

Title: 'Being together': creating social presence in short online courses for academic staff development

Presenter: Elaine Mowat
Edinburgh Napier University

Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will have:

- participated in a variety of short online activities as part of a group of learners
- reflected on the experience of engaging with other learners online
- identified types of activities, tools and resources that can help develop social presence before, during and after short online courses

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

'The importance of creating a sense of presence in online teaching and learning environments cannot be overestimated.' (Lehman & Conceição, 2010)

What is social presence and why is it so important in online courses? What are the different ways in which it can be supported? And how can it best be achieved in short courses where participants, working at different times and from different locations, only have a few days to build connections with each other and work together as a group?

This session provides an opportunity to engage with these questions through the first hand experience of participating in a variety of focussed and engaging online tasks over a short period of time just prior to, and during, the SEDA conference. The workshop session, to take place on Day 2 of the conference, will then offer the chance for the participants to come together as a group and in person to reflect on their shared experience online.

Drawing from their extensive experience of designing and facilitating short online courses in the context of academic development, the facilitators will share examples of good practice, highlight key design principles and welcome the ideas and experiences of participants in exploring the potential of the short, online course format to meet the professional development needs of busy academic staff.

Following the conference, there will be the offer of two places on any of the short online professional development courses that Edinburgh Napier offers for its academic staff throughout the year.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

14 - 17 November (online): Series of short, focussed activities that delegates can participate in from any device that offers internet access – mobile phone, laptop etc. Times of participation flexible; support and advice always on hand from session facilitators. Activities take just a few minutes to complete and are designed with the appreciation that this will be a particularly busy week for everyone!

18 November (45 min workshop session): Reflection on shared experience. Participants will identify questions for discussion at the start of the session.

References

Lehman, R. M. and Conceição, S. C. O. (2010). *Creating a Sense of Presence in Online Teaching: How to "Be There" for Distance Learners*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Please register for this workshop in advance of the conference (4 November at the latest) if you would like to participate. Please also note the requirement to take part in the online activities in the week leading up to the event. Numbers are limited so sign up soon to be sure of a place!