

Title: An evaluation of the effectiveness of new distributed arrangements for educational development established at Wrexham Glyndŵr University in September 2016, following the closure of its central educational development centre in 2014.

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Session Learning Outcomes

- Understand one university's approach to 'doing things differently' through a distributed approach to educational development following the closure of its central educational development centre
- Understand the networks, barriers and enablers identified for effective working within a distributed educational development team within the context of specific educational development projects
- Take away relevant learning and development points for introducing such a model elsewhere

Session Outline

This evaluative case study (Cousin, 2009; Yin, 2003) considers a new institutional educational development structure that is not predicated upon the existence of a central educational development unit, but rather takes a distributed approach across Academic Schools with support from Professional Services. The case study is the new Academic Development Team established at Wrexham Glyndŵr University (WGU) in September 2016, following the closure of its central educational development centre in 2014. The study evaluates the effectiveness of the new distributed arrangements for educational development, identifies networks, barriers and enablers for effective working and considers relevant learning and development points for other universities considering introducing such a model.

The case study uses Jones and Wisker (2012)¹ as a basis for asking questions related to this distributed form of educational development (the Academic Development Team, ADT) now in operation at WGU. Specifically, the study considers:

¹ This report was prepared for HEDG (Higher Education Developers Group) and continued the work of predecessor reports that tracked the work of educational developers in the UK, mapping the territory they occupy in the higher education landscape (Gosling, 2008; Gosling, 2001).

- The profile of Academic Development Team (ADT) members, self-conceptions of identity, remits and responsibilities.
- Enablers and barriers for the ADT in relation to making an impact on areas of work traditionally carried out by a central educational development unit.
- Networks of influence for the ADT, captured through sociograms.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

- **Introduction and context (5mins)**
 - Discussion point: 'modes' of educational development represented in the session (eg central learning and teaching units, lone players, units within staff development, faculty teaching and learning representatives, professional services etc) (5mins)
- **Overview of ADT member profiles through vignettes: 'Who am I?' (5mins)**
 - Discussion point: what aspects of each vignette resonate with session attendees? 'Could this be you?' (5mins)
- **Presentation of ADT members' sociograms, representing networks of influence in relation to working practices (5mins)**
 - Discussion point: how does this match the networks of influence for other models of educational development? Where are the gaps? Where are the additional touch points? Could a strength be that in a distributed model the whole is greater than the sum of its parts? (5mins)
- **Outline of identified enablers and barriers for the ADT in relation to making an impact in relation to educational development (5mins)**
 - Discussion point: what are the similarities/differences with enablers/barriers for more 'traditional' centralised units? (5mins)
- **Plenary: through discussion generate and capture learning and development points for other universities considering introducing a model of distributed educational development (5mins)**

References

Cousin, G. (2009) *Researching Learning in Higher Education*. London: Routledge.

Gosling, D. (2001) Educational Development Units in the UK: What are they doing five years on? *International Journal of Academic Development*, 6, 74 - 92.

Gosling, D. (2008) Educational Development in the United Kingdom: Report to the Heads of Educational Development Group. HEDG.

Jones, J. and Wisker, G. (2012) Educational Development in the United Kingdom: Report to the Heads of Educational Development Group. HEDG.

Yin, R. K. (2003) Case study research: design and methods. London: Sage.