

# EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

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## Supporting Health and Wellbeing: A new award for the SEDA Professional Development Framework

Ruth Pilkington and Roisín Curran, Ulster University

SEDA PDF offers a framework of professional learning and development awards that can be accredited by SEDA and used by Further and Higher Education (FHE) institutions for enhancing the learning of both students and staff. One of the newest awards is in 'Supporting Health and Wellbeing'. This award reflects the current growing interest in healthy work and study, resilience and well-being of both staff and students. The award reflects this two-pronged focus on staff and student needs in its design and outcomes, for example: increasingly, across Further and Higher Education (FHE) contexts, the challenges of workload demands are having a negative impact on the health of professionals and students:

- 1) Recent publications from Locke *et al.* (2016), Baume and Popovic (2016), and Cashmore *et al.* (2013) highlight the complexity of career and workload structure for professionals in FHE, in particular those in academic and learning support roles. Not only are career paths less well defined within academic lives, but also the drive to offer quality and meet standards across the FHE sector means there is a challenge in managing workload for all staff; responding to initiatives and market challenges while performing at a high level to meet public, professional accountability, and student expectations, can mean that colleagues struggle to gain balance between the conflicting demands of career, role and health. This is acknowledged in the evidence from websites, conference themes, and the higher profile for well-being in HR strategies and policy.
- 2) Students too find it challenging to structure and balance their study, social and working lives, especially when faced with financial demands of fees, accommodation and rising costs of living. Recent *Guardian* reports predict over half a million students started their student life in 2017 and the *Guardian* annual student survey predicted 9 out of 10 will struggle to cope with the demands of that transition. Mental health is flagged as a hidden disability for many, leading UUK to identify this as a priority concern in recent reports, e.g. the 'Student mental wellbeing in higher education: good practice guide', produced by the Universities UK Standing Group on Mental Wellbeing in Higher Education (2015), and prompting a burgeoning of initiatives across the sector in response.

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More widely, there is national concern about health due to, for example, increasing levels of obesity, alcohol, lack of exercise and stress, and a 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' tool, commissioned by the Government, has been developed to improve the mental health and well-being of the whole population (Aked and Thompson, 2011). Results from recent Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) surveys provide strong evidence that the undergraduate student population have lower levels of well-being than the rest of the population and young people as a whole when measured against Office for National Statistics (ONS) data.

Such concerns often emerge in studies, surveys and national recommendations, but can be neglected as a factor influencing academic work and environments. The HEA has taken this issue on board in its TeachWell initiative. Projects across the sector are focusing attention on the challenges presented by concern about physical and mental health and well-being in the FHE population.

Staff may need to be informed about these, to be able to show consideration for and accommodate mental and wider health issues for students. Staff can feel overburdened and disempowered by what they see as increasing demands on their time and effort, fewer resources, administrative changes and institutional priorities.

This SEDA award acknowledges the importance for both students and staff of balancing healthier lives and healthier working practices through increased resilience, and building awareness of, and strategies for, well-being. It acknowledges the growing expectation that staff proactively plan, prioritise, determine and implement strategies for developing their careers and managing the work demands of, e.g., research, teaching, administration and work-life balance. In short, the award offers a mechanism to evidence and support institutional initiatives on these crucial issues for their staff.

The award can be variously targeted. It has been designed to offer a flexible award to encourage health and well-being awareness across institutions for staff and students, therefore it can be used by managers, by academics and professional support services, and when considering the student HE experience and learning processes.

The award encourages dialogue, reflection and action around this issue for individuals and teams as an important component of the student HE/FE experience and academic practice. An important caveat for potential adopters of the award is that it is *not* designed to fit within counselling or equivalent training. It is about informing and developing staff, awareness-raising, and enabling staff to be more appreciative of their own well-being and that of others, and hence enabling them and the institution to contribute to a more healthy environment. As pointed out by Lawrence (2017), recognising the link between learning success and educator well-being in higher education strengthens the case for future staff development built on models and messages of well-being.

### Award specialist outcomes

In addition to evidencing how they meet the values and core outcomes shared by all SEDA PDF awards, those using this award to focus professional learning and development activity will need to show how participants will be able to:

- Identify and reflect on issues for health and well-being in their practice setting as a duty of care for him/herself as individual practitioner and/or for others (students and staff)
- Inform themselves on appropriate approaches and techniques for supporting health and well-being for themselves and/or for others
- Evaluate selected approaches (for the individual) and identify appropriate responses
- Contribute to enhanced health and well-being practices within their HE setting informed by appropriate ethical considerations.

For further information about the Award, contact the Award Co-ordinators: Ruth Pilkington ([ruth.pilkington1@btinternet.com](mailto:ruth.pilkington1@btinternet.com)) and Roisín Curran ([r.curran@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:r.curran@ulster.ac.uk)).

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# Academic staff: To apprentice, or not to apprentice, that is the question!

**Stephen Powell**, Manchester Metropolitan University, and **Peter Gossman**, University of Worcester

## Introduction

This article explores Higher Education Institutions' (HEIs) adoption of the higher apprenticeship model for the development of their academic staff, with a particular focus on delivery in parallel with existing Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) provision. An initial background discussion sets out the context for apprenticeships, and this is followed by an explanation of the assessment requirements. A model for supporting academic staff as apprentices is presented and institutional considerations are discussed. The article concludes with a reflection on the key issues facing institutions in adopting apprenticeships for the training of academic staff.

## Background

The *de facto* teaching qualification for academics working in UK HEI is the level-7 PGCert. Although by no means mandatory, it is a route offered by many universities for their staff. PGCerts are typically aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) and accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA), thereby allowing successful participants to gain Fellowship of the HEA. Staff

on such courses have considerable subject or discipline knowledge evidenced by postgraduate level 7 or 8 qualifications, but tend to have limited experience teaching or leading research.

Current Higher Apprenticeships, developed from 2010 onwards, have their origins in the introduction of Modern Apprenticeships in 1993 (Mirza-Davies, 2015). Over the years, there have been numerous refinements and developments, with arguably the most significant being the introduction of a new funding model, the Apprenticeship Levy, from April 2017. This levy applies to all businesses with a pay bill of over £3 million and is set at a rate of 0.5% of this sum. The opening up of apprenticeships to degree and higher levels can be traced back to the Leitch Review of Skills (2006) that proposed a partnership between employers and universities to fund higher education. This voluntary partnership did not materialise in a significant way. However, the advent of a compulsory levy has now resulted in a rapid growth in employer-led provision of apprenticeships delivered by universities, colleges and private providers.

The development of new apprenticeships is facilitated by the Institute for Apprentices (IFA), whose remit is to support employers through the development process for apprenticeship standards and assessment plans working with employer 'trailblazer' groups. In the case of higher education employers, a group of over 20 institutions worked to develop the 'Academic Professional Apprenticeship Standard' (Institute for Apprenticeships, 2017a). Although the PGCert is very common across the sector, it is not a mandatory qualification so can be modified to form an integrated apprenticeship that delivers a programme of study and assesses academic learning and training on-the-job – something a university could do alone. Instead, a non-integrated approach is required that separates out the assessment of the apprenticeship from any training and education such as a PGCert. This requires a different organisation to undertake the assessment, a significant point that will be returned to.

There is an opportunity for HEIs to develop an apprenticeship for their academic staff based on a pre-existing PGCert, with only minimal adaptation. This will allow the HEI to

recoup a significant portion of their apprenticeship levy as both provider and purchaser of apprenticeship training. The enthusiasm for developing apprenticeships by some senior managers in HEIs could be seen as an opportunistic way to claw back the levy, although a more charitable view would be that it can provide additional funding for enhancing academics' professional development opportunities.

### Assessing the Academic Professional Apprenticeship Standard

The academic apprenticeship is designed as a level-7 qualification for HE staff following teaching and research career paths in higher education. The standard identifies a core set of knowledge, skills and values with the expectation that beyond these, academics will follow a specialist route in teaching or research, each with additional required competencies. In addition to the standard, an 'Assessment Plan for an Academic Professional' (Institute for Apprenticeships, 2017b) sets out what will be assessed and how. These two key documents were written to align with the UKPSF and the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (Vitae, 2011). As such, there are few surprises about the scope of the standard and the associated assessment plan, although purists in the construction of learning outcomes might want to take a deep breath before reading the plan.

The assessment plan sets out what is called an end point assessment (EPA). This assessment must be undertaken by an independent assessor (IA) who is suitably qualified and belongs to an approved end point assessment organisation (EPAO).

There are three components to the EPA:

- 1) Stage 1, Academic Professional Practice Assessment – completed within the final three months of the apprenticeship with the candidate given one day to prepare. For the teaching specialist role: a one-hour classroom-based session (observation of practice)

demonstrating the design and delivery of teaching, learning opportunities and assessment within the subject discipline of the apprentice. For the research specialist role: an academic or professional conference presentation. Both of these can be recorded and then assessed remotely by the IA

- 2) Stage 2, Professional Conversation – completed at the end of the apprenticeship as a one-hour conversation with an IA; and focused on the knowledge, skills and behaviours required by the Standard
- 3) Stage 3, Written Submission – completed within the final three months of the apprenticeship with the candidate given two days to prepare. Reflective journal (3000 words) and an annex containing a maximum of ten pieces of supporting evidence (4500 words, +/-10%). The annex (portfolio) must be mapped onto the specialist knowledge and skills assessed by this method. The EPAO will provide a template.

In one of the authors' institutions, an evaluation of the current PGCert against the EPA revealed that stages 1 and 3 fit well into the existing provision, with only limited adjustments required. However, stage 2 would be an addition, albeit a pedagogically sound one, where students participate in a professional

conversation to identify their learning because of the apprenticeship and begin to formulate plans for further development activities. Two further points are worth noting: the EPA can be retaken up to a maximum of two occasions; secondly, the format of the end point assessment will be provided by the EPAO. It seems likely that the sector will take control of this, collaborating on the development of templates that fit the design of PGCerts – there is no need to introduce risk into the EPA.

### Supporting apprentices in a higher education context

A key component of any apprenticeship is the support mechanism and a key requirement is that there will be a robust mentoring scheme. A quality measure of this is that meetings will take place four times per year between the apprentice, the workplace mentor and the provider. In the specific context of an HEI working as both provider and employer, this will require an academic teaching or research mentor from the subject or discipline area, as well as someone from the unit delivering the PGCert (a personal tutor). The former may be a significant extra organisational and resource requirement as it is probably fair to say that across the sector mentoring arrangements for new members of staff are patchy. Likewise, this is also additional work for PGCert teaching teams.

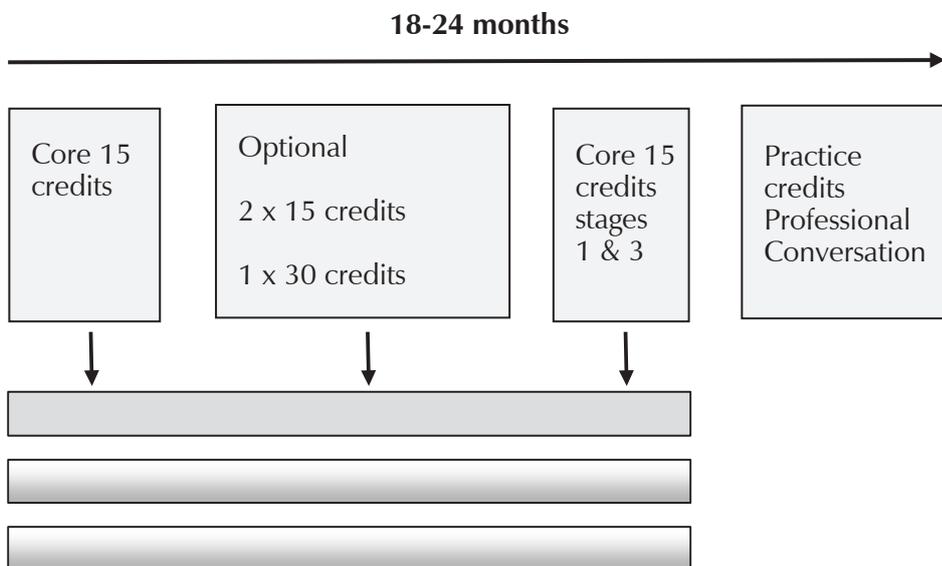


Figure 1 Apprenticeship Delivery Model

The apprenticeship standard prescribes a particular workload model for both the delivery and assessment of the apprenticeship. This includes, for each apprentice, twenty per cent of time for off-the-job training and three days for assessment preparation activities. A full-time member of staff who is undertaking an apprenticeship will, therefore, need one day per week identified. The formalising of the required twenty per cent is a particular challenge for an HEI, but a substantive part of this time can be accounted for by the PGCert with other additional professional development activities counted.

Figure 1 captures the Apprenticeship Delivery Model being explored by the authors. The experience for academics on the apprenticeship and those only on the PGCert will be the same, the only difference being who conducts the professional conversation (stage 2). In the case of apprentices, it will be the external assessor, whereas for those not on the apprenticeship it will be course tutors. This design uses practice credits that have no level and carry no academic credit, but which need to be completed successfully to pass the PGCert. The observation of teaching practice (stage 1) and the written submission (stage 3) can be accommodated with minor changes to existing units and a portfolio to gather evidence. The advantage of this approach is that the overall experience will be very similar for all students. In the institutional scheme agreement with the HEA, the first core unit confers associate fellowship, and fellowship when combined with the second core unit.

