

**Title:** Striving for teaching excellence beyond the UK: what can we learn from middle and northern Europe?

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### Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Draw on an increased understanding of differences and similarities in educational development practices in HE across middle and northern Europe
- Draw on an increased knowledge of institutional approaches to 'teaching excellence' in a wider European context
- Discuss HE 'teaching excellence' as a concept beyond the UK context
- Use examples of educational development from middle and northern European institutions in their own settings.

### Session Outline

The themes that this session will be aiming to address are:

- Institutional and departmental initiatives to achieve teaching excellence.
- Factors underpinning and influencing excellence

This workshop will explore the findings from a recent research project funded by SEDA Small Grants 2016 and provide the opportunity to share experiences relating to some of the findings. The project completion date is May 2017.

The research project is using a case study approach to explore two areas: the meaning of professional recognition for academics that teach in a number of countries in middle and northern Europe (Pleschova, et al 2012); and staff development activities relating to a specific area of teaching practice, teaching first-year students (Nutt and Calderon, 2009).

A short survey was provided to a range of institutions across middle and Northern Europe to identify what approaches were being taken to professional recognition in different countries and contexts. The survey also invites participants to provide examples of institutional approaches to educational development. The survey is being followed by case study interviews with selected institutions. At each institution we are interviewing (via Skype) two participants: an educational developer and a member of academic staff who had

participated in educational development. We are also being provided with additional documentary material about educational development and 'professional recognition' in the case study institutions. During the case study interviews, as well as discussing broader ideas of professional recognition, we are discussing notions of 'teaching excellence' and whether particular understandings of this specific concept are incorporated in any way within the educational development culture of the institution and/or country.

In this workshop we will look at a number of examples from the project that relate to staff development activities focused on enhancing teaching practice and will draw on data from 4 non-UK countries. We will be using a number of vignettes of staff development activity. We will also consider the ways in which the European institutions in this study might strive to achieve teaching excellence (beyond professional recognition) and how success is measured.

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

Presenters: Introduction to the project and brief review of key findings (8-10 minutes)

Group Discussion, including brief feedback: Co-ordinated discussion in small groups focused on educational development activity vignettes provided from the case study institutions, with the opportunity to discuss similarities and differences with the delegates own contexts and in particular focussing discussion on how the examples might, or might not support a notion of 'teaching excellence'. (10-15 minutes)

Presenters: Institutional approaches to teaching excellence in a European context (5 minutes)

Group discussion in 2-3s: How measurable are these approaches? (5 minutes)

Presenters and all: Last thoughts from the floor and close session (5 minutes).

We will also invite delegates to provide feedback and additional thoughts on the session via post-it notes as delegates leave the session (where participants would like time for reflection, these can be submitted afterwards, but before the end of the conference)

### **References**

Nutt, D. and Calderon D. (2009) (editors) *International Perspectives on the First-Year Experience in Higher Education*, Columbia, S.C: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

Pleschova, G., Simon, E., Quinlan, K, Murphy, J, Roxa, T., Szabo, M. (2012) *The Professionalisation of Academics as Teachers in Higher Education*, (Science Position Paper/ Standing Committee for the Social Sciences), Strasbourg, France: European Science Foundation.