SEDA Autumn Conference 2024

Session Title: Putting pedagogy at the heart of an large scale (whole provider) course design process

Session Type: Practice Papers (20 minutes)

Main presenter(s): Jackie Potter, University of Chester

Co presenter(s): Laura Milne, Claire Stocks, Ruth Healey, University of Chester

Session Summary: We report on the implementation of a new modular framework for taught degrees in a broad-based university with more than 200 courses. We share key features of the new framework and the work of the educational development centre: (i) consulting with employers and researching the literature on high impact teaching, learning and assessment to ensure our new Future Skills Curriculum was evidence-based; and (ii) designing and delivering a pedagogically-informed, collaborative sprint process for course design.

Session Outline: Universities are grappling to make courses fit for their more diverse students and their varied professional aspirations and futures, as well as respond to financial pressures that demand that course delivery is cost effective and efficient. In this context, new models of large-scale course design and approval processes, as well as pedagogically-informed learning design principles, are being rolled out at scale in universities to drive educational reform. These processes allow universities a significant, and potentially new role in determining curriculum (Potter, 2021) and simplified learning architecture can bring about pedagogic and efficiency benefits (Potter and Milne, 2024).

In this paper, the roles of staff within the educational development centre in planning and developing the guiding learning design principles for a reformed 'Future Skills curriculum' and its design by course teams through a guided sprint process are presented and discussed. The authors reflect on their experiences of being very visible leaders for the work that has developed and highlighted their own subject expertise in relation to how higher education students learn, teaching and assessment practices that facilitate learning, current trends and approaches to higher education curriculum development, and ways to facilitate groups of external employers and staff teams from a wide range of subject areas and professional services to work collaboratively on curriculum reforms.

Key issues to be addressed include:

1.   Whose curriculum? Power and presence of different players from within universities during the development and defining of learning frameworks and the process of curriculum design

2.   Whose expertise? Balancing educational development competencies with those of other third space professionals and with academic subject knowledge to redesign courses

3.   Measures of success. Exploring ways to embed course approval, long-term monitoring and evaluation of curriculum reforms into business-as-usual and the implications for regulation

References: Potter, J. (2021). Who owns the curriculum? WonkHE Blog. 28.04.2021.

Potter, J. and Milne, L. (2024). Fewer, larger modules could help students too. WonkHE Blog. 09.05