### Institutional considerations

Using the PGCert as part of the vehicle for the academic apprenticeship is something that is possible, but in doing so there are some institutional challenges that need consideration and working through. These are broadly considered under the following themes

although the operational challenges will be unique for each HEI.

### Financial model

It is not yet possible to develop a fully worked financial model, as there is still no confirmation of the funding band that the apprenticeship will fall into. Whether it is £6K or £9K is clearly a significant factor. For institutions where a PGCert is already made available to staff, the key questions are around the extra costs associated with running an apprenticeship alongside a PGCert. This is explored below based on one of the authors' institutions.

### Income

Modelling of the existing PGCert-enrolled participants shows around 49% eligibility from the current cohort (see Table 1). The exact numbers will vary year to year within institutions, depending upon the backgrounds of academics they recruit, and according to what categories of staff are allowed onto a PGCert. At this institution, a wide range of teaching staff has access to the PGCert including associate/hourly paid lecturers who would not be eligible for an apprenticeship.

A key issue resulting from the apprenticeship eligibility criteria is that colleagues must have a GCSE in Maths and English grade C or above or level-2 Functional Skills – other equivalent qualifications do not count. A particularly stark impact of this is that colleagues with a PhD with significant mathematical or English content from universities outside the UK would still need to gain level-2 functional skills to be eligible! Lastly, apprentices' contract of employment needs to be as long as the apprenticeship programme (24 months).

A further significant factor is progression through a PGCert. The standard anticipated apprenticeship entry to achievement time is 18-24 months; this could be extended if it was felt that more time be required but it needs to

be identified in the agreement with the apprentice and will be used by the IFA to determine timely completion rates – one of the key quality indicators. Further work is underway to model the rate at which staff currently complete our PGCert, although for most this is within the 24-month period. Lastly, by becoming an EPAO, there is an opportunity to recoup by generating income from assessing other universities' apprenticeships.

### Costs

Table 2 illustrates the estimated additional resource per student of the academic apprenticeship. The analysis is based on a 24-month programme and unpicks the costs involved with delivering an apprenticeship alongside a PGCert. These additional costs are key to any university-wide decisions about the financial viability of developing and providing an academic apprenticeship. However, it is arguable that some of these costs can be seen as an investment in improving existing provision such as a rigorous mentoring scheme for new staff.

The financial equation is a simple one: potential levy drawdown using this approach against additional costs (although these costs and more are also likely to be present with other drawdown provision options).

### Institutional risk

At an institutional level, the key challenge is to ensure that the additional apprenticeship demands are adequately resourced. This is particularly important for monitoring and tracking apprentices as, if timely completion rates fall below around 67% (an annually adjusted figure provided by the IFA), an inspection by the IFA may be triggered that can lead to a suspension of the ability of a provider to deliver any apprenticeships. A further risk is the extent to which academic colleagues with doctorates are comfortable with the idea of being on an apprenticeship. This is hard to quantify and it is easy to overemphasise it as a reason for not developing an apprenticeship. The proposition of teaching as something learned on-the-job with additional supporting study has a lot going for it that many academics would accept.

	GCSE Maths	GCSE English	Full-time contract	EEA Resident > 3 years	Apprenticeship eligibility
% with	76	78	53	96	49

Table 1 Student eligibility for apprenticeship

<i>Apprentice</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Resource per student</i>
20% 'off the job' training	Arguably, significantly accounted for by the 1 credit = 10 hours learning for the PGCert. A technical system for recording other CPD may be required.	90 days
Record of 'off the job' training	Maintain record of professional development against the knowledge, skills and values detailed in the assessment plan.	2 days
EPA stage 1 and 3 preparation time	The end point assessment requires 1-day prep for stage 1 and 2 days for stage 3.	3 days
Mentee (apprentice)	4 sessions per year, approximately 1.5 hours each	2 days
<i>Support</i>		
Teaching support for EPA stage 1-3	Tutors on PGCert to support apprentices beyond 'normal' existing teaching and assessment activities to prepare students for EPA.	1 day
Mentoring within PGCert delivery	4 sessions per year, approximately 1.5 hours each.	2 days
Mentoring within home department	4 sessions per year, approximately 1.5 hours each. Do departments have existing robust schemes, either teaching or research focused?	2 days
Administration	Administrate agreements, monitor student progression, keep track of mentoring meetings, coordinate the end point assessment, etc.	2 days
Technical	Video observation of teaching practice (EPA stage 3)	2 hours
End Point Assessment	Around 15% of the total costs of the apprenticeship, so depends on funding band set.	£900 - £1350

Table 2 Estimated additional work to an existing PGCert of apprenticeship

### Human resources – contracts and workload

The most significant challenge for the academic apprenticeship lies within a university's HR function and the changes that they may need to implement. These may include:

- 1) How to deliver an equitable experience, as near as possible the same for apprenticeship and non-apprenticeship students in terms of probationary requirements
- 2) A ring-fenced time allocation of twenty per cent off-the-job training and three days to prepare for assessment
- 3) The integration of (2) into existing workload models
- 4) Provision of robust departmental mentoring
- 5) Processes in place to monitor (4) that meet the frequency of four times per year in a triad of student (colleague), employer (department), provider (e.g., the academic development unit)
- 6) An apprenticeship agreement and commitment statement between employer and employee explaining how they will be

supported through the academic apprenticeship, aligned with the general contract and offer letter that sets out conditions of employment with regard to gaining a teaching qualification

- 7) Depending upon the design of the PGCert, it may be a challenge to incentivise apprentices to complete the EPA (see Figure 1 for an approach)
- 8) Incentivising staff to gain level-2 Functional Skills.

### Conclusion

The substantive challenge for developing an Academic Professional Apprenticeship is not one for academic developers or the units in which they work. Adaptations to typical existing PGCerts are entirely manageable. In fact, there are some potential benefits such as the professional conversation and the increased emphasis on mentoring arrangements. In terms of operationalising an apprenticeship through a PGCert, there will be extra work around preparation for the EPA, mentoring arrangements (robust

personal tutoring on a PGCert), and maintaining records to track that each apprentice's progress is in a timely manner.

The most significant challenges that institutions face are largely in the purview of human resources, but the design of apprenticeships by academic developers can help significantly. For example, a design that has a common route for apprentices and non-apprentices reduces complexity around any incentive schemes and equity of experience and having different contracts with employees.

A second set of challenges is around workload models. Some institutions have formal arrangements in place for new members of staff to undertake a PGCert, many do not. To study on a PGCert, a student commits to 600 hours of learning, which requires roughly a day a week over 24 months; somehow institutional workload models would need to capture this or else the time required for off-the-job training will be prohibitive.

It will be interesting to watch which institutions, if any, break cover first to provide apprenticeships for their own staff and external applicants and to offer themselves as an EPAO.

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# Just ask – Locating effective teaching practice

**Lydia Arnold** and **Steve Barnett**, Harper Adams University

**As a small educational development team, we were recently reflecting on the question of 'what practice should we share and prioritise in our staff development programme?' This may appear to be a routine dilemma in the work of developers and staff trainers, but when brought into focus, this issue seemed to take on new complexity. Grappling with this question led to a remarkably simple, but quite illuminating, student engagement event to help us to understand the types of approaches that we might usefully select. This paper outlines the process that we used to locate teaching practices to inform staff development; it summarises what we learned about the practices that students value; and, it describes a personal journey of realisation about the identity, role, reach and relationships of an educational developer in a small institution.**

## That'll never work! Bias beware

Literature provides a key source of information to inform choices about what should be shared and advocated, and equally what should not be. Recently the detailed and hugely insightful 'What Works?' report (Thomas *et al.*, 2017) gave a clear outline of interventions and approaches that had proved effective in supporting student success. As we read this report some of the approaches resonated as potentially workable within our own context, while other ideas made us recoil and declare 'not now or ever!' This instinctive pull towards one or another approach is often rooted in experience of institutional context and culture, and professional bias.

Understanding institutional culture can both help and hinder the location of practice that is right for sharing. Knowing the culture can encourage 'good fit' to locate aspects that have a likelihood of success, but perhaps stiflingly we can find ourselves reinforcing the status quo and limiting creative disruption. Working to 'a' perception of institutional culture fails to recognise the place of multiple cultures co-existing. In practice, by example, as a campus-based university with a strong face-to-face culture, we may (and have) rejected

virtual pedagogies. Our own perception of culture shapes the priority given to different practices. Standing back, we need to be careful of our own biases about what will or will not succeed within our own institution.

## Privileging practice within the university

As well as seeking practices to import, we actively seek out recommendations for practices to share from within the university's own staff. To inform this we try to stay alert to innovative and well-regarded approaches, we use course data and student feedback, and we respond to university committees which identify areas which need to be addressed. We use a pragmatic combination of being proactive and reactive in forming the staff development agenda. As we reflected on our approaches we observed three specific difficulties:

- There is a degree of reliance on hearing about practices to share. We must concede (reluctantly!), that as networked as we are, we have blind spots. People and practices that, for a whole host of reasons, don't enter our line of sight. We risk bringing unconscious bias into our programme through limitations of our insights
- Some voices in the staff community are louder than others and as such the ideas of, and dissemination by, these individuals can perhaps have the unintended side effect of inducing reticence in other colleagues to share their practice as it is 'not on the same scale' or 'well, it's not very exciting'. Overcoming such modesty is important to ensure that all forms of practice are reliably captured
- There can be a normalisation of the novel. As we are involved in regularly locating innovative practices our sense of what it may be useful to share can become inflated. We find the standard at which we deem something as valuable to share ever more demanding. The creep of expectations can mean that we miss the opportunity to share effective and illuminating practices.

We decided that the best starting point to help locate practices to share was to consult students directly and refresh our conception of ‘what works?’ in our context.

### Student consultation

We routinely meet with student representatives to understand current issues, receive feedback on institutional development proposals and to hear suggestions for enhancement work. This opportunity to engage with students is enormously valuable, but it is often a reactive agenda driven by concern. On this occasion, we deliberately wanted to set up a conversation of a different type. We simply asked ‘What works, to bring about learning, success and a positive experience?’

We met with 40 students in two one-hour sessions. Armed with plenty of sticky notes, we posed the question and then left the students, who were drawn from all course areas and years, to hold table discussions. We encouraged them to write down their findings and to cite individual staff names and module codes to then help us go and find out more after the meeting. Students were overwhelmingly positive and there was a distinctive buzz in the room as they shared.

### Findings

Following the two events we categorised the responses of similar type, resulting in a list of 16 categories. On second reading some of these groupings were overlapping, and so were combined. The final result was 12 types of practices that our students especially valued. These categories were given brief descriptive labels and collated into a graphic (Figure 1). The detail of each point is then discussed.

### Resources given in advance

Students identified that they valued being able to access resources ahead of classes to aid preparation. This was not an explicit endorsement of a flipped classroom, more simply students valued the opportunity to print or access resources in advance of class to aid note-taking and to see what content lay ahead (familiarisation). It was unclear whether this related to getting acquainted with terminology, making active and informed choices about attendance or attention, or whether students had specific pre-class study patterns. One practice that was seen as especially helpful was the creation of course packs, where all information (e.g. slides, glossary, worksheets, and case study material) is offered as a single resource at the start of a module.

### Guest speakers

Students valued the inclusion of guest speakers, specifically those who held professional insights that helped them to connect to the real world. Invited speakers were seen to add ‘variety’ and new perspectives. They peaked interest and brought content to life. This is especially relevant within our curriculum where units of study are usually ‘long and thin’, delivered across the whole academic year rather than on a semester model. The need for variety appeared to centre not on the rejection of course tutors (thankfully!) but more of a recognition that new and multiple voices are beneficial, motivating and insightful.

