Title: **Pracademia and shifting settings: Exploring applied learning within the 'new-abnormal' HE environment**

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Learning Outcomes

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

- Understand more about the role that practitioner experience may play in responding to the challenges for applied learning that have been presented by the pandemic.
- Identify strategies to address some of the challenges for applied learning within shifting settings.
- Recognise the valuable roles that both pracademics and academics who have taken a more traditional route to their career can play in collaboratively developing opportunities for applied learning within a challenging HE environment.
- Find out more about joining an online, international, community of practice, the Pracademia HE Advance Connect Network.

Outline

The myriad challenges facing the HE sector are well-documented. These include fears about the psychological health of both staff (Wellcome Trust 2020) and students (Macaskill 2012). Such concerns about mental wellbeing have only been compounded by the global pandemic (Gavin et al 2020), and the resulting anxieties arising from shifting classroom settings (Times Higher Education 2020) and e-learning (McPherson and Nunes 2008).

Against this backdrop, this interactive workshop encourages audience reflection and peer-learning about the role that practitioners who teach in academia, or 'pracademics' (Posner 2009), may play in developing opportunities for applied learning (Acharya et al 2018). Whilst research already highlights how pracademics use their practitioner experience and contact networks to enhance the student experience (Dickinson et al 2020), this workshop specifically considers how HEIs could draw on pracademics' skills, knowledge, and approaches to help address the challenges presented by fluctuations between physical and virtual learning spaces. To stimulate the workshop discussions, the presenters will present findings from their related projects that explore staff and student perceptions of changing working environments, and pracademics' experiences of making the transition from practice into academia.

As part of the workshop, the presenters will also invite delegates to join the Pracademia community of practice that is hosted by AdvanceHE Connect. This online, international platform has been developed for the benefit of all academics, students, HEIs, employers and other organisations. Bringing together academics and practitioners from across the

world, it seeks to influence the development of training programmes, encourage best practice, and facilitate collaborations around the themes of research, teaching and learning, and professional development.

Activities and Approximate Timings

- Introduction – presenters will outline the key concepts to provide a context for further discussion (5 minutes)
- Spaces discussion – delegates will be invited to discuss how their working spaces may have changed since the Covid-19 on-campus restrictions and its impact on their practice with students. A mechanism for sharing insights will be offered. (15 minutes)
- Future thinking – presenters will deliver a short input which offers suggestions for how educators are adapting to remote delivery (5 minutes)
- Adjustments to practice – delegates will be invited to consider what, if any, changes necessitated by the requirement for remote delivery they will incorporate into their practice for the future. (10 minutes)
- Delegates will be invited to join the Pracademia networking group (5 minutes)
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Preparation before the session

We invite delegates to:
- bring with them a photograph of their learning space and/or an artefact from their time in practice to help stimulate discussions; and
- reflect on the extent to which their approach to applied learning may have changed during the pandemic.

References and sources

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Wellcome Trust. (2020) *What Researchers Think About the Culture They Work In,* Availabel from: what-researchers-think-about-the-culture-they-work-in.pdf. Accessed 28 January 2021.