**Report on SEDA Research and Evaluation Small Grant, 2011**

**Dr. Marita le Vaul-Grimwood FSEDA, 26 July 2012**

**What was done?**

I have carried out an evaluation of the first year of a project aiming to promote parity of esteem for teaching and research through the promotions process in a research-intensive university.

**How was it done?**

The evaluation has involved taking both quantitative and qualitative measures of progress: notes and recordings of interviews with a selection of staff from around the university early on in the project; promotions statistics from before and after the first year of the project; and results from a questionnaire which was issued to successful and unsuccessful promotions applicants in all Faculties in the first promotions cycle after the first year of the project.

**Why was it done?**

The project being evaluated has as its overall objective to attain parity of esteem for teaching and research at Newcastle. Within this aim there are three key objectives: to clarify the nature of evidence of teaching achievements; to communicate this clarified vision around the university; and to develop an electronic means of recording teaching achievements. This evaluation was conducted to support these objectives in the following ways:

* to provide fresh data to share internally, help sustain dialogue and thereby increase understanding of what evidence for teaching achievements look like;
* to give the project team evidence of impact, and an appreciation of what work remains to be done, by gauging staff perceptions;
* to gauge the level of understanding and support for the electronic recording of teaching achievements;
* to provide data for external dissemination of Newcastle’s work on recognising and rewarding teaching.

**What effect did it have?**

The interviews gave us valuable baseline data by which to gauge the varied levels of understanding of what is involved in evidencing teaching and enabled us to pitch our communications accordingly. For example, it was this information that enabled me to ask the right questions at university committees to lead academics to begin questioning some of their assumptions about what can and should be evidenced and rewarded.

The statistical information and survey results are enabling the project team to focus the remaining time-limited project resource on where it will have most impact. (See ‘What has been learnt’, below).

**How are people hearing about it?**

We will be presenting our fully analysed findings at the 17th SEDA conference this November. We also plan to run an internal seminar as part of the project’s communications strategy.

**What has been learnt?**

Full analysis of the data is still ongoing and this will be presented in November. However, some of the practical implications of the findings have already helped us to gauge success and to deploy the remaining project resource more effectively. There are areas to focus on, and to explore further. For example:

* Awareness of our new documentation among promotions applications was relatively low. However, when circulated as part of the survey, it was perceived as useful.
* Perception of reward for teaching still falls short of the reality at Newcastle.
* Our ‘saturation’ approach to communicating with academics in management positions has only partially ‘trickled down’ to more junior ones. We will be modifying our communications strategy accordingly.
* There is work to be done ensuring that our plans for electronic recording of teaching achievements facilitate a continued dialogue around evidencing teaching, and are not perceived as a move towards a purely quantitative approach to measurement.
* Staff rarely weight their promotions applications towards Teaching where their duties are fairly evenly split between Teaching and Research.

**Where might it lead?**

Following the SEDA conference presentation, colleagues and I will explore the possibility of future publication now or with another year’s promotions data.

**What next?**

The survey and statistical collection will be repeated next year, to measure culture change as the work of the project on rewarding and recognising teaching is embedded in policies and practices.

Newcastle University is part of an international team of four universities which has recently been awarded funding from the HEA for a benchmarking project examining teaching promotions which will produce a set of resources for external dissemination. Information from this evaluative work will inform Newcastle’s contribution to this project.