### Quizzes

We were especially pleased to see ‘quizzes’ emerging as a positive component of the teaching and support mix, after

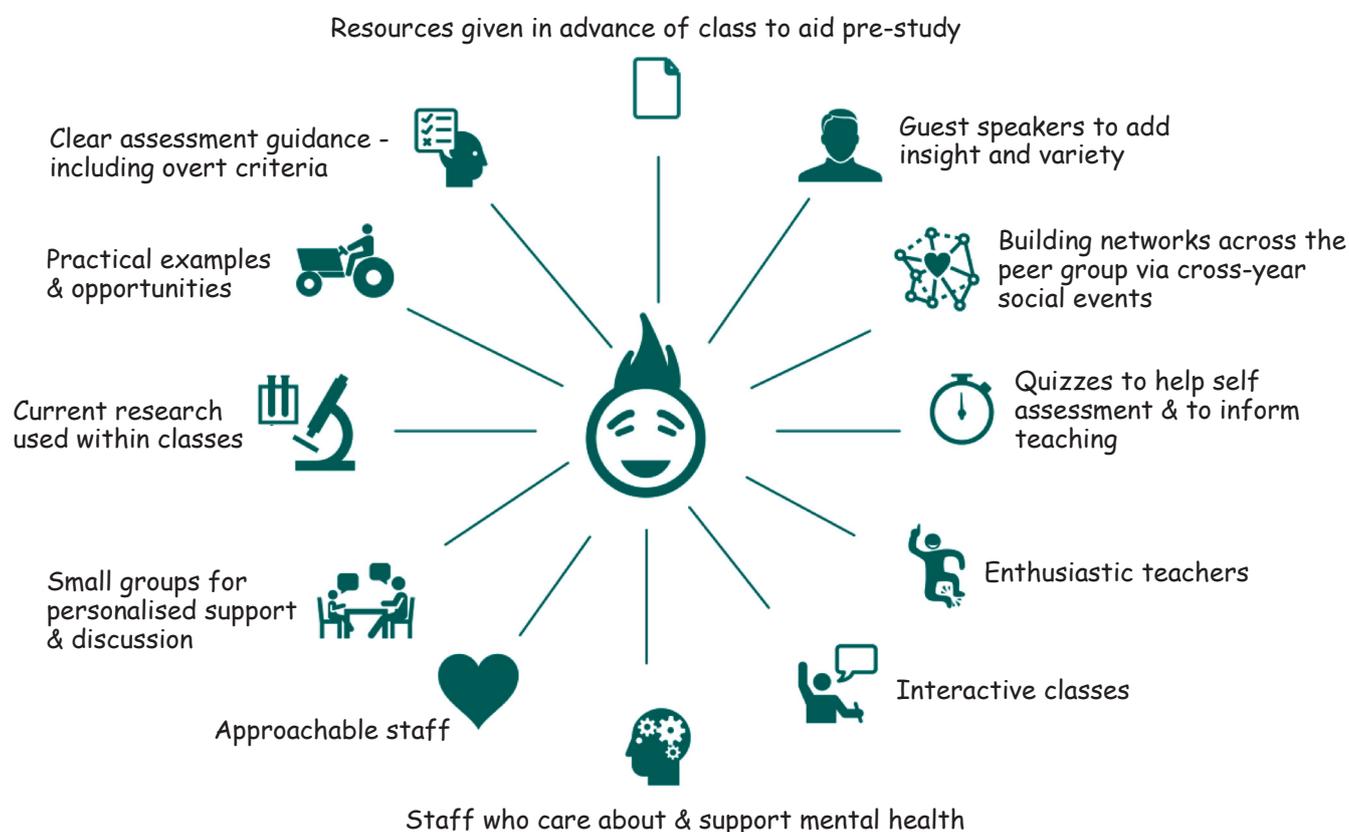


Figure 1 A summary of the student view of effective teaching and support at Harper Adams University

we held our own concerns about whether there is such a phenomenon as quiz fatigue. It seems not! Perhaps in part because of the variety of ways that these quizzes are integrated into learning. Quiz tools such as Kahoot and Mentimeter were cited for their use in the following ways:

- Checking understanding in a lecture and if students are not confident in their knowledge the tutor adapts and revisits the topic in class
- Promoting immediate and ongoing engagement with lecture material with post-class quizzes to reduce the pressure of learning at the point of final assessment
- Working as revision aids to help self-diagnosis of areas for further study
- Providing variety within the context of a class to maintain engagement
- Enabling the class to express views through opinion-based quizzes on a complex or controversial case study or topic to inform a class discussion.

We observed that students appeared to appreciate the care given by tutors undertaking these practices. The quiz itself was valued, but so was the thoughtfulness and care from the tutors as they thoughtfully administered the quiz and then attentively responded to the results to enhance teaching.

### Networks between peer groups

The benefit of inter-cohort peer interaction is well charted in literature through such processes as formal mentoring programmes (see, for example, Collings *et al.*, 2016). We do not have such a mechanism in place, but the benefits of peer group interaction came through in other ways at Harper Adams University. Our students noted the positive involvement of final year students in preparing students for work placements by providing briefings and first-hand insights; the sharing of experience demystified the placement process. They reported the particular benefits of tutor-organised opportunities for informal peer interaction and network building. This occurred through course-level social events, and within the field trip context. Students in earlier years also enjoyed the opportunity to see the research of final year dissertation students, via exhibition events. Finally, the campus ‘community’ of the university appeared to provide a supportive network where ‘everyone knows each other and all help one another’.

### Enthusiastic teachers

It seems enthusiasm is contagious and students absolutely value tutors and professional services staff who are passionate and invested. Unsurprising, perhaps. We did recognise in the discussion, though, that clearly there are many ways to show enthusiasm and it is not only about appearing as a bouncy, energetic individual with great physical presence; students recognised the passion of those who updated resources to fit the group’s interests, those who ensure classes are varied and well planned, and those who have a quiet confidence and deep knowledge of their subject. This is all good news, because in our experience new lecturers can struggle with locating their teaching persona or style; they sometimes question how they can gain greater presence, and be louder and bolder than they feel comfortable being, in the belief

that this is how enthusiasm is perceived. It seems instead that genuine enthusiasm is recognised in its many forms.

### Caring about mental health

It was seen as especially positive when staff care about mental health and are able to offer support. It is clear that the two aspects students valued were an empathetic attitude from lecturers and a good knowledge of where students can go for help, so that they can be signposted to specialist services. The voices we heard did not expect staff to all be mental health experts, but they valued kindness and a genuine interest in their well-being.

### Practical examples and opportunities

Students clearly recognised the advantages of practical classes, noting their role in helping develop an understanding of theory and in developing skills that will be needed after graduation. These classes also bring intrinsic enjoyment brought from *doing*. In the Harper Adams University curriculum there are many opportunities for practical application, given the nature of the disciplines that we support (these include agriculture, engineering, land management, business and agri-food, applied biology, veterinary nursing, geography, and food sciences). Practical classes take so many different forms, from field walks, to lab sessions, and from design and build challenges through to taste-testing and sensory analysis.

As well as actual practical classes, students resoundingly valued the real-world experiences of their lecturers. They found it helpful when staff taught using anecdotes from practice and examples from different sectors of industry than the one under direct consideration. Students gave a sense that they respected, and connected to, the insights from practice.

Students recognised that practical work is not always possible and so they valued videos as a substitute. Again these were valued for bringing theory to life, and for providing insights to the real world. They also provide variety in the teaching mix which is helpful for maintaining attention. The videos described varied from existing clips selected and used in class through to customised video creations (like a *virtual field trip*) used for very specific purposes.

### Small groups

Small groups were valued because they allow more variety and discussion. They provide a forum to clarify misunderstandings from other classes and to actively make sense of content. Students themselves recognised that they may need only a limited amount of time in a small group to achieve significant benefits.

### Current research

The inclusion of up-to-date research in classes was valued as inherently interesting to students. It was also seen as a further signal of an attentive and engaged tutor. It gave students a form of immediate usable knowledge which can be used in professional work; this is especially relevant in our context as all undergraduates proceed to placement

where they need to apply their learning. While literature describes the benefit of lecturers modelling research to assist students in turn become researchers, this was not evident in the voices of students on this occasion.

### Assessment clarity

Students reported the usefulness of having clear and supported approaches to assessment. They noted great value in:

- Having a clear task and clear criteria which are explained and discussed
- Using a tailored assessment criteria rubric
- Opportunities to practise and gain feedback on examination questions
- Using assessment exemplars to show what good and weaker performance looks like
- Clear communication from lecturers around the expectations of assessment
- Responsiveness to requests for assistance in relation to assessment.

They found these points especially helpful in limiting anxiety around assessment and clarifying the requirements of the task. All of these approaches are held up in literature as being effective for students, so it is heartening that students notice and appreciate these aspects when they are indeed present in their everyday experience.

### Interactive classes

Students widely cited the value of interactive classes which used a variety of methods including: case studies, discussion, interactive quizzes, debates, engagement with artefacts related to the class, competitions, demonstrations, and sharing stories. Alongside this variety there was a sense that students still valued the form of the lecture; it has not lost its appeal despite the move towards interactive methods. But where lectures are used students clearly value them for making the complex simple, signposting out to other activities and providing an event (sometimes with humour, sometimes with props, sometimes with stories from practice and sometimes with research – but always with ‘something’ which adds value).

### Approachable staff

The strongest theme of all was around the approachability of staff. Students valued formal steps such as open-door policies and swift replies to emails, but they also valued a friendly environment where they are encouraged, where staff appear to do their best to help and where relationships are supportive. It’s difficult to locate what approachability means in practice – but it has been associated with support for specific situations of difficulty, feeling that staff genuinely want to help and a shared purpose amongst staff and students in achieving positive outcomes for all students.

### Using this learning

This work has been helpful in providing instant insight into what our students recognise as effective practice. It will now be used as a discussion prompt within our Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Supporting Learning in HE, and

more widely. Colleagues who have already encountered the graphic have used it as a self-reflective tool, asking questions such as ‘are we doing enough of these things across our course area?’ It is important to remember in future discussions of this type that this work focused on the activity of those supporting learning; it did not ask what the student might do in the learning partnership. Perhaps there is a parallel piece of work to do to explore what actions and dispositions students themselves see as important to ensure their own success and positive experience.

The exercise has provided us with a strong student-centred rationale for the selection of forthcoming professional development. The graphic itself has provided inspiration for a specific staff development session with a ‘speed’ sharing showcase related to each of the strands of practice, with a follow-up world café opportunity to find out more about the approaches that resonate most.

This work has helped us to locate practices which may be simple, but which are highly valued by our students. It has tempered our pursuit of the novel in favour of a pursuit of the impactful and valued. It has opened our eyes to some of our own assumptions – for example, our suspicion of quiz fatigue was ill-founded, and we now understand that quizzes are about attentiveness as much as the process of learning. It has also highlighted that the traditional lecture format still has much to commend it (beyond being an efficient method of delivery), providing it avoids being an unimaginative download of facts and figures. Finally, though we have long considered that small-group teaching is highly effective and desirable, it is also tinged with anxiety that students may feel ‘cheated’ of contact. It was therefore particularly reassuring that our students recognised the value of quality over quantity.

By asking for detail from students we have been able to make contact with individuals about their practice and ask them to share their work at future events. This is bringing new and experienced colleagues together. It is reconnecting us with a wider pool of peers. When approaching colleagues to find out more and invite them to ‘share their magic’, we were almost universally met with ‘I don’t do anything special’. This exercise has been revealing in finding excellence amongst humility. Asking for volunteers to share would never have located these individuals or their work.

### Reflections

Although using current students to identify good (or exemplary) practice is hardly innovative, the use of the group format generated a level of feedback that was beyond our expectations. As an institution, we routinely invite students to complete module- and course-based surveys on an annual basis, which currently enjoy good response rates from our students. However, the two 60-minute sessions that we ran provided a genuinely rich source of information, which will help to inform our staff development activities over the next 12 months.

More than ever, the higher education sector is required to address a range of performance metrics, from those of the

NSS through to TEF, and from the requirements of the Office for Students to the demands of working with Longitudinal Educational Outcomes. In supporting this blizzard of information and associated response, it remains vital that we maintain a strong, two-way dialogue with our key partners – students themselves.

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# The distributed educational development team

**Colin Heron, Sue Horder, Jane Richardson and Claire Taylor**, Wrexham Glyndŵr University

In 2014, the central educational development unit at Wrexham Glyndŵr University was closed. This was not a reflection of the work done by the unit, which had supported the enhancement of teaching quality in a number of ways, rather the unit became a casualty of the need to streamline costs across the organisation. Two years later, under new University leadership we found ourselves reflecting upon how to reinvigorate support for educational development in the context of ever-increasing demands for teaching excellence and quality enhancement. One option may have been to re-establish the centralised educational development unit, but rather the opportunity was taken to approach things differently and new distributed arrangements for academic development were established from September 2016.

The new arrangements comprised a core Academic Development Team (four individuals each with substantive roles for learning and teaching in the Academic Schools, plus the Deputy Vice-Chancellor), supported from September 2017 by a new network of Academic Development Team Associates. This initiative has been supporting major organisational change in learning and teaching through embedding a transformational (rather than transactional) leadership network

across the organisation, using the principles of Kotter's (2014) dual operating system approach. Kotter advocates a move away from the traditional regulated hierarchy of management and a move to using an agile and innovative network made of volunteers organised in small project teams who are fully empowered within their project focus. The agile network gets on with innovative change projects, operating alongside the traditional management structure that ensures that day-to-day 'business as usual' happens. Here, we outline our approach and offer some reflections upon how it is going so far.

## A different approach

Traditional Educational Development Units (EDUs) normally sit as a central function within a university and generally employ academic developers to provide continuing professional development opportunities and a range of accredited programmes for staff across the university who teach and support students. This may be oversimplifying their role but a key issue remains that the function may be perceived to be remote from those who are 'doing' the learning and teaching.

