

**Title:** Collaborative versus competitive: approaches to quality enhancement

**Presenters:** Stuart Boon and Ginny Saich  
University of Strathclyde and University of Stirling

**Abstract:**

**Session Learning Outcomes**

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

- Identify opportunities and constraints presented by quality enhancement or assurance frameworks in their sector;
- List networks/communities of practice with which they currently engage and identify how these support their practice;
- Explore opportunities for collaborative enhancement initiatives through these networks;
- Consider the potential transferability of approaches employed within Scotland and any adaptations required for translation to their own context.

**Session Outline**

Key issues to be addressed are:

The presenters will illustrate how a positive spirit of collaborative 'common purpose' has prevailed among educational developers within the Scottish sector, despite financial pressures leading to competition for resources. Whilst this may be facilitated by the size of the Scottish Higher Education (HE) sector, structures and processes employed may usefully inform responses to the enhancement agenda emerging elsewhere within the UK (QAA, 2010).

The Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF) will be briefly outlined (QAA Scotland, 2010: 4) and the implementation of an enhancement-led agenda within a climate of financial constraint will be discussed. Specific reference will be made to collaborative endeavours employed by Scottish HE Developers (SHED), including the use, and extension of, pre-existing networks, alongside the emergence of new and/or transient arrangements within the context of the QEF. Consideration will be given to the transferability of approaches used in Scotland to other sectors, or elements thereof.

A sector-wide Community of Practice (Lave and Wenger, 1998) has emerged from SHED with a set of common goals focused on knowledge exchange and the concomitant development of members and those with whom they work. This Community of Practice (CoP) arose from, and is facilitated by, a pre-existing, formal, cross-institutional group (Universities Scotland Educational Development Sub-Committee). Enhancement activities, under the aegis of this

sub-committee, have included collaborative research, a joint CPD programme for SHED members, and shared events/programmes that inform the whole of the sector. In addition, the community works with QAA Scotland and the HE Academy to form adaptive networks addressing specific sector-wide enhancement themes within the QEF.

Whilst there have been challenges to the SHED ethos, its CoP has prevailed via collaboration rather than competition, by adopting a common vision built upon shared expertise and a passion for enhancement, implemented through effective networks and activities.

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

- 5 mins      Presentation: Introduction to the Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF) in Scotland, opportunities presented by the QEF and operational constraints (including financial)
- 10 mins     Whole group discussion:  
○ What opportunities do you perceive within the framework in your sector?  
○ What operational constraints do you envisage?  
(presenters record collected opportunities and operational constraints in 2 columns on a flipchart sheet and subsequently put up on the wall)
- 10 mins     Presentation: Implementation strategies:  
○ Collaborative frameworks and networks  
○ Collaborative enhancement activities  
(specific reference made to constraints on flip chart where relevant)
- 15 mins     Group Discussion (groups of around 4 individuals):  
○ List the networks and/or Communities of Practice to which you belong  
○ How do these currently support your practice and what opportunities do they present for collaborative enhancement initiatives?  
Consider:  
○ What similarities and differences are apparent between your networks and those of SHED?  
○ What, if anything, might you take from the SHED experience of enhancement?  
(2 columns on flipchart – one for network and second for how it supports practice – put up on wall)
- 5 mins      Feedback & Close (one or two recommendations from each group)

### **References**

Lave, J., Wenger, E. (1998) *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, Cambridge University Press.

QAA (2010) Institutional Review Consultation, online at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/news/consultation/reviewconsultation.asp> [last accessed 03.11.2010]

QAA Scotland (2010) The work of QAA Scotland, QAA: Glasgow, online at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/IntroToQAAScotland.pdf> [last accessed 03.11.2010]