SEDA Grant holder: Project Abstract

**Understanding the factors which support the work of faculty and centrally based academic developers in bringing about positive change**

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The research sought to understand the factors which are perceived as relevant to the work of academic developers in creating the conditions for enhancement of academic practice. We were especially interested in whether location of the role, i.e., school, faculty or centrally located, plays a significant part or whether other factors need to be taken into consideration.

Data was collected from a range academic developers based in either centrally based units or faculties/schools using a detailed Survey Monkey Questionnaire which had 90 completions (November 2019) and through seven one-to-one in-depth interviews (March-August 2020).

Our findings showed that while there were pros and cons of the location of the academic developer role amongst institutions there were some strong and consistent themes including the importance of: status, scholarship, and a teaching background for academic developers; their reporting line; opportunities for the academic developer to be a mediator or bridge focusing on enhancement (and not being seen as the ‘teaching and learning police’); realistic timelines for change management.

The research also identified ways in the pandemic has brought a new and unexpected opportunity for academic developers with HE. If they were previously thought to be on the periphery this is no longer the case. Academic developers have been key to the continuation of learning, teaching and assessment, identifying solutions, providing training, and creating a multitude of resources. In doing so educational developers, wherever they sit within the university have worked across institutions at all levels, gaining a seat at the table and forming new collaborations, communities of practice and achieving in weeks what would otherwise have taken years.