The distributed model at Wrexham Glyndŵr University deliberately eschews the idea of a distinct and remote unit. Our approach is as follows:

- A senior member of each of our four Schools has overall responsibility for learning and teaching enhancement, in addition to programme and people management responsibilities and teaching load
- They are part of the core Academic Development Team (ADT) along with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor who assumes an equal role as team member
- Each person within the ADT is given responsibility for a range of university-wide projects which this year has included: Transforming Assessment and Feedback, Technology Enhanced Learning, HEA Fellowship Applications, and Peer Observation of Teaching
- In addition, a university-wide network of ADT Associates contribute to different project streams (linked to our Strategy for Supporting Student Learning and Achievement), thereby sharing cross-disciplinary practices.

The approach is one that supports the move from a context of power to one of influence espoused by Jones *et al.* (2014a) and a process that supports a culture of autonomy. The Academic Development Team (ADT) have a shared purpose and vision but also have the ability to look at school-specific development opportunities alongside projects that are institution-wide. Through a distributed approach,

a greater understanding of the current issues within each School can be gained, enabling development activities to be customised within Schools to maximise the effectiveness of those development opportunities for improving learning and teaching and the student experience. In this way, a sense of shared purpose and collaborative working is developed, motivating staff to achieve much more impact which goes beyond that which may be achieved within the context of a hierarchically controlled approach from senior management (Bolden et al., 2009).

This concept of a distributed approach recognises that leadership of activities can be widely shared across an organisation and the recent addition of ADT Associates within each School, as well as a range of staff from professional support services, underlines this. We all have differing perspectives of what good teaching consists of; the use of a distributed approach therefore supports staff to engage critically with a range of different pedagogical perspectives and across disciplinary boundaries.

**Transformational not transactional**

The expansion of the ADT to include Associates was a key strategy to accelerate the adoption and urgency for innovation, aligned to Kotter’s theory of a guiding coalition who would champion change in a distributed network (Kotter, 2014). The recruitment process for the Associate roles requested volunteers who would be prepared to take on institutional roles on projects that would be in addition to their usual work. This was a new approach to the usual single-task and group-based mechanisms for change that would generally involve the appointments of small numbers of managers who would be tasked with overseeing change as a function of their role. Kotter argues that this can be counterproductive and that it is more productive to appoint people who have a ‘want to’ rather than a ‘have to’ philosophy, in other words, volunteers. The volunteering aspect was seen as essential in order to create large numbers of energised change agents amongst the distributed

network, who would champion change and communicate the work effectively and quickly amongst peer networks. This is an extension of earlier work on the diffusion of innovations that examined the influence and roles of adopter types with regards to the success of the adoption of new ideas and paradigms (Rogers, 2003). It is argued by Rogers that innovators and early adopters are essential to the successful adoption of change as they act as positive change agents that accelerate the adoption process.

When the positions were advertised, the work of the ADT had already gained momentum and the direction and responsibilities for the core team members were well established. This resulted in the work of the group becoming visible across the University and raised the profile of the ADT across the Schools. The application process consisted of an expression of interest that would allow selection to be based upon evidence of a commitment to learning and teaching and being willing to ‘go the extra mile’.

The guidance for the roles included phrases that were designed to appeal to the aspiration and motivation of applicants, listing opportunities such as ‘influence and drive change’ and ‘network cross-institutionally’. To supplement the aspirations, key personal skills were also required of the applicants including ‘commitment’, ‘the ability to problem solve’, ‘divergent thinking’, all mapping directly to the head and heart principle of an Accelerate programme by demonstrating a passion for the work.

The response to the expression of interest call was extremely positive. It is worth noting that Kotter (2014) suggests that just 5-10% of an employee population is all that is needed for the network to function; we have achieved an engagement level of just over 10% of academic staff, plus colleagues from professional support services. In total, 22 Associates were recruited, with representation across the Schools and professional services. The expression of interest forms were then utilised to develop

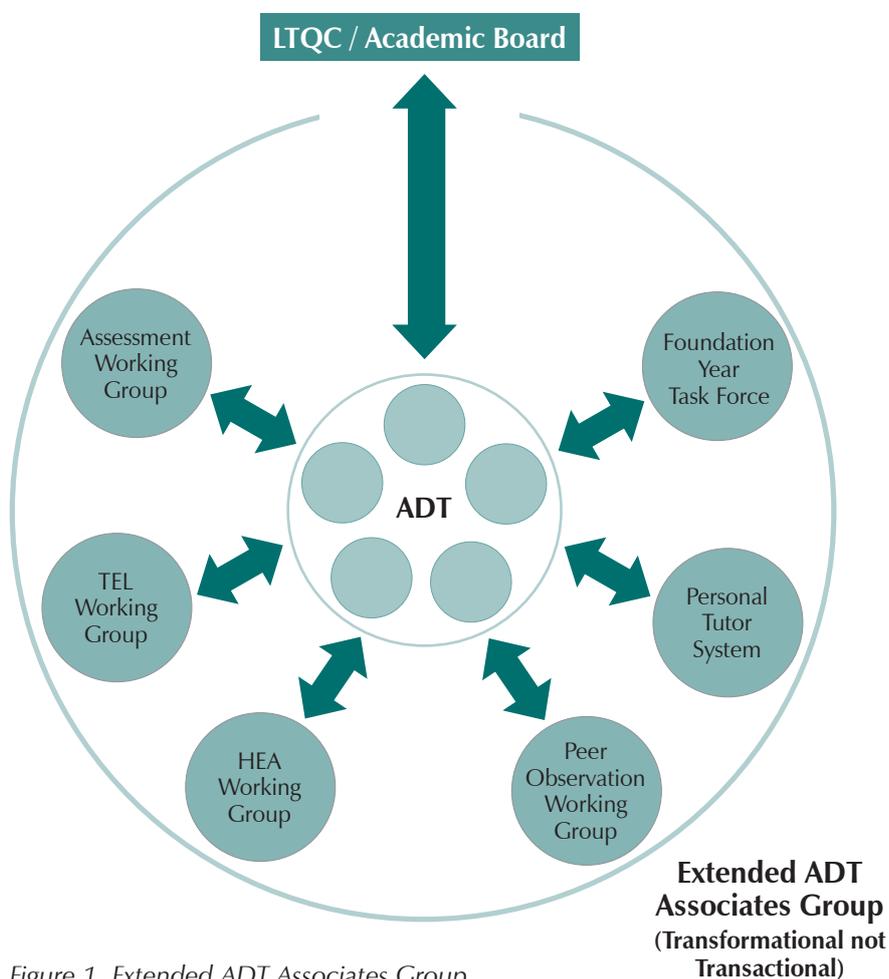


Figure 1 Extended ADT Associates Group

an understanding of the areas that the Associates would like to be aligned to. Six individual strands of activity were created that would champion specific areas of interest to the ADT. Each of the strands was allocated an ADT core member to lead and each of the Associates was included in one or more of the working teams. The resulting structure that was established is represented in Figure 1.

The distributed network approach, embracing Kotter's 'Accelerate' principles, has begun to evidence positive early results in a number of the strands of ADT activity. General pedagogy has benefited from the cross-institutional approach, creating more coherent communication of good practice as evidenced in the success of the 'Learning Lunch' initiative (a monthly in-house learning and teaching community of practice event open to all). Although this is not a specific strand of interest to the ADT, it has become a catalyst for communication between the distributed network of ADT and Associates. Sessions have focused upon topics derived from the key strands of activity, such as Technology

activity. This has resulted in a thorough appraisal of Assessment and Feedback practice across the University and is leading to a unification of procedures and protocol.

### Enablers and barriers

The existence of a distributed model of leadership for educational development does not in itself guarantee success (Jones *et al.* 2014b). As with another form of organisational change, the outcomes are dependent on a range of factors which influence implementation and achievement of objectives. The previous section of this paper identified that the initial distributed leadership model within the University was limited to a small number (4) of key teaching and learning leads within each of the Schools. Working with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, they were recognised as having both the responsibility and authority in relation to teaching and learning. The location of their position in the University structure ensured awareness of the University's strategic aims as well as being part of the decision-making process as members of the University's key policy-making committees. To this extent the core

The resulting context is that there is a core ADT made up of staff with formal leadership recognition working with Associates who, whilst not formally recognised as leaders in the traditional/authoritative sense (Bryman, 2004), are nevertheless taking a lead in evaluating existing practice, developing policies and seeking to influence their peers, who in some cases will be their line managers or more senior academics. So, what emerges is a complex set of arrangements which without the right level of support could fail to realise the wider University objectives, or indeed the aims of the distributed leadership approach.

The challenge for the University, having recognised the complexity of arrangements, is to ensure that it sets the conditions to enable the groups to be agents of change whilst seeking to understand and reduce the barriers to effectiveness. The question then is, to what extent are current formal processes and structures enabling individuals and what are the perceived barriers?

An initial analysis suggests that the key enablers currently engaged are:

- The University has a clearly articulated Strategy for Supporting Student Learning and Achievement (SSSLA) which is aligned to the University's Strategic Plan. The SSSLA sets out key priority aims and actions for a three-year period
- The action plans arising from the SSSLA align the role of the Academic Development Team with the University Strategic Plan
- There is visible leadership at senior level which connects, sustains and reinforces the connection between the members of the University and the vision. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor launched the vision at the staff conference, she champions learning lunches and has regular meetings with the Associates. Twice-yearly staff conferences focus on the key priorities in the SSSLA
- Core members of the ADT are empowered to act and this is further supported by having formally recognised leadership roles (as Associate Heads of School or equivalent) within the University

## 'Further evidence of early success is the rate of adoption for TEL activity'

Enhanced Learning (TEL), Assessment and Feedback and Higher Education Academy Fellowship applications. Importantly, cross-institutional collaboration is being evidenced that was not attainable before the Associate ADT initiative.

Further evidence of early success is the rate of adoption for TEL activity. This has resulted in a rapid rise in the use of advanced features of the VLE. The reason for this success is that professional services in TEL support are now Associate members allocated to the TEL strand of activity. The result of this is faster deployment of ideas due to the availability of a conduit to key academic structures such as the Learning and Teaching Quality Committee (LTQC) and Academic Board. Similar evidence is also being noted within the Assessment strand of

ADT members were engaged and enabled.

The extension of the project to include Academic Development Team Associates has resulted in the appointment of a multiplicity of individuals from across the University who are at very different stages in their academic/operational career, have varying degrees of responsibility within the University and who exhibit cultural differences in relation to approaches to teaching and learning. The bond that they do share is a stated desire to contribute to enhancing the student experience and to act as agents of change. The initiation of a number of projects already referred to has also resulted in the inclusion of other colleagues, including student union representatives, specialist operational staff and students.

structure. Each one has taken responsibility for individual projects and each project aligns to the SSSLA

- The distributed project groups include a range of participants at all levels across the University and include operational, academic and specialist staff as well as a growing number of students
- The profile of the Academic Development Team and Associates is confirmed and reinforced at termly Academic Forums (all-staff briefings from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor) and at development events such as monthly learning lunches and staff conferences
- There is alignment between project groups and the formal decision-making processes. The outcomes of project groups are reported to the Learning and Teaching Quality Committee (LTQC) and are leading on developing policy options for decision by LTQC
- A participative process and networking opportunities have been facilitated through project work, learning lunches, and staff conferences.

The perceived barriers are all related to the fact that our approach is predicated on harnessing an army of volunteers. This brings with it risks which, if not mitigated, could see

the dual operating system become unworkable. Therefore, we have to:

- Recognise potential conflict in relation to role ambiguity and the need to balance the leadership and influencing role with teaching and/or other roles
- Recognise the time commitment (notionally recognised through our Work Allocation Model for academic staff) and other resources needed to sustain the approach
- Consider how to motivate and sustain interest through reward mechanisms (this could include individual as well as collaborative rewards) whilst not undermining the voluntary aspect of the approach
- Build in more opportunities for reflection to ensure Associates feel engaged in the process and smartly evidence the impact of changes and practices
- Not take for granted the contribution to policy development and ensure we find ways to celebrate success
- Recognise the interconnectedness of activities and outcomes in relation to projects being undertaken.

Going forwards, we have plans to conduct a more in-depth evaluation of our approach, using the benchmarking framework developed by Jones *et al.* (2014b). This evaluation evidence

will provide a further tool for other universities who may be considering implementing what we believe is an innovative and agile approach to educational development.

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# The positive impact of a University Fellowship on Teaching and Learning

**John Bostock**, Edge Hill University

## Introduction

For over a decade, Edge Hill University (EHU) has operated an Institutional Teaching and Learning Fellowship which, since 2012, I have formally co-ordinated. Initially an opportunity to research and showcase best practice based on an individual's research, it has evolved into something much more intricate and complex. It has been notoriously difficult to articulate what I do in terms of co-ordinating the Fellowship and particularly hard to say what the Fellows actually do. Once the conversation with colleagues starts, it soon ends with glazed looks and a breakdown of language from meaningful dialogue to reactions such as 'oh', 'gosh' and 'really'? In order

to identify what I do, how I do it and why, I have looked to some historical theories on human motivation, diagrammatically devised a conceptual overview (see Figure 1) and arrived at interesting conclusions, recommendations and next steps.

## The Fellowship

The Institutional Teaching and Learning Fellowship is, in effect, a team of 52 colleagues who work in various roles in academic and service areas and who promote and champion teaching and learning (T&L). I co-ordinate this Fellowship actively bringing the team together throughout each academic year to regularly share experiences – an

important focal point for developing staff within and beyond the Fellowship (Wenger, E. *et al.*, 2002). I wish to emphasise that I ‘co-ordinate’ rather than ‘manage’.

