

**Title:**                   **A community approach to online staff development design**

**Presenter:**           **Anne Campbell and Mark Jones**  
The Open University

### **Session Learning Outcomes**

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

Consider how a peer community approach to developing online staff development can contribute to its success.

### **Session Outline**

Designing appropriate staff development for part-time distance staff can present challenges: staff often will have the time and motivation to participate only in events and activities which are timely for them, and directly relevant to their own working practices (Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010). In addition, staff developers do not always identify the same development needs as do the 'rank and file' who are engaging with day to day teaching, who may not feel supported (Cannell and Gilmour, 2013). In this paper, we will describe how we addressed these challenges when developing and designing a one day online staff development event for part time distance science tutors in The Open University.

The event incorporated a mixture of synchronous and near-synchronous sessions, which can enhance a sense of presence for participants (Campbell & Macdonald, 2011). The design also can foster the building of a sense of community amongst distance staff (Kear, 2011; Perry and Edward, 2009), as well as allowing shared reflection on the topic at hand. The particular strength of the format is to bring together a diverse range of staff across discipline areas and across geographic space.

The overall theme of this event was how to use synchronous online tuition effectively for student learning. Well in advance of the event, we brought together peer presenters, moderators and event organisers in an online community to plan live presentations and asynchronous discussion topics. Extended discussion and reflection in an online forum allowed topics of interest to teaching staff to be identified. This allowed presentations to be honed – so that they were relevant to teaching staff and distinct from each other, with little or no overlap.

Examples of this discussion and reflection will be presented, and we will also show how this approach led to a successful event, using participant comments and feedback.

## Session Activities and Approximate Timings

This will be a PowerPoint presentation with key points for discussion at various points throughout the presentation. We anticipate that some of the questions may be:

- How much should staff development be embedded in present working practices, and how much should be policy driven?
- How can we make use of the deep knowledge and understanding of learning and teaching already within our teaching communities in our institutions?
- Can we develop communities of practice to prepare for and develop events in our own institutions?
- How could this sort of format for development be adapted to different contexts and institutions?

## References

Campbell, A and Macdonald, J (2011), Experiential learning in online staff development. *Proceedings of the 2010 18<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Improving Student Learning, incorporating the 7<sup>th</sup> ISSOTL conference. Global Theories and Local Practices: Institutional, Disciplinary and Cultural Variations*, ed Chris Rust, Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development

Cannell, P and Gilmour A, (2013), Staff: enhancing teaching, Final project report. *QAA Enhancement themes publications*. Available from <http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/publications/staff-enhancing-teaching-final-project-report.pdf?sfvrsn=8>, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> November 2013

Kear, K (2011), Online and social networking communities. *Oxon: Routledge*

Ottenbreit-Leftwich, A T, Glazewski, K D, Newby, T J & Ertmer, P A (2010), Teacher value beliefs associated with using technology: addressing professional and student needs. *Computers and Education* 55, 1321 – 1335

Perry, B. & Edward, M. (2009), Creating a culture of community in online courses. *M2009: Proceedings of 23rd ICDE World Conference on Open and Distance Learning*