Session title: Mentoring Graduate Teaching Assistants

Session type: Lightening talk (10 mins)

Main presenter: Thomas Rodgers, The University of Manchester

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Session summary:
Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) assume a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of undergraduate education and influence student learning. Enabling GTAs to engage in continuing professional development to enhance their teaching excellence is of utmost importance. In this session, we will introduce the Mentoring Excellence program, designed to provide comprehensive support to GTAs as they undertake their application for Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (AFHEA).

Session outline:
Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) often find themselves straddling the roles of research students and faculty members engaged in teaching responsibilities. Their pivotal role in shaping the quality of undergraduate education and influencing student retention cannot be overstated. Therefore, providing GTAs with continuing professional development (CPD) for their teaching is vital.

Mentoring Excellence's approach to improving GTA teaching development and recognition is through supporting them to achieve professional accreditation, i.e., the Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (AFHEA) through Advance HE. This requires GTAs to reflect on their teaching and to think about pedagogies that enhance their practice. We have found mentoring helpful in supporting GTAs to achieve this. The mentoring scheme is aligned to the main semesters (Sept to Jan, Jan to May) as this is the time GTAs are actively engaged in teaching. We run two rounds every year, each with an intake of around 80 GTAs.

In this session we will describe how we have made this work to support the large number of GTAs within the University of Manchester. This will include the structure of the programme, suggestions for mentoring session topics, how this links to GTA training courses with the university, how we engage mentors with the programme, and how the mentors are trained. We will also outline the main problems that we encountered developing this programme and suggestions for overcoming these based on what worked.

References:
J. Slaughter, T.L. Rodgers, and C.E. Henninger; 2023; "An Evidence-Based Approach to Developing Faculty-Wide Training for Graduate Teaching Assistants", Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice, 20:4,17.

T.L. Rodgers and C.E. Henninger, C.; 2023; "A mentoring scheme for graduate teaching assistants", THE Campus+, 11 May.