

Title: **The tie that binds: joining disciplinary and interdisciplinary communities of learning**

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify the benefits and drawbacks of both discipline specific and interdisciplinary professional development communities
- Better understand and value alternative communities of learning
- Join a developing a community of learning that embraces discipline specific and interdisciplinary activities

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

A sometimes unspoken tension exists between the merits of interdisciplinary communities of learning that operate at the institutional level versus those that exist within disciplines across the community. This tension has been explored for example by, Gibbs G (2000) and Healy and Jenkins (2003). It was also one of the main themes of the most recent issue of the Higher Education Academy's magazine 'Academy Exchange'. See for example King et al and Wareing (2009).

This workshop aims to bring together institutional academic developers and Academy subject centre staff to explore and better understand this issue. It will build upon what has already been discussed at the Academy event 'Integrating discipline characteristics within generic education development programmes that will take place in November 2009'.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

- Introductory exercise (5 minutes)
- Introduction, backgrounds, and roles of subject centres and institutional staff development units (10 minutes)
- Interdisciplinary and disciplinary education communities – key issues (10 mins)¹
- Discussion questions (30 minutes)²
 - What are the merits and drawbacks of disciplinary and interdisciplinary communities of learning?

¹ This will be a brief presentation drawing on some of the key concepts explored in the referenced literature

² We will reproduce extracts from the referenced documents as supporting material for each discussion

- What are good practices from each area?
- How can subject centres enhance the work of institutional development programmes and vice versa?
- Feedback in plenary (20 minutes)
- Small Group Activity: Taking it Forward –Action planning for joint working in developing this community of learning (10 minutes)
- Feedback and close (10 minutes)

References

Gibbs G (2000) Are the pedagogies of the disciplines really different? In C. Rust (ed.) *Proceedings of the 1999 7th International Symposium on Improving Student Learning: Improving Student Learning through Disciplines* (pp.41-51) Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development, Oxford Brookes University

Healy, M. and Jenkins, A. (2003) Educational development through the disciplines in Eggins H and Macdonald R and (eds) *The Scholarship of Academic Development* Open University Press and the Society for Research into Higher Education, pp 47-57

King N. Grove M. Lantz C. and Atfield R. (2009) Supporting staff at the discipline level. In *Academy Exchange (August 2009) Teachers as learners – the development of Academic Staff* The Higher Education Academy

Waering, S (2009) In my discipline or interdisciplinary? In *Academy Exchange (August 2009) Teachers as learners – the development of Academic Staff* The Higher Education Academy