working with staff in an academic context has emphasised the value of the community aspects of learning and development. To engender this,

support is also provided through “community groups” such as discipline-based GTAs meeting with a mentor to engage in CPD, or post doctoral researchers joined through the skills training office.

How this support is provided and enhanced by engagement with the academic development unit will be described in the session, as will initial feedback from staff and postgraduates who have interacted with the VLE space.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

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| 5 minutes: | Brief introduction to issues relating to CPD in learning and teaching and groups of staff requiring support |
| 5 minutes: | Participant identification of issues and groups in their own institutions, to bear in mind during the description of the initiative. |
| 15 minutes: | Illustrative description of VLE system, support mechanisms and initial evaluations |
| 5 minutes: | Questions from participants |
| 15 minutes: | Discussions in plenary regarding implementation in own institutions. |

References

- Caffarella, R. S. and F. Zinn, L. F. (1999) Professional Development for Faculty: A Conceptual Framework of Barriers and Supports. *Innovative Higher Education*, **23**:4, 241-254
- Kahn, P., Young, R., Grace, S., Pilkington, R., Rush, L., Tomkinson, B. and Willis, I. (2008) Theory and legitimacy in professional education: a practitioner review of reflective processes within programmes for new academic staff, *International Journal for Academic Development*, **13**:3, 161-173.
- Muzaka, V. (2009) The niche of Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs): perceptions and reflections. *Teaching in Higher Education*, **14**:1, 1-12.