



Exploring professional tensions: from “the lady in the office” to the professional who supports 21<sup>st</sup> century student learning.

How a SEDA PDF programme enhanced the student experience.

Julie Hall, Head of Learning and Teaching Enhancement  
Unit

Sarah Hall, Assistant Registrar  
Roehampton University

## 21<sup>st</sup> century HE: shifting identities, blurring boundaries beyond traditional 'academic' provision

- boundaries breached between professional and academic activity ('para-academics', managers, administrators)
- students report using a wide range of staff to support and enhance their experience + expectations of good 'customer service'
- Whitchurch (2007) describes a 'third space' between professional and academic domains, requiring contributions from a range of staff

# Exploring professional identities

- Lots of research on impact of a changing policy environment on academic identities (Henkel, 2000; Becher and Trowler, 2001; Barnett, 2005)
- Less on changing identities of professional or administrative staff –lit search available at <http://www.lfhe.ac.uk/publications/research.html/>

‘As the capacity of staff expands and diversifies to cope with the ongoing demands on institutions, professional roles and identities are subject to continual revision. The situation is, therefore, more dynamic and complex than organisation charts and job descriptions would suggest.’ Whitchurch 2007



- to enhance student experience at the departmental level by:
  - Restructuring administrative support for academic programmes to break-down silos of practice, and to standardise process and procedure where possible
  - Investing in IT solutions to lead to smarter ways of working e.g. electronic attendance recording in class, Sharepoint community sites for data storage and collaboration
  - Building a new team of pro active, confident, administrators, more aware of the student experience and university strategies
- developed to promote professional values, collaboration and networking as well as embedding IT tools into everyday practice. Delivery was used as part of the change process for the new administrative team .. and they gained a nationally recognised certificate!

