

Title: *Supporting effective programme leadership in Higher Education: a National perspective*

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Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Describe the National context of Programme Leadership in Higher Education
- Explore and seek to address challenges for programme leaders in delegates own institutions
- Consider the findings from a recent research project that explored the continuing professional development (CPD) needs of Programme Leaders
- Explore future directions for research into Programme Leadership

Session Outline

The session will open with a description of the National context of Programme Leadership in Higher Education. Programme leadership is an important, highly complex role and one that has the potential for impact on the staff and student experience. However, there are a number of challenges associated with this form of leadership. For example, the role is generally ill-defined (Mitchell, 2015) and is often found in the 'shadows' of university structures (Murphy and Curtis, 2013). It is demanding (Murphy and Curtis, 2013; Cahill et al, 2015) and largely unrewarded (Senior, 2018) nor supported with appropriate training (Cahill et al, 2015). The proposed workshop will explore and seek to propose solutions for these programme leadership challenges in delegate's own institutions through the use of structured questioning around the context of programme leadership. Results from a recent study that sought to explore the continuing professional development needs of programme directors will be explored and related back to the challenges and solutions identified in the earlier section of the workshop. Initial analysis of the data shows a number of common factors such as resilience, pedagogical knowledge, and communication and organisation skills and critical to the programme leadership role. These common factors will be explored alongside directions for future research in the area.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

- National context of Programme Leadership in Higher Education – 20 min – Presentation style

- Explore and seek to address challenges for programme leaders in delegates own institutions - 45 min – group work around structured questions/plenary style
- Exploration of the authors research findings – 15 min - presentation
- Future directions for research into Programme Leadership – 10 min - presentation

References

Cahill, J., Rendell, C., Hammond, A. and Korek, S (2015). An exploration of how programme leaders in higher education can be prepared and supported to discharge their roles and responsibilities effectively. *Educational Research*, 57(3), pp. 272-286.

Mitchell, R. (2015). 'If there is a job description I don't think I've read one': a case study of programme leadership in a UK pre-1992 university. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 39(5), pp. 713-732.

Murphy, M. and Curtis, W. (2013). The micro-politics of micro-leadership: exploring the role of programme leader in English universities. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 35(1), pp. 34-44.

Senior, R. (2018). The shape of programme leadership in the contemporary university. In: Lawrence, J and and Ellis, S. Eds. *Supporting programme leaders and programme leadership*. London: SEDA.