

**Title:**                   **Empowering tutors as online educators through progressive online staff development**

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### **Abstract:**

### **Session Learning Outcomes**

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

1. Identify the potential benefits current and emerging technologies are thought to offer in relation to meeting the strategic objectives of educational institutions and in enhancing the learning and teaching experience
2. Highlight how developments in Higher Education and the move towards increased use of technology in learning and teaching are influencing the nature and responsibilities of the tutor as a 21<sup>st</sup> century educator
3. Discuss the pedagogical, technical and developmental challenges and barriers that tutors face in learning to teach in blended and online contexts
4. Draw upon new or further enhanced ideas for learner-centred online staff development in the area of technology-enhanced learning and teaching
5. Adapt examples of technology-enhanced learning and teaching explored during the session to their own professional practice in ways that are appropriate to the nature of their discipline and the learners they support

### **Session Outline**

Key issues to be addressed are:

As a sector Higher Education is now in an informed position regarding what current and emerging technologies can offer by way of widening access, responding to increasingly diverse student needs, and providing new or improved learning opportunities. Our institutions are in turn exploring what the implications and benefits of technology-enhanced education may be in meeting their own strategic objectives.

Yet for many tutors there remain significant challenges around understanding how the principles of good learning and teaching translate to blended and online contexts, and in learning to teach online without disrupting their students' learning experience.

In helping our tutors meet these challenges many institutions offer workshops, written guidance, and opportunities to share good practice. However recent years have seen a growing consensus that this is not enough, and that to fully realise how technology can help enhance or transform learning we need to engage our educators online so they can

experience what it means to learn online, and make more informed pedagogical decisions as a result (Oliver and Dempster, 2003; O'Donoghue, 2006).

This session explores the impact of a SEDA-accredited online postgraduate programme for educators that shares this ethos of learner-centred online staff development, but which attempts to extend it in fundamental ways. This includes: having programme participants work from the outset on technology-supported approaches that they implement and evaluate within their own practice; using the programme itself as a platform for developing and practising the skills required to teach online; and engaging participants in wider professional communities to support their continued development as online educators.

Through articulating the design of the programme, and drawing on examples of projects undertaken, this session will share key lessons learned relating to staff development in technology-supported education and offer a range of effective uses of technology that can be adapted to any course context.

### **Session overview and approximate timings**

- 5 mins: Introduction to session
- 15 mins: What does technology-enhanced education offer and why it is important? (Open floor discussion of benefits to institutions, tutors and students)
- 20 mins: Making the transition to teaching in blended and online contexts (Small group exploration of challenges and personal experiences, with broad discussion questions around implications for new and experienced academics and implications for staff development to be provided)
- 30 mins: Exploring the MSc Blended and Online Education. During this interactive exploration of the programme in question, delegates will be asked to note what they feel would work well in their own staff development provision or teaching practice, before a small group sharing of ideas.
- 15 mins: Implications for new lecturer induction and 'traditional' PG Certificates in Learning and Teaching (Open floor discussion framed by broad questions around what we need to change or adapt within existing provision).
- 5 mins: Concluding evaluation of session (via text wall and minute paper feedback delegates will be asked how well the session met the stated outcomes, what the most useful aspect of the session was, and be offered opportunity for follow-up questions to be answered via e-mail).

Please note that while the proposed session would use a text wall for evaluation as indicated above, the text wall would be used throughout so delegates can text in points, observations and comments during small group and open floor activities.

## References

Oliver, M. and Dempster, A.D. (2003). Embedding e-learning practices. In: R. Blackwell and P. Blackmore (Eds.) *Towards strategic staff development in Higher Education*. Open University Press, pp. 142-153.

O'Donoghue, J. (Ed.) (2006). *Technology supported learning and teaching: a staff perspective*. London: Information Science Publishing.