

Title: **Designing bite sized staff development to increase participation, creativity and knowledge exchange**

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will:

1. Be aware of open online course engagement pitfalls
2. Understand the 90/20/8 rule approach to development
3. Understand the concept of bite-sized teaching and its effective uses
4. Be able to design their own bite-sized, professional development provision
5. Be able to foster engagement from beginning to end
6. Be able to employ participant creativity and learner-generated content

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

Bite-sized teaching involves developing a group of people in a fully online environment over the period of 1 or 2 weeks. The group learns about a particular topic through a series of 20 minute tasks delivered on a daily basis. This approach brings together the benefits of flexible, short, just-in-time learning (Simkins & Maier, 2010) and the benefits of social learning approaches, such as those offered by a learning community or community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It is also underpinned by research into human attention spans, drawing from Robert Pike's 90/20/8 rule (Pike, 1994), on information chunking and interaction.

I have found bite-sized professional development to be very effective in encouraging busy, time-limited staff to participate. Its flexibility allows a significant amount of creativity; tasks and delivery methods can be hugely varied every day, utilising audio, video, web2.0 and more. I encourage participants to be equally creative, learner-created content being a key feature in this approach.

This form of teaching carries significant retention problems, and retaining participants in the second half of the course is problematic. Learning analytics drawn from my own courses clearly show this trend and mirror retention problems in larger MOOC-style offerings. In their initial MOOC experiments, Edinburgh University recently reported an average 29% engagement ratio during fifth week assessments compared to the number of initial active learners (MOOCs@Edinburgh Group, 2013). During this session I plan to share my experience in increasing this engagement, found through much experimenting over the past 2 years.

During this session I will encourage session participants to consider the value of this approach for their own contexts. I will also share the results of my research and offer advice on how to develop effective bite-sized teaching which enables creativity, maintains engagement and retains participation right to the end.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

5 mins: Description of the bite-sized teaching approach, it's pedagogical basis and some examples of its use.

5 mins: Quick poll of online experience in the room. Ask attendees to put their hand up if they've participated in an online course, and give us one pro or one con about the course.

5 mins: Activity, in groups: What development or teaching do you deliver that could be delivered via bite-sized teaching?

10 mins: Feedback on discussion – short example from each group, and allow feedback from other groups.

10 mins: Presentation of my research conducted on a number of bite-sized teaching run at Edinburgh Napier and externally. Includes my conclusions on what makes for engaging provision, and what approaches to take to ensure participants keep participating.

10 mins: Discussion around these results - Pose the following questions. Whole group participation. (If slow going then split into small groups again to try to stimulate some creative thinking around the topic.)

1. Which engagement tactics do you think would work in your context?
2. Have you experience with any of these approaches? If so, what happened?
3. Can you think of any other methods of engagement that might work in this context?

References

Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University

MOOCs@Edinburgh Group (2013). *MOOCs @ Edinburgh 2013 – Report #1*. The University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh. Retrieved on 22nd July, 2013 from <http://hdl.handle.net/1842/6683>

Pike, R. (1994). *Creative Training Techniques Handbook*, 2nd Edition. Lakewood Books, Minneapolis.

Simkins, S., & Maier, M. (2010). *Just-in-time teaching: Across the disciplines, across the academy*. Stylus Pub Llc.