

Title: **Developing interdisciplinary cohort identities among early career university teachers**

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Session Learning Outcomes

1. Compare and contrast their own approaches to developing cohort identity in early career teachers (ECTs) to the QMUL approach.
2. Enhance their approach to developing cohort identity based on the above comparison to QMUL models of group work and interdisciplinary communities of practice.
3. Review and reflect on support for early career teachers, particularly in probationary training, and the relationship between centralised development units and departments in training ECTs.

Session Outline

- Trede (2012) asks “Are there some core values and learning strategies that consciously facilitate professional identity development?” for academic staff in higher education, questioning whether professional identities can be measured across disciplines or faculties. Academic development programmes such as the PGCAP are key to professional development for teaching staff in HE. These are often disciplinary, and as such the professional identity of HE teachers is indeed shaped at, least in part, outside their faculty. This raises the questions of the networks in which such professional development does take place, and how it affects participants’ sense of their own professional identity.
- Abigail (2016) found that communities of practice improved performance in interdisciplinary healthcare teams. We’ll investigate how our academic development programmes, which are similarly both interdisciplinary and sector-specific, affect participants’ feelings of connection to various communities of professional practice.
- Both presenters convene modules on academic development programmes for Early Career Teachers (ECTs). Thus we have a key opportunity to test the development of cohort identity and communities of practice for early career staff in HEIs.
- We will briefly compare how two different modules on our taught programme involve participants in communities of practice. We’ll contrast the ways in which we provide interdisciplinary support, a community of practice and collaborative learning and assessment in our week-long residential summer school and our twelve-week introductory module *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*.
- We’ll identify key findings on how ECTs feel their academic development practice links them to communities of practice, and whether this helps them work within teaching and policy teams within and beyond their disciplines in the university. We’ll also contrast this

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The session will comprise:

[10 minutes] Introduction to our work, rationale and comparison of how communities of practice are developed the two modules on which the paper will focus.

[10 minutes] Audience opportunity to discuss the question: how are communities of practice developed currently in taught programmes and other routes to HEA Fellowship at your institution?

[10 minutes] Presenters will outline the key communities of practice that ECTs felt the programmes had either linked them to or facilitated, as well as the broader impact that our emphasis on cohort identity and group-working skills has had for participants.

[10 minutes] Returning to the thoughts the audience had about communities of practice, we'll ask: what are the benefits and/or drawbacks of your current practice for yourself and participants? How might you change?

[5 minutes] Summary: we'll ask volunteers for one change they'll make and pledge to make at least one ourselves from the ideas we've received. We'll hand out postcards and record these, then contact participants at a later date to ask whether they've made the change.

References

Abigail, L. K. M. (2016). Do communities of practice enhance faculty development?. *Health Professions Education*, 2(2), 61-74.

Trede, F., Macklin, R. and Bridges, D., 2012. Professional identity development: a review of the higher education literature. *Studies in Higher Education*, 37(3), pp.365-384.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge university press.