This has increased engagement across the university in dialogue around Teaching and Learning, and has placed renewed emphasis on the developmental, supportive and transparent process, pivotal in encouraging staff to articulate and reflect deeply on their professional activity – now realised in three aspects (Hogan, 2000) and represented in Figure 1:

- All Fellows contribute to the CLT Staff Development Series by disseminating aspects of their work aligned to University T&L Priorities. Colleagues are able to take away practical ideas to share with staff and apply to their own teaching
- All Fellows act as Internal Reviewers and Mentors for the EHU CPD Scheme (UKPSF) for recognition of HEA Fellowships
- All Fellows act as Personal and Academic Tutors (PATs) for the Post-Graduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education (PGCTHE).

This means that Fellows are instrumental in supporting three distinct yet interconnected University mechanisms for maintaining quality T&L. But:

- 1) How is this evidenced?
- 2) How has this influenced collaboration and teamwork?
- 3) How can we show impact? (HEA, 2016)

I recently presented this concept map at the SEDA Annual Conference (2017) and posed the three questions in

order to further increase scrutiny and discussion of whether the Fellowship is indeed a ‘team’ or just a collection of individuals pursuing their own agenda. It will be useful, therefore, to reflect on and discuss how our collaborative infrastructure has influenced both the quality T&L and collaboration/teamwork across the university. After all, the overarching priority for the Fellowship is to support colleagues who in turn influence students’ development of their intellectual, practical and creative potential. So an overview of the strategic aims of the Fellowship will be beneficial.

The Fellowship is designed to:

- Enhance learning of students by the dissemination of good practice across the university
- Recognise and support excellence in teaching for learning and learning support activity
- Strengthen the implementation of the University Teaching and Learning Strategy.

Thus it provides an opportunity to achieve personal and professional development and to share good practice and, ideally, to contribute within a vibrant community to sharing practical examples that work. This includes contribution to the future direction of T&L strategies and to the expanding base of the scholarship of T&L at the university. It is expected that Fellows demonstrate ongoing commitment to T&L development within the context of university priorities. This is coupled with taking responsibility related to teaching and learning leadership within their subject, faculty, or service area and at university level.

In terms of articulating any answers to the three questions above, it might be best to start with those related to evidence and impact.

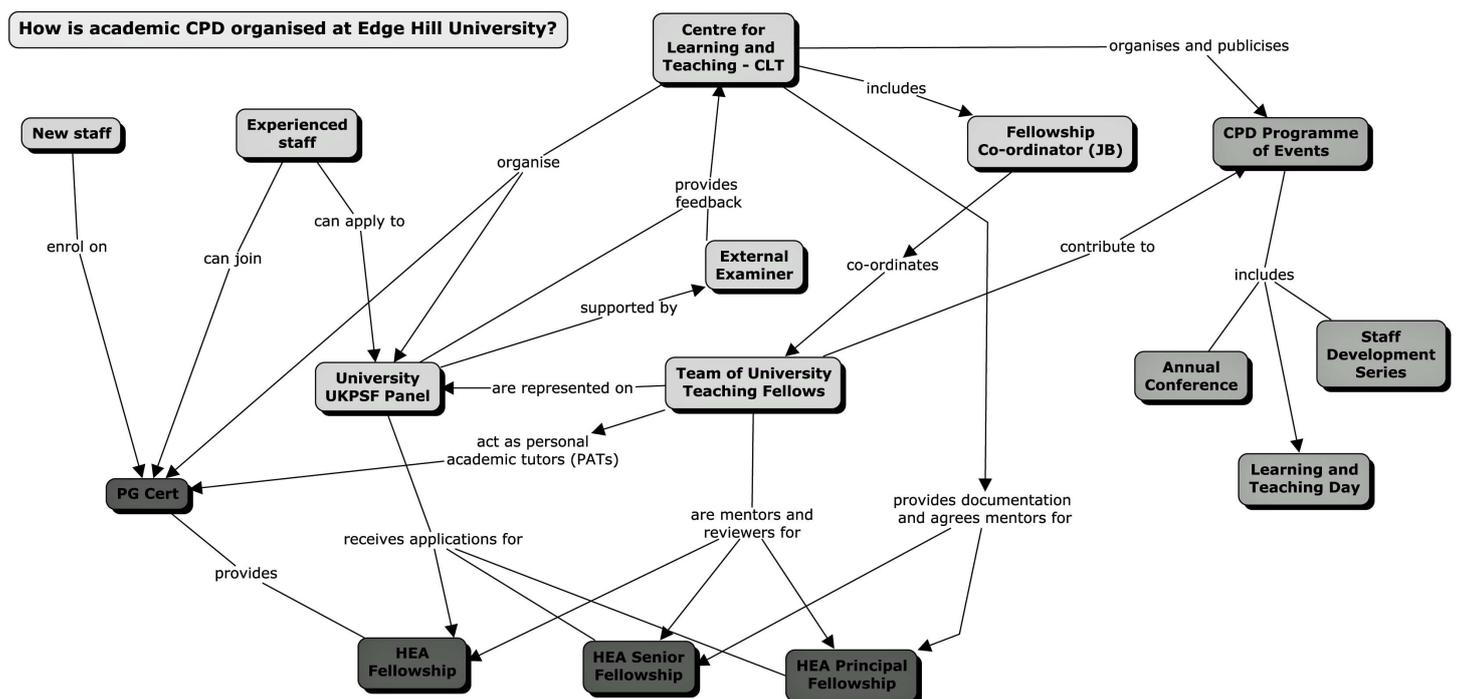


Figure 1 Concept map

What would be happening *without* the Fellowship?:

- No CLT/SOLSTICE conference: EHU holds an Annual International CLT/SOLSTICE Conference at which all the Fellows either present their work or chair. They are also awarded a certificate of recognition
- No CPD Staff Development Series: All 52 Fellows contribute to the CLT Staff Development Series by disseminating aspects of their work to other colleagues. This work is aligned to Institutional Teaching and Learning Priorities. Through this dissemination, colleagues are able to take away practical ideas around Teaching, Learning and Assessment to share with staff in their areas and to apply to their own teaching
- No Internal Reviewing (UKPSF): The Fellows act as Internal Reviewers and Mentors for the EHU CPD Scheme (UKPSF) for recognition of HEA Fellowships, and in many instances as Personal and Academic Tutors (PATs) who mentor and assess staff on the PGCTHE.

So clearly there is evidence of presence and impact, but how has the Fellowship influenced collaboration and teamwork? Why do they do it? Are there any motivational factors? It is important to stress that, although there is a rigorous procedure to decide on appointing Fellows, they are given neither time nor remuneration for their contributions. Described as institutional and cultural glue, it is a Fellowship that operates on goodwill, collegiality and passion – all traits that are intrinsic rather than extrinsic. Motivation is, therefore, very important.

### Motivation within the Fellowship

The requirement for effective teamwork and collaboration cannot be underestimated. If we assume that the most influential factors in motivating or demotivating staff are leadership and management, then motivation itself should be theorised and critically analysed. Indeed without acknowledging the theoretical basis, appropriate conclusions and effective strategies could not be drawn. Numerous theoretical models are available and there is no single answer to how one successfully motivates others, but collectively they may provide a framework to understand motivation and its relevance in teamwork and indeed the Fellowship:

*‘Of all the resources at the disposal of an organisation, it is only people who can grow and develop and be motivated to achieve certain desired ends.’*  
(Crawford et al., 1997, p. 88)

Motivation and its synonyms – incentive, determination, enthusiasm – go some way to help explain the existence of certain theoretical models to encourage effective participation and productivity at work. The quote above also infers a link between motivation in individuals and teams and the need to effectively and positively nurture and support it. Historically, there are many theories, four of which help define motivation, namely Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg’s Two Factor Theory, Vroom’s Expectancy Theory and Adams’ Equity Theory. A brief review of each will suffice

in order to also highlight experiences of co-ordinating the Fellowship.

### Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Generally represented as a pyramidal structure to demonstrate how needs in the base of the structure must be met before moving up in a staged progression through basic physical needs to self-actualisation (Bostock and Wood, 2012). Maslow theorised that a person could not recognise or pursue the next higher need in the hierarchy until the currently recognised need was satisfied. This makes the assumption that people/staff actually do know what they need and that they have already a great deal of self-awareness. Therefore individuals may be unsure of the goals they wish to pursue and can be very unsure of the goals of the organisation. Strategies based on the need of the organisation and not the individual must be harmonised.

### Herzberg’s Two Factor Theory

Basically Herzberg categorised two factors of motivation: intrinsic factors such as achievement and recognition and extrinsic, hygiene factors such as pay, conditions and status (Miner, 2005). In other words intrinsic motivators relate to the content or nature of the work and extrinsic ones to the context or environment. Hygiene factors may prevent demotivation but they do not motivate by themselves. The assumption is, therefore, that motivation is driven by work content and not the context, the latter being important but of not much consequence without the former. Yet I would argue that in terms of the Fellowship, the context and the environment are as conducive to positive motivation and co-ordination as the work itself. So what motivates or satisfies people at work is not the opposite of what demotivates or dissatisfies them. These are the distinct and separate factors or motivators proposed by Herzberg.

### Vroom’s Expectancy Theory

This theory is based on the assertion that effort will lead to good performance and then to rewards which may be positive or negative (Vroom, 1964). So motivation requires positive rewards. In essence the idea is that people are influenced by the ‘expected’ results of their actions but if the outcome is negative then motivation is low, but if positive then high. This theory acknowledges the importance of individual differences.

### Adams’ Equity Theory

Finally Adams’ theory is concerned primarily with the individual’s need for equity, thus where there is inequity, perceived or real, then motivation can be negatively affected. This could mean putting less effort into work when it is perceived that others may be better off *i.e.* financially or contractually.

### A synthesis?

The value of motivation should be of great importance to all those who manage people in organisations. There is no one single model or theory but an integrative model, which perhaps draws on the finer points of each, could help in providing a broad-based framework to apply to a given organisational context, in this instance the Fellowship:

- Maslow – Belonging and esteem are important
- Herzberg – Environment is important
- Vroom – Increased peer support, good conditions and sufficient resources are important
- Adams – Perceived differences in the treatment, status and reward of individuals are important.

There are of course downsides to the theories. For example, Maslow's hierarchy can be applied in its fullest sense to society in general, but when distinctly applied to individuals, the notions of self-actualisation, values and altruism are largely undefined or even ignored. Yet with Vroom's expectancy theory individuals are influenced by what they expect the impact of their actions to be, in turn emphasising the importance of environmental conditions for positive outcomes. Adams' theory asserts that motivation is influenced by the extent to which individuals feel they are being treated in comparison with others. Therefore in my co-ordination of the Fellowship, I have given considerable weighting to the physical and environmental factors. I believe I have created a continuous and interactive motivational model of coordination, where Fellows feel they are doing something worthwhile in the interests of staff, students and the university mission in general. They are personally respected for what they do, they take decisions and are recognised and valued.

So, it can be seen that the general principles and theories on motivation are, on certain levels and in certain aspects, interrelated. In terms of teamwork I have implemented an integrative model of co-ordination which encompasses an organisation with clear, effective goals (Vroom), combined with a positively perceived, supportive, collegial network/environment, and which gives impetus to Fellows to work toward and experience successful outcomes. Collegial affiliation and approval are strong motivators in positive, constructive environments where Fellows can compare and share abilities, opinions, ideas and resources (Adams' Equity Theory). Expectations and feedback from me are timely

expressed in order to meet individuals' needs and aspirations (Maslow), which, in turn, convey a sense of recognition and achievement (Herzberg).

## Recommendations and next steps

There are two main recommendations I would like to take forward from my nearly six years of co-ordinating the Fellowship. First, I think there is great scope in obtaining professional narratives from the Fellows in order to compare and contrast experiences, but moreover to identify common themes relating to the impact of their work. For example, what it is that makes for effective teaching in higher education, and for teaching that promotes a positive and inclusive experience for all students. This would ensure an opportunity to critically analyse and thematically evaluate against the definitions/metrics of the TEF. In light of TEF 3, it would provide an opportunity to explore Fellows' theoretical perspectives and insights drawn from their disciplines to illuminate practice. Notwithstanding the evidence of impact cited in this paper, it would be of great interest to see whether this and the emerging themes from the Fellows' narratives bear any semblance to those definitions or expectations.

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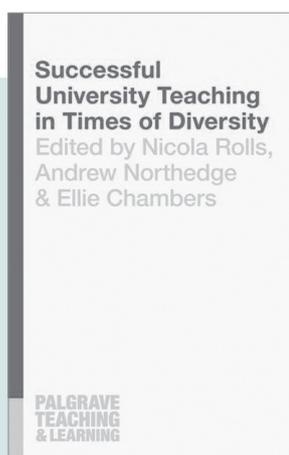
# Book Review

## Successful University Teaching in Times of Diversity

N. Rolls, A. Northedge, and E. Chambers.

2017

London: Palgrave.



