

Title: **The Student Voice: using students to enhance professional development practice in learning, teaching and assessment in higher education**

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

- Outline how students can be employed to enhance academic professional development;
- Evaluate how the use of this strategy can be applied to delegates' own practice;
- Identify which mechanisms are most suitable in different contexts

Session Outline

'Good teaching means seeing learning through the learner's eyes' (Ramsden, 1988).

Students can have a powerful impact on academic professional development aimed at enhancing learning, teaching and assessment practice. By providing qualitative insights about the nature of their learning experience, students can bring both valid and valuable viewpoints and motivate staff who are engaged by the students' perspective and often admire their perspicacity. But bringing together students and staff to discuss the process of teaching rather than the content of the curriculum has been described as 'as rare as it is valuable' (Asmar, 1999). This workshop will provide a forum for the discussion of the effectiveness of the use of this professional development strategy and current activities designed to encourage its use within higher education.

The session will:

- Report on initial investigations of the use of this strategy within the sector (funded under the Staff and Educational Development Association Small Grants Fund in 2004) and on current and planned activity in developing case studies of innovative and effective practice across the sector through a collaborative project involving Napier University, the University of Central England, Leeds Metropolitan University and the University of Westminster (funded by a Higher Education Academy ESCalate development grant in 2006).
- Highlight examples of effective practice and provide opportunities to explore what works best through interactive opportunities provided for participants and discussions.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

90 minute workshop:

20 min - Presentation of the student voice strategy in academic professional development in higher education including:

- rationale (illustrated with examples of innovative and effective practice)
- results of investigation of activity across the sector

- details of current case study development being undertaken by the collaborating universities

10 min - Open floor discussion

40 min - Participant activity: Groups of participants will each discuss a different provided scenario for a staff development intervention and devise a mechanism for involving students to enhance the process. Each proposal will be justified to the other groups in terms of effectiveness, resourcing and the likely impact on the staff and students involved.

20 min - Concluding session including:

- input regarding ways participants can contribute:
 - by submitting examples of practice for inclusion in the case study website
 - participating in forthcoming dissemination events including regional workshops to be held in London, Edinburgh and Birmingham in late 2006 and a national event to be held in Leeds in May 2007
- further discussion.

References

Ramsden, P (1988) *Managing the effective university* Higher Education Research and Development 17(3)

Asmar, C (1999) Scholarship, experience or both? A developer's approach to cross-cultural teaching *International Journal of Academic Development* 4 (1)

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