

Title: **Learning conversations: professional development through coaching and mentoring**

Presenters: **Diana Eastcott and Emma Heron**
Birmingham City University and Sheffield Hallam University

Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will have:

Considered the coaching/mentoring approach to professional development through exploration of an initiative in the Faculty of Development and Society at Sheffield Hallam University

Reflected on the significance of this initiative in their own context and reflected on the wider implications of coaching/mentoring as a form of professional development

Session Outline

Coaching and mentoring are used in a range of contexts and have a variety of definitions and meanings in Higher Education. Studies by Knight and Trowler(1999) and Knight, Tait and Yorke (2006) demonstrate the importance of coaching/mentoring alongside formal courses in the effective professional learning and development of academic staff. Knight, Tait and Yorke's (2006) view of professional learning is that it is both systematic and situated with the development of capabilities occurring as a result of situated social practices. A coach/mentor has a key role to play in assisting in the development of relevant values and competences.

This session will be based on a successful, large scale professional development initiative in the Faculty of Development and Society at Sheffield Hallam University. One to one coaching/mentoring sessions were provided for 14 academic staff over a period of two academic years. The purpose was to provide professional development through learning conversations for staff from a range of subject disciplines who had recently acquired leadership roles in Learning, Teaching and Assessment in addition to their existing teaching, course leadership and research roles in their disciplines. These LTA roles are often complex involving political sensitivity, strategic alignment and responsibility for the professional development of colleagues.

The coaching/mentoring approach to professional development at SHU was very positively evaluated. The session will tell the story from the perspective of a Faculty member

participating in the initiative as well as the coach/mentor, with the aim of exploring the wider benefits of academic coaching and mentoring to the HE community.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Introductory ice breaking activity (5 minutes)

Overview of the coaching/mentoring project at Sheffield Hallam University – the story from the perspective of a participant in the initiative and the coach/mentor (20 minutes)

Group activity/discussion: reflection on the possible applications of this initiative in the contexts of the session participants and consideration of the wider implications of coaching/mentoring as a form of professional development. (20 minutes)

References

Knight,P.T., Tait,J. and Yorke,M. (2006) The Professional Learning of Teachers in Higher Education, *Studies in Higher Education*, 32:3, 319-339

Knight,P.T., and Trowler,P.R. (1999) Organisational socialisation and induction in universities: reconceptualising theory and practice, *Higher Education Journal*, 37, 177 - 195