A new book with Andy Northedge in the writing team is always worth getting excited about and this book, as the title suggests, spans an enormous amount of ground in its 246 pages. It focuses mainly on UK and Australian practice, but also includes valuable examples from US higher education. Nicola Rolls is from Charles Darwin University, Australia, and Andrew Northedge and Ellie Chambers are emeritus Professors from the UK Open University, which is evident from their characteristic thoroughness of coverage, a common feature

associated with Open University curriculum design and delivery. Readers may well remember Andy's work for the *Good Study Guide* (2nd ed., 2005) but also for his penetrating discussions in journals about developing students' academic literacy, and this enquiring approach is reflected in the present volume. Collectively, the contributors dive deep into the student experience and how to enhance it.

The scope and coverage of this book is extensive, and it is presented in five parts:

- 1) Teaching in today's universities: Learning and learners in modern times (Nicola Rolls and Andrew Northedge)
- 2) Principles of learning and teaching: Learning and teaching through language (Nicola Rolls and Peter Wignell)  
Learning and teaching through active engagement (Andrew Northedge)
- 3) Designing effective learning and teaching: Learning and teaching in the online era (Greg Shaw and Andrew Northedge)  
Creating a positive environment for learning (Linda Hodson)  
Designing assessment to promote learning (Andrew Northedge)  
Designing and presenting a student-friendly course (Ellie Chambers and Nicola Rolls)
- 4) Inclusive practice for diverse cohorts: Supporting demographic diversity (Frances Tolhurst and Kerin Bolton)

- Embedding literacy skills in academic teaching (David Rose)
- 5) Bringing it all together: Teaching that communicates and inspires (Andrew Northedge, Nicola Rolls and Ellie Chambers)

The preface aptly suggests that 'this book is for anyone with the ambition to teach well at degree level. These are times when university teaching is increasingly complex and demanding, with growing student diversity and relentless institutional and technological change, accompanied by intense pressure to deliver results'. Lorraine Stefani (from New Zealand), in the cover note, rightly says 'this book presents a truly inspirational approach to teaching and learning. It should be recommended reading for new and experienced teachers alike, along with those charged with providing developmental opportunities that promote and support teaching excellence'.

Naturally, the range of subjects addressed is so large that each chapter can only give a snapshot of each topic, and there are times when one is left hungering for more, but there are many unique features to be relished throughout the book. A theme running throughout is promoting active learning, and a discussion of the substantial benefits of helping students to develop appropriate capabilities to bring to bear on their studies. The relevant acquisition of language and writing skills is addressed sensitively and informatively in contexts of diversity. The authors recognise the extent to

which, for many new lecturers, the skills needed in successful teaching are often only fully developed over a period of time, and sometimes by a process of trial and error, and this book aims to support these journeys. A wide range of international literature is referenced chapter by chapter to illustrate viewpoints and principles of important aspects of assessment, learning and teaching.

Principles and practices of curriculum design are often illustrated in some depth, for example, using illustrations from documentation from Open University materials in the UK and generic Australian and US sources. Among the strengths of this book are the frequent and useful illustrative case studies exploring the problems and triumphs of particular students as they surmount the hurdles of degree-level education in the complex and often challenging contexts in which they learn, ranging from traditional campus-based programmes, to distance- and blended-learning contexts and online.

Readers of this book will naturally gravitate to particular chapters which deal with their own specialist concerns, depending on the contexts in which they work, the nature of the provision to which they contribute, and the disciplines they work in – but there are plenty of useful messages for everyone to be gained from this book.

**Phil Race** is an author and independent educational developer (<https://phil-race.co.uk/>).

## Editing experience with IETI – Everything you wanted to know but didn't like to ask

**Celia Popovic**, York University, Toronto, Canada

*Innovations in Education and Teaching International* (IETI) is a scholarly peer-reviewed journal published by Taylor and Francis. It is also the official journal for SEDA. I have been associated with IETI for more years than I care to recall. My

first contact with the journal was as a reader. While SEDA is, as we know, an association for educational developers, the journal has a wider remit than educational development. The clue is in the journal title; articles explore innovative

approaches to teaching and learning in higher education as well as approaches to educational development in support of such innovation.

It was at a SEDA conference that someone suggested I consider reviewing for IETI. At first, I was reluctant – what did I know about academic articles? However, as I discussed the idea with others, I realised that I had been reading academic journal articles for years, and in fact did know quite a bit about them. I knew when the article didn't make sense, when the title didn't seem to connect with the content or when the research seemed flimsy. Gradually, I began to realise that having completed a doctorate and engaged in educational development for many years, I did have a certain amount of knowledge, albeit in a specialised area. I plucked up my courage and offered my services.

Over the next couple of years, I reviewed five or six articles every 12 months. I enjoyed the process of identifying strengths and weaknesses in the writing, of suggesting improvements, and later seeing a reworked piece. I also enjoyed engaging in work that was interesting and relevant but outside my day to day job.

In 2014, I joined Gina Wisker on the editorial team. At that time Gina was the sole editor, ably assisted by the irreplaceable Liz Thomson as assistant editor. As with so many endeavours, it is the administrative backbone that keeps the journal running. In the case of IETI that is Liz.

In 2016, we decided to grow the team by recruiting a further four co-editors. This has helped enormously, not just by sharing the work, but by increasing the specialist knowledge in the editorial team.

Now, in 2018, I have decided that the time has come for me to step down as deputy editor and make way for someone with new ideas and more energy than me. This article is really an extended advertisement for the role!

### What is involved?

'So, what does a space ranger actually do?' asks Rex, the dinosaur in Toy Story. In the case of the deputy editor of IETI, the answer is longer and less enticing than Buzz's, but some readers may find it interesting.

To answer the question, I would like to take you through the life cycle of the typical journal article (Figure 1); as I do so, I shall indicate the roles of the editors.

When an article is sent to IETI the first person to see it is Liz, the assistant editor. She screens all articles and rejects any that are obviously out of scope for the journal. For anyone who has advertised a role for an educational developer this will be a familiar scene. Dozens of applications arrive from people who seem not to have read the advertisement, or in this case, the journal. We receive articles on areas that are out of scope, principally concerning school-based teaching. I suspect the title of the journal is the cause of much confusion for some authors. However, we occasionally receive articles that are so far out of scope it is beyond me to understand why they were sent. Fortunately, there are also many relevant and interesting articles too.

Each week Liz compiles a list of articles for the editors. Our role is to review the submissions, decide if they are suitable for consideration, and if so, identify two reviewers. We use ScholarOne which is a portal provided by the publisher. ScholarOne helps us to find likely reviewers as we can search using key terms. A couple of years ago, we asked all reviewers to update their key terms so that we use common language. In the past it was a nightmare trying to locate someone to review a paper on flipped classrooms, for example, when different folk might use any of a number of terms, such as IT, technology, computers, and so forth.

Liz contacts the reviewers to see if they are willing to assist. The following week's list may include articles still in need of a reviewer if the original person suggested has not accepted the invitation. Once the reviews are received, the editor decides on the next step. When the two reviewers agree, this is fairly simple; for example, both say 'reject' or both suggest 'minor amendments' (it is very rare for even one reviewer to accept a paper without any corrections at all, let alone both reviewers). The challenge comes when the reviewers have different opinions. When this occurs, I read the paper myself with the reviewers' comments in mind to see if I agree with either of them, and if necessary I suggest a third reviewer. Often the review process, of submitting a paper, getting comments and resubmitting with amendments, takes more than one iteration. This takes time. Occasionally a reviewer will not be able to review a second or third version of the paper. That situation can be very problematic, as a third reviewer at this stage may not agree with the comments of the original reviewer. This can lead to the author being asked to make completely new revisions having previously made significant changes in line with the original feedback.

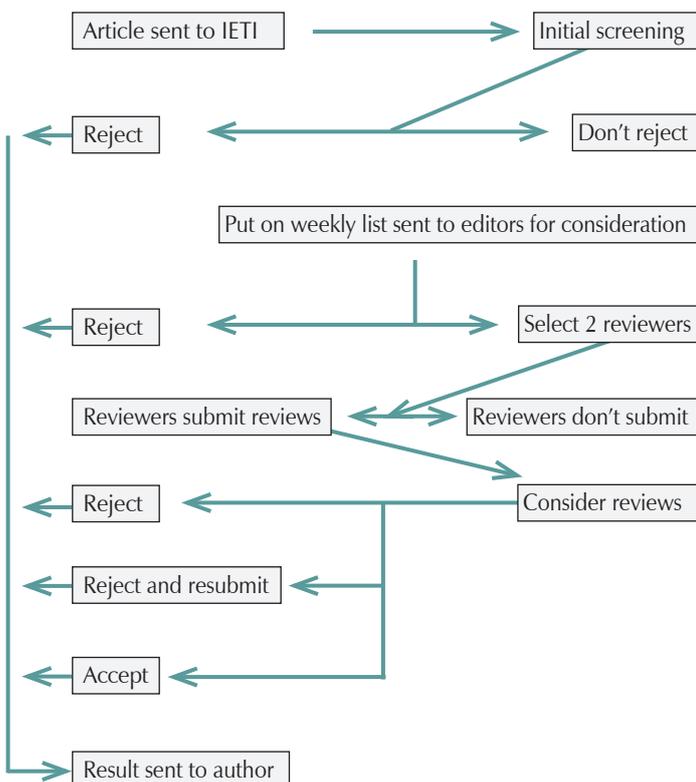


Figure 1 Life cycle of an article

Eventually a decision is reached. This may be to reject the paper, or a suggestion to reject and resubmit, but in the happiest cases the result is an acceptance.

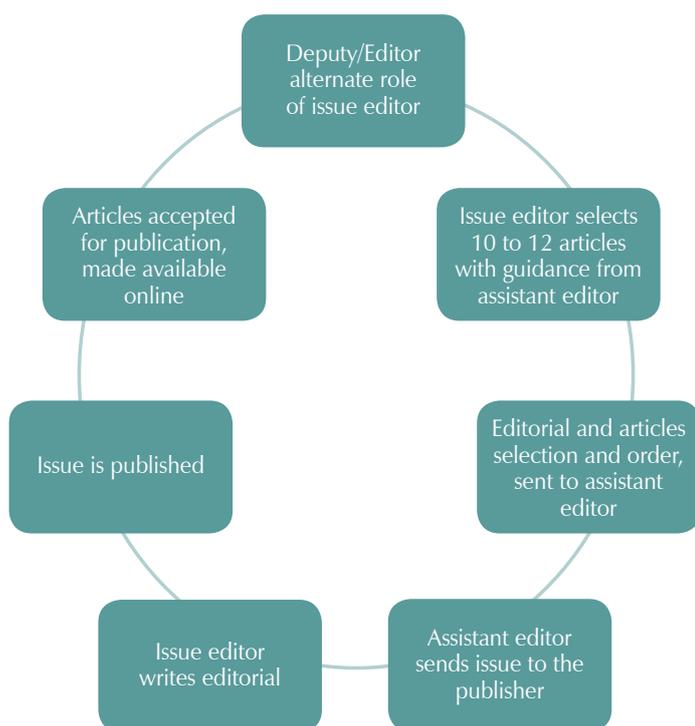


Figure 2 Flowchart from acceptance to publication

Once a paper has been accepted it is published online fairly quickly. The process from acceptance to final publication in the hard copy issue of IETI is between 18 and 24 months, (Figure 2). The ability to publish online has alleviated much of the pressure caused by this delay.

IETI has a backlog of accepted papers. These have been published online but have not yet been published in hard copy. This is typical of many academic journals. We have worked hard to reduce the backlog in recent years, and the number of articles waiting for hard-copy publication is getting smaller all the time. Nonetheless it will take several years yet to clear it completely.

As deputy editor I do all the activities of the co-editors, but I have some further responsibilities. Gina as the editor has ultimate responsibility for the journal. She is the person people contact when asking for special issues (please don't do this – see comments about our backlog above!). When there is a dispute, she also liaises with the publisher and reports to SEDA. The deputy is spared all of that, and more. However, there are some responsibilities that the deputy shares with the editor, the principal one being responsible for alternate issues of the journal.

IETI is published six times a year. Each issue involves the editor identifying the ten to twelve articles and writing the editorial. The deputy editor does this three times a year. As with the rest of the process, Liz is a tremendous support in this process. She identifies a selection of articles, usually those that have been waiting the longest, and sends

them to the relevant editor, leaving it up to us to make the final selection and decide the order of publication. I look for themes in the chosen articles, and aim to give some coherence to an issue. Once the selection has been made, the editor writes the editorial and the whole package is sent to Liz, who liaises with the publishers to complete the publication process.

### Why do it? – Benefits

Given that the role involves quite a bit of work, why would anyone volunteer to be an academic journal editor, specifically for IETI? I am sure every editor will have a different answer to this question, but for me, the benefits are numerous. I enjoy engaging in scholarly activity. I am acutely aware that the process of gaining publication relies on the goodwill of colleagues, and I am happy to play my part. I have learnt a great deal from the process, not least, I believe I am a better writer as a result of my experience with IETI.

Clichéd as it may sound, there is a deep sense of satisfaction in seeing an article progress from the original submission to final publication. The review process is not perfect, but I do believe that in the vast majority of cases it results in improved papers.