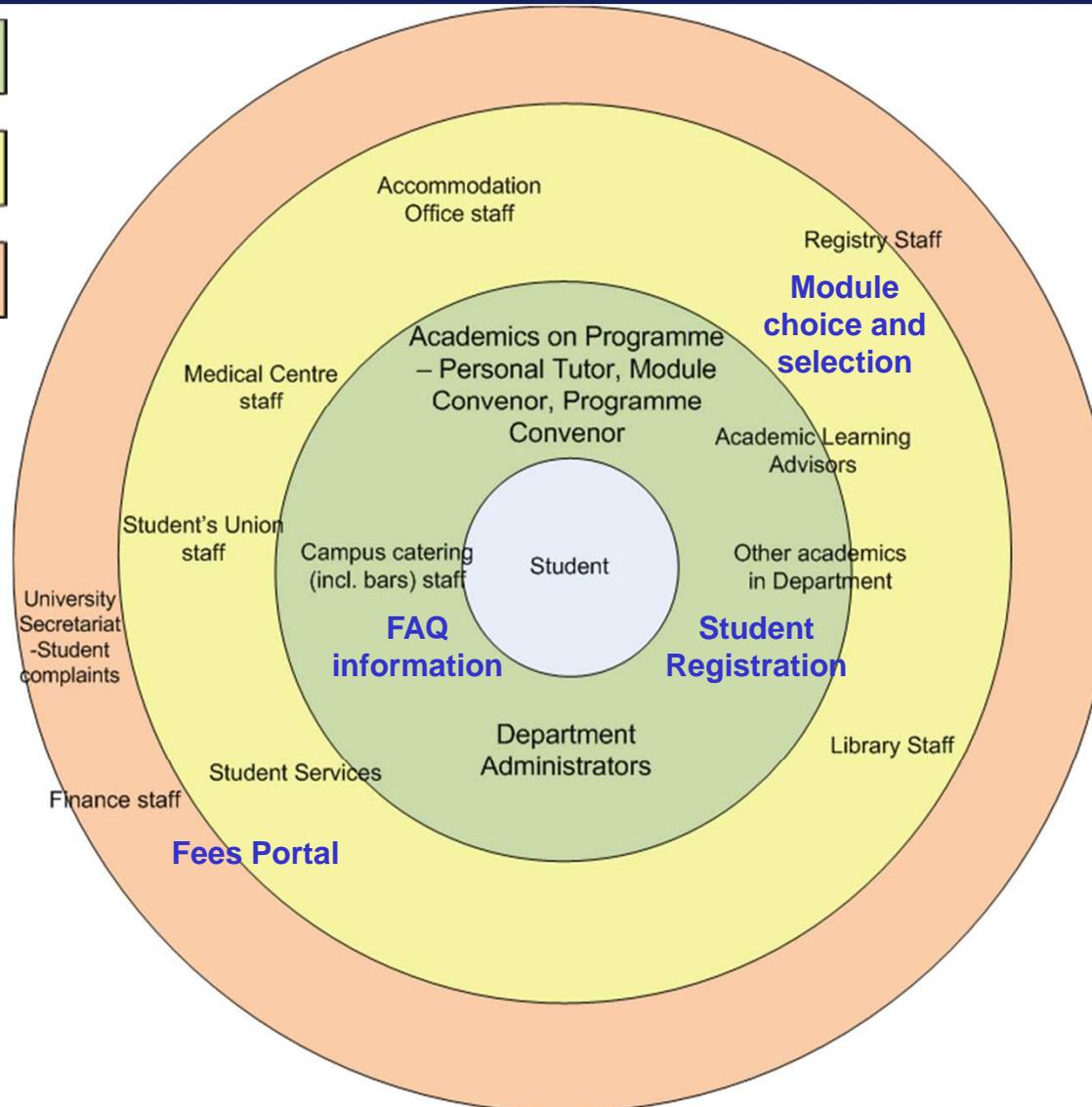


1<sup>st</sup> line support:  
Face to face, regular contact

2<sup>nd</sup> line support:  
Less frequent contact or referred  
contact when an issue arises

3<sup>rd</sup> line support:  
Infrequent direct contact

Process or system



# Exercise 1



Exercise 1 – Recognising the people and the systems that contribute to the 21st century student experience

Does this sound familiar?

Using this diagram, discuss how it might be adapted for your institution

- What interactions are nearer or further away from the student in your HEI?
- Should this be centred around the student?
- How does your staff development / L&T unit support a wider range of staff to enhance the student experience?



- JISC project – building capacity to embed IT in HE practice
- SEDA Cert in Professional Practice as the vehicle
- Specialist and Core outcomes + SEDA values
- A framework which can be adapted for local issues and needs
- Free to choose level and type of assessment
- A joint project between LTEU and Assistant Registrars





- A series of 6 x 3 hr sessions with additional resources and activities online via a Moodle VLE site.

## Course aims:

1. To support individuals and teams of staff in their personal and professional practice and development
2. To recognise the professional contribution and achievements of these staff
3. To advance the professional practice of candidates by promoting action research, evaluation and the reporting and sharing of outcomes
4. To enhance the quality of the educational experience of students by attention to quality and service delivery
5. To promote SEDA professional values and the values of Roehampton University
6. To develop local support frameworks across the university
7. To facilitate the sharing of best practice across the university
8. To embed IT tools and techniques into everyday working
9. To encourage collaboration and communication within and between individuals and teams
10. To encourage the development a personal development plan



“This was the first assessed course I’ve taken part in for 30years. It was nerve-racking to start. I’ve always called myself ‘just an administrator’ if anyone asked but now I feel I have so much more to offer and have the confidence and support to succeed.”

“This has been the first chance we’ve ever had to get together, previously the School structure was very compartmentalised”

“I’ve enjoyed learning together, it’s not so frightening after all. I’ve taken this back to my day to day work by continuing to coax and support my colleagues along the journey”

“ The moodle site clarifies and supports my learning and builds a real sense of community. It’s like our virtual staff room.”



- Need to provide flexibility to work around peaks in the academic cycle
  - Use virtual sessions as well as face to face sessions
- Don't underestimate the impact that a reflective reading exercise or giving a presentation may have
  - often this course is the first structured learning experience a staff member may have had for a number of years and anxiety levels are high to start.
- Design the course to be able to react to the current issues facing your institution or the sector
  - Provide a 'safe' environment for staff to discuss anxieties and issues



Design a SEDA PDF professional Practice programme for one of the group members, based on your discussion in ex 1



- SEDA contacts [http://www.seda.ac.uk/professional-development.html?p=3\\_1\\_office@seda.ac.uk](http://www.seda.ac.uk/professional-development.html?p=3_1_office@seda.ac.uk)
- JISC project info  
<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/staffroles/workit>

“The course has allowed me to step back from the day to day, and I have been able to reflect on why we do things, how we can work smarter. My New Academic Year resolution is to build time to reflect and review my practice and [the course] has given me confidence to suggest new ways of working.”

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- Barnett, R. and di Napoli, R. (2008) *Changing Identities in Higher Education: Voicing Perspectives*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Bauman, Z. (2005) The Liquid-Modern Challenges to Education. *Values in Higher Education*. Eds. S. Robinson and C. Katulushi. Vale of Glamorgan: Aureus Publishing, pp. 36–50.
- Becher, T. and Trowler, P. (2001) *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual Enquiry and the Culture of Disciplines*. Buckingham: SRHE/Open University Press.
- Whitchurch, C. (2006) *Who do they think they are? The changing identities of professional administrators and managers in UK higher education*. [Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management](#), Volume 28, Number 2, July 2006, pp. 159-171(13)
- Whitchurch, C. (2006) *Professional Managers in UK Higher Education: Preparing for Complex Futures*. London: Leadership Foundation for Higher Education