### What are the challenges?

There really is just one challenge that stands above all else, and that is finding the time to do this work. I have been involved with IETI for several years now, and I am sad to be leaving, but it is the pressure on my time of many other activities (not least my day job) that has led to this decision. I would encourage anyone to consider taking on the role, though, as I have learnt so much and enjoyed myself in the process. I would suggest making this a time-limited appointment, to avoid the feeling of guilt that I am experiencing as I jump ship!

**Dr Celia Popovic** (cpopovic@yorku.ca) is Director, Teaching Commons, at York University, Canada.

## Information for Contributors

The Editorial Committee of *Educational Developments* welcomes contributions on any aspect of staff and educational development likely to be of interest to readers.

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# How useful is peer assessment in evaluating individual contributions to group work?

Amy Lund, Leeds Trinity University

How do you replicate industry practice through Work-based Learning (WBL) team projects within the university and then assess individual contributions to the group work? For practitioners aiming to simulate working practice within education and assessment this can present a tricky dilemma.

## Teamwork projects as WBL

As a former magazine editor, journalist and public relations (PR) consultant, I entered Higher Education (HE) as an industry professional and I aim to embed WBL into all my Journalism and PR modules. Publications and PR agencies rely on teams of journalists or communication professionals working together to achieve common goals, so group projects are a common form of assessment in the Journalism Department at Leeds Trinity University (LTU). Biggs' theory of constructive alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2011) proposes that we align the ways we teach and assess to the intended learning outcomes. It is my goal that the learning outcomes, teaching and assessment of these modules align with WBL principles and practices.

In my own experience, teamwork, with group assessment, is both loved and loathed by students for a multitude of reasons. In stronger teams, students report a real sense of enjoyment, professional learning and achievement. For teams that encounter challenges, individual members may express frustration and dissatisfaction, especially through their feedback in the Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs). If students have overcome some of the challenges they face working as a team, their satisfaction tends to be higher and this is paralleled by a raised sense of

accomplishment. However, the main complaint about teamwork has come from how individuals are assessed for their contribution to the project and, indeed, the weighting of the assessment between group assessment and individual assessment.

## Leeds Trinity University (LTU) case studies

The two modules I will use as a case study from LTU are both Level 5 (second year) modules: *Magazine Styling* and *PR in Practice*. The *Magazine Styling* team project involves working in teams of approximately five students to style a food photoshoot, working to a professional brief for *Waitrose Food* magazine. This involves research, planning, creative brainstorming and the creation of mood boards and storyboarding. Students work up the brief as a team, select props, style the food and direct a professional food photographer to produce industry-standard images that are suitable for publication. This group project is awarded 50% of the overall marks. The remaining 50% of the assessment is based on individual contribution.

The second LTU case study *PR in Practice* is another highly vocational module, replicating industry practice through WBL. The students work in teams of 5-6, giving themselves a PR name and identity and working with a real-life business or organisation that they have selected. They spend 10 weeks collaborating and working with their real-life client to create a bespoke PR campaign which:

- *Identifies* issues that the client has, requiring marketing or public relations solutions
- *Creates strategies offering solutions* to the identified marketing or PR issues

- *Proposes the PR techniques and ideas* they would use as part of the PR campaign.

The teams pitch their PR campaign proposal with a group presentation to their client and receive feedback. Following this assessment, many students have volunteered to do work placements with their clients to implement the PR proposals, working together long after the module has been completed. This group project is awarded 50% of the overall grades and the remaining 50% of the assessment is based on individual contribution (as with the *Magazine Styling* assessment).

## Individual reflective reports

For a number of years 50% of the assessments were based on individual contributions and were assessed using individual reflective reports. These proved to be unpopular with the students and our External Examiner, and as the Module Coordinator, I thought that they did not truly reflect an individual's contribution to the group work. A student who had not engaged positively or had contributed little to the group work could write an academically impressive Individual Reflective Report. They could gain more marks for this individual element of assessment than a student with weaker academic or writing skills who had contributed significantly and positively to the team project. Both *Magazine Styling* and *PR in Practice* modules, with their WBL foundation, are opportunities for students to demonstrate their professional skills, yet having 50% of the marks based on an academic written assessment (individual reflective report) seemed incongruous. Peer assessment seemed to be more in keeping with the WBL ethos of the module, reflecting industry practice and allowing students

themselves to assess their peers' individual contributions to the group project.

### External examiner's comments on individual reflective reports:

- 'These "reflective" reports were mostly descriptive and contained limited references and no evidence of criteria specified in the marking grid such as: "Sophisticated and coherent links between theory and reflection" or "Original and searching analysis".'
- 'The reflective report is an assessment type which is used rather excessively and is not always marked appropriately. Many reports are largely descriptive and are not critically reflective enough, only paying lip service to referencing...I would recommend an evaluation of reflective reports as an appropriate assessment type in all cases as other types of assessment may be more effective and engaging for students.'

### Students' thoughts on individual reflective reports:

- 'For bigger groups I'd definitely say group work and peer assessment, due to my experience in big groups in other modules. Some people can get lazy and leave it all to one or a couple of people!'
- 'I don't feel reflective reports are an effective way of communicating thoughts, achievements and targets from the task as this is something I feel should not be marked but should be a compulsory pass/fail module task (similar to in-class assessments in Practical Journalism or Placement) for tutors to understand a student's progress.'
- 'Some people put a lot more effort in than others and it isn't very fair when one person puts the most in but doesn't get credit for it.'

## Moving to peer assessment

As the students' and External Examiner's comments reveal, Individual Reflective Reports were not working for the assessment of the *Magazine Styling* and *PR in Practice* modules. I looked towards an alternative form of assessing individuals' contributions to group projects and decided to try Peer Assessment.

The QAA (2013) advocates collaborative teaching and learning strategies including: 'peer assessment, portfolios, and the assessment of performance and creative work; using technology both for supporting assessment and for enabling feedback to students; the assessment of work-based learning and practice, including the involvement of employers and practitioners in the assessment process; the development of assessment activities which are closely connected with real-world situations or tasks.'

Peer assessment, at its heart, is a very social process and students are able to learn from each other through their interaction, according to van Gennip *et al.* (2010). More widely, students evaluating each other's work establishes a new type of 'participatory culture' for learning (Ingo and Fischer, 2010). By embedding WBL practices, the students develop the skills they need for professional employment and prepare for work within the communication industries.

The students were consulted and they perceived peer assessment to be a 'fairer' way of assessing individual contributions to team projects (see their comments, below). Survey research after the team project and peer assessment showed that almost all learners preferred peer assessment.

## Implementing peer assessment for assessing individual contribution to group work

I developed marking criteria specifically for the students to assess their teammates' individual contributions to the group project. There are four categories to assess:

- Technical Expertise
- Communication
- Problem-solving and Creativity
- Teamwork.

These are familiar categories used for marking practical work at LTU. The students are asked to assess each member of their team for their individual contribution to the group work. They can select from the grading system they are familiar with for their other university assessments. They are asked to select one classification (abject fail, fail, third, 2:2, 2:1, first, outstanding first, exceptional first) for each category of the four categories.

In addition to their familiarity with the university marking criteria for practical work (which are used in many other LTU modules), I offer a verbal explanation of the marking criteria and the students are given marking criteria grids which fully explained what is expected for each of the four categories for each classification. The students assess each of their teammates using a confidential online poll via a link on the Virtual Learning Environment. I can then access the results which are collated with an overall mark for each individual student's contribution to the group work.

I explain that the results are confidential. As the Module Coordinator, I can see the grades the students have awarded each teammate for each category. I have been present at the workshops where the group work has taken place and I have attended the final assessment/group presentations so I can moderate and check that students are not unfairly marking their peers too harshly or generously. They are aware that the system is confidential but not anonymous. I warn them that as a moderator I may need to intervene but this has not been required to date. Overall, the students have responded positively to the introduction of Peer Assessment rather than Individual Reflective Reports to assess individual contributions to group work (see students' comments).

## What students like about peer assessment:

- *'I feel the peer assessment gives a clearer picture of the learning and contribution of every member of the team.'*
- *'Peer assessment is much fairer than reflective report. Peer assessment grades you on your ability and the standard of your work whereas reflective report grades you on your ability to write about it which isn't a real reflection on your work.'*
- *'It's more opinions so the person marking can get a clearer picture of what that individual has achieved.'*
- *'I believe that using peer assessment alongside teamwork encourages involvement and responsibility and allows students to reflect on their contribution to group work. It also allows peers to discover each other's strengths and weaknesses in a friendly manner.'*
- *'You can see what others thought of your efforts and voice your opinions on others.'*
- *'Useful to see what my team mates think of the input and effort I put into the group project. Useful for feedback.'*
- *'Out of modesty I have a habit to mark myself down and self-critique too much, whereas others may see positives in my work I'm unaware of and this will reflect in the mark and be a more accurate reflection of my ability.'*
- *'The advantage is that other team members know that if they don't effectively contribute, they may not get a good mark as opposed to just the lecturer marking the work.'*
- *'It helps you voice your own opinions more because if you're in a smaller group it helps you to do so.'*

## What students did not like about peer assessment:

- *'Can lead to unfair marking.'*
- *'Peers may feel that they should be reluctant to be honest when it comes to their peers. Therefore, resulting in them not getting honest feedback on where they can improve.'*
- *'Outside judgement can cause inaccurate assessments of others.'*
- *'Hatred and prejudice can come into play.'*
- *'Could be unfair if you dislike your group.'*

## How peer assessment improves student engagement and satisfaction

Now that peer assessment has replaced academic-style individual reflective reports in both *Magazine Styling* and *PR in Practice* modules, the feedback has been generally positive (see 'What students like about peer assessment') with students taking ownership of both their own work and the assessing of their colleagues in team projects. One noticeable benefit has been the increased student engagement. Students know that they are accountable and will be marked by their peers for their individual contribution, which is worth half of the overall grade. Students who contribute significantly feel satisfied that they will be fairly rewarded for their efforts and they are empowered to fairly reflect when a peer has not engaged well with the teamwork. The result of half the module's assessment being based on peer assessment is that it generally motivates most students to be engaged with the team project. If they do not positively contribute to the teamwork, they know that they risk losing a significant amount of marks for their lack of individual contribution. They cannot rely solely on the marks from the team project to carry them through the assessment as they are only worth 50%. They can no longer rely upon writing a skilful Individual Reflective Report to boost their scores for their individual contribution. Therefore, I have noticed an increase in both attendance at workshops

and engagement. With improved attendance, the students are actually engaging with the vocationally-based team projects and many have reported enjoying the learning process. The MEQs for these modules have revealed positive feedback and improved student satisfaction.

## How peer assessment supports work-based learning

My research into students' perceptions of peer assessment in evaluating individual contributions to group work has revealed that they can see the explicit connection between peer assessment and WBL (see their comments in 'How students perceive peer assessment as supporting work-based learning'). They feel more satisfied with Peer Assessment than Individual Reflective Reports as a method of assessment that truly reflects working practice. If a magazine team works together on a food-styling photo shoot, they are likely to receive peer feedback on their individual contribution and they are held accountable to the team for the successful production of professional food photography, which meets the magazine's brief. If a PR agency delivers a pitch to a potential client, they can expect to be held accountable for their individual contribution to the success of the agency's pitch. If they win the contract, they have played a part and they can also give feedback to their teammates about their contribution.

When students see how the methods of assessment align with professional practice, they understand the skills and experience they gain through the university assessment will be very useful in their future professional lives by developing their skills and employability.

Biggs' theory of Constructive Alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2011) emphasises the need for this alignment to be visible from the students' (not just the teachers') perspective. I am delighted that the students on the *Magazine Styling* and *PR in Practice* modules can see that both the group project and the peer assessment align with the WBL objectives of these courses.

### How students perceive peer assessment as supporting work-based learning

- 'It's realistic for what would be expected in the workplace.'
- 'In the work place you get judged by your peers for the work which is what is happening here.'
- 'I know this is a tool frequently used within the workplace so it's good to become confident using it now.'
- 'I think peer assessments are a more fair way of doing it as they represent the real way you would be assessed in a work environment.'
- 'It gives us a clearer idea of what it would be like in a professional environment and what it would be like to work in a team.'

### Issues raised by the use of peer assessment

I presented "How useful is peer assessment in evaluating individual contributions to group work?" at the SEDA's 2017 Cardiff conference on 'Developing Teaching Excellence:

Supporting and Developing the Work of Groups and Teams', and facilitated group discussions on the delegates' own experiences of both peer assessment and assessing individual contributions to group work.

A number of valuable questions and issues were raised and discussed including:

- The benefits and issues surrounding the evaluation of individual contributions to group work including: learners' perceptions of fairness, effort, leadership, responsibility (both individual and team responsibility)
- Whether individuals should be evaluated within group assessment and, if so, what should the weighting between individual and group assessment be?
- A comparison of different methods for evaluating individual contributions to teamwork and exploring the benefits and challenges
- How to account for difference in learners' backgrounds, abilities, contributions, engagement/non-engagement in assessing individual contributions.

These are all issues I hope to investigate further in my research into peer assessment and I look forward to sharing my findings in the future!

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# Benefits and limitations of a collaborative approach to course design

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## Introduction

The University of Northampton has been running collaborative course design workshops since 2008. These course design workshops are referred to as a CAleRO (Creating Aligned Interactive Educational Resource Opportunities), and they are a modified version of the Carpe Diem process, embedded in quality enhancement and development frameworks and run by trained facilitators (Usher *et al.*, 2018). While others have investigated experiences of designing programmes collaboratively (Chao *et al.*, 2010; Chiang *et al.*, 2011; Gast *et al.*, 2017; Taylor and Znajda, 2015; Ziegenfuss and Lawler, 2008), our particular situation at Northampton gave us the opportunity to explore staff perceptions of collaborative design across a number of diverse programmes, as we are undertaking a full-scale curriculum redesign project, using an institutionally

recognised approach to course design which recommends collaborative development.

In Spring 2017, we conducted interviews with ten members of academic staff who had undertaken a CAleRO, to find out what they really thought about the process. Their views were, as expected, diverse and wide-ranging, although on the whole they were positive about the process. One of the strongest themes to come out of the interviews concerned the thoughts that academics had about the collaborative nature of the course design process. For the most part academics placed a high value on the opportunity that CAleRO gave them to design courses collaboratively, although they often valued the nature of collaboration for more than one reason. A summary of the various perceived advantages and limitations of engaging in a collaborative course design process is presented below.

## Perceived benefits of collaborative course design

### Benefit 1: Building consensus and developing a cohesive curriculum

Many tutors reported that developing their modules alongside others on the same programme helped them to have a more strategic view of the programme as a whole:

*'...it was a good opportunity to say, "Look, how does this all fit together."' (Interviewee #1)*

*'...it was good to get us together to try and help develop the whole structure across the whole course.'* (Interviewee #2)

They described making collaborative decisions on selection (what to include and what to drop), repetition (when it was necessary for reinforcement of learning and when it was simply overlap), and progression (establishing clear links to scaffold learning from one level to the next). The benefits of this process are clear in providing a coherent learning experience for students. In this way, successful teams develop a kind of 'distributed cognition' model (Putnam and Borko, 2001), where collaboration makes it possible for them to design and deliver a programme of study that has an agreed vision and direction, even though it may be beyond the expertise of any one individual tutor to deliver.

### Benefit 2: Strengthening co-operation

The CAleRO model depends on co-operation, and many of the tutors reported gains in terms of team building, although these were often conditional on initial buy-in. The CAleRO workshop takes two full days, and setting aside this time requires participants to have a degree of personal motivation, commitment and openness to reviewing their practice. Commitment to the process usually resulted either from previous experience of CAleRO, or through a recommendation from a trusted colleague, rather than from requests from management or the requirements of quality processes. Where participants were motivated and engaged for the duration, tutors reported an increased sense of shared ownership over the resulting programme design.

### Benefit 3: Collaborative learning

Participants described a range of different ways in which developing a course collaboratively helped them to learn about course design, teaching, assessment and technology. Collaborative learning took several forms, and participants reported learning from fellow academics as well as from professional services staff, e.g., librarians and learning technologists. The CAleRO model focuses on capacity building, supporting teaching staff to develop their understanding of pedagogy and technology and enabling them to make informed decisions about course design:

*'[The CAleRO] helped me, I guess, see it from the students' perspective of what it would be like to go through... [the course], and I think it made me pay more attention to their strengths and weaknesses and suitability of different tools, like different elements of the teaching.'* (Interviewee #6)

For experienced teaching staff, the workshops provided an opportunity to get some new perspectives on their practice.

These tutors often valued perspectives from facilitators or others outside the course as well as their peers:

*'As an academic you may not necessarily always be looking at how other people are doing, you may know about your subject knowledge but you're not necessarily looking at how it's being packaged or delivered or assessed in other places. So if somebody has that opportunity to look at bits and say, "these are a couple of ideas for you to look at", then that is actually quite a useful process.'* (Interviewee #10)

For newer staff, or those without formal teacher training, CAleRO was an opportunity to learn about designing for learning in a structured, practical way, and this was not always something that had been provided in previous roles. These staff also welcomed the opportunity to get advice on new ideas from those with more experience.

All of the research participants valued the opportunity to 'cross-fertilise' and share ideas. Some also described how they had begun to transfer these skills to other modules, and to develop shared language and models around teaching and learning, which has long been a goal for learning design support (Dalziel et al., 2016) :

*'...Then we used the same principles, so we had our own internal CAleROs if you like, which was like two or three of us just sitting together and remembering what we did in CAleRO and trying to duplicate that or use the same sort of pattern to create the module specs for other strands...'* (Interviewee #5)

### Benefit 4: Confrontation (but not conflict!)

The process of describing, explaining and justifying your design choices to others is central to the CAleRO workshop. Participants are encouraged to confront and reflect on their practice, and when carefully handled it is often this process that prompts some tutors to begin to transform their teaching (Ho, 2000). CAleRO participants spoke a lot about accountability, and were very positive about listening to outside perspectives, but when talking about describing their own work, even experienced staff were much less comfortable:

*'It's – I mean you're rummaging around in my underwear drawer, that's what it feels like, you know, this is my module, I've been running it, it's really personal to me... and now you're rummaging through it and telling me that this could be, these pants could be thrown out and that top could go as well. You know, actually that needs to be dealt with very sensitively and you don't always understand the reason why those things are still in that drawer, and why I keep them.'* (Interviewee #7)

Confrontation is important to the process of course design, but it needs to be handled constructively and with respect for experience and alternative views, because teaching is a very personal process and closely tied to personal values (Pratt, 1998). Attempts to impose one person's teaching values onto another member of teaching staff rarely ends well:

*'It became quite fighty...and then the academic then becomes more entrenched in their position...they won't change and they will become more and more obstinate,*

*and they will find very good intellectual and logical reasons why their obstinacy is an appropriate thing to do.* (Interviewee #7)

### **Benefit 5: Facilitation as collaboration**

When asked about their experiences of facilitation, all of the participants described it as an advantage to have an independent member of staff running the workshop, rather than someone from within the teaching team. In terms of the facilitation process, some of the advantages described were purely logistical, around keeping discussions on track, structuring tasks and capturing and recording ideas. Others were more political, and related to the ability of the facilitator to be objective, to ask questions from an outside perspective, and to moderate disagreements within the group.

Alongside the need for objectivity and diplomacy, a number of the respondents also spoke about the need for facilitators to have a good background knowledge in learning and teaching:

*'I don't think it's something where you can just take someone and say, "Oh, do you fancy being a facilitator for a CAleRO?" I think they need to be embedded in teaching and learning...They need to have teaching and learning kind of coming from their core, otherwise I don't think it'd work. I think you'd see through them.'* (Interviewee #2)

Participants found value in learning or getting inspiration from the facilitator, in being able to trust their opinion on ideas brought to the table, and also in the ability of the facilitator to support the transfer of knowledge and skills by 'drawing the general principles' of learning and teaching out of the specific examples described. These were all felt to be important characteristics for effective facilitation, although it was also noted that facilitators often had slightly different styles and that teams often had a preference for a particular facilitator as a result.

Of particular interest was one interviewee who spoke about the idea that after being involved in a number of CAleROs, the process would become unnecessary as they would have learned a sufficient amount about course design to be able to undertake it without an independent facilitator. The interviewee rejected this idea, saying that an independently facilitated CAleRO is always useful when designing or redesigning a course:

*'...There is something about a facilitator bringing a different perspective. Because when a module team has been doing the same thing year after year after year they tend to be bogged down by the barriers and the constraints and all that kind of thing ...So while I want to say it's ideal that people eventually are confident enough to take themselves through the CAleRO process, there is something about somebody that is outside of that process that helps them think about things differently, that is not bogged down by all the barriers...'* (Interviewee #8)

### **Benefit 6: Co-development (sharing the load)**

A number of tutors noted that they relied on the facilitator to act as *de facto* project manager, in leading the creation of

a shared action plan and following up with individuals and the team. The sharing of the development work is another advantage of collaborative design, and participants also described the CAleRO process as more efficient in the longer term than developing modules individually and in isolation:

*'You can argue that if you just sit at your desk and... [design courses] yourself it will be faster, yes...but then you will have the other people coming back and saying, oh I don't agree with this...what're we trying to do. So I think although it may be faster, at least on the surface of it, it's not as efficient even, let alone effective.'* (Interviewee #5)

If the team-building and cooperative elements are successful, and the individual participants buy in to the shared design, the remaining design and implementation work can be less onerous.

## **Perceived limitations of collaborative course design**

As well as the advantages of CAleRO described above, academics also spoke about some of the perceived limitations of the process.

### **Limitation 1: The CAleRO process is highly dependent on the willingness and ability of participants to engage**

Designing courses collaboratively is not something that can be imposed on academics, and the process only works where there is a willingness to engage with it (Chao *et al.*, 2010; Gast *et al.*, 2017). Having a structured collaborative design process and an experienced facilitator are both helpful in ensuring a positive outcome, but these two factors are not sufficient conditions for success; without the willingness of participants the process is unlikely in itself to ensure a positive outcome:

*'...It's not like a magic thing this CAleRO, it's just the will of people...'* (Interviewee #5)

Related to this is the fact that the collaborative course design process is also dependent on the ability of staff to engage with it. If staff cannot be released to participate in the CAleRO for all or most of the time, or if they are unwilling to set aside the necessary time, then the process doesn't work:

*'If they're worth having, then people need to be there.'* (Interviewee #7)

### **Limitation 2: Knowing the limits of collaboration**

Some participants noted that there are limits to collaboration, and at some point a course or module will become the responsibility of an individual academic. The collaborative process allows an academic to get a variety of perspectives on their course, and to see how it fits into the bigger picture, but it is unrealistic to suggest that every aspect of the course can be designed in collaboration:

*'Well, you can't get away from the fact that at some point you need to go away on your own and sit down and write something. And it didn't do that, no. It did the broader, you know, the outlines and the structure and this is where this bit goes and this is where that bit goes and the objectives that you need in order to do the nitty*

*gritty. But when you do the nitty gritty bits you do need to do them on your own.* (Interviewee #9)

Ultimately, one individual, usually the course leader, has to make a decision about the course, and the responsibility for this is still theirs. That said, the people delivering the course still have to be confident in the end product, and it is important that less assertive or less experienced academics are not talked into putting a course together that they are not comfortable delivering.

### **Limitation 3: Lack of buy-in can mean that things get changed on paper but not in practice**

Even when the collaborative course design process appears to work well, there is a danger that the new designs may be agreed on paper (or in principle) but without agreement to change anything in practice.

*'So it wasn't particularly a successful CAleRO I think... we've agreed on it, but agreed on it according to this person only on paper and that they still are not going to change anything in terms of how they teach or what they are doing...what makes a CAleRO successful is who's coming with what agenda to the CAleRO and whether there is that buy-in from people who are actually involved in delivering, in designing the programme. If it isn't then how is it going to work?'* (Interviewee #10)

Even where there is buy-in to the CAleRO, and to the agreed course designs, changing teaching is likely to require more than just a new design, and will take much longer than a two-day workshop (Brown *et al.*, 2013; Taylor and Znajda, 2015; Ziegenfuss and Lawler, 2008):

*'I think the learning outcomes are the bits that are easy to achieve with teams. The changing of teaching is the harder bit to achieve.'* (Interviewee #10)

### **Limitation 4: An unequal power balance can impact on the extent and quality of discussion**

Students, junior staff and GTAs are often invited to take part in the collaborative design process, and while this can be very positive, it was noted by some academics that they did not always feel that they were able to give completely honest feedback about the designs:

*'...Whilst we'd said to [the students], "Please critique it. Please say if it's not very good or you don't think it works", they both stood there and I could tell they were just saying it because they thought that's what we wanted to hear.'* (Interviewee #2)

There is clearly more work to do in exploring these dynamics, and finding ways to support constructive debate.

## **Final thoughts about collaborative course design**

In this article, we have noted a number of advantages and limitations to taking a collaborative approach to course design. In the ten interviews that we conducted, only one of the interviewees, a very busy and experienced member of staff, felt that the limitations of CAleRO outweighed the advantages. The remaining nine interviewees all found the process worthwhile.

Given the extensive benefits reported by participants, it seems there is clear evidence to support a collaborative approach to course design. However, our findings, which are supported by others in the literature, emphasise that this approach is dependent on institutional support, in terms of time, recognition, and resourcing (Gast *et al.*, 2017). This is particularly relevant in considering course design support in the wider context. Although this study focused specifically on participation in course design workshops, these are only one stage in an ongoing process of design, delivery and evaluation, and as others have argued, collaboration can have benefits at all of these stages (Brown *et al.*, 2013; Taylor and Znajda, 2015; Ziegenfuss and Lawler, 2008). Ultimately, there are clear benefits in adopting a collaborative approach to course design. However, for an institution to reap those benefits in full, they will need to consider the findings of Gast *et al.* (2017, pp. 756-757) and provide the necessary organisational support, rewards, research focus, and finances and resources, in which the collaborative course design process can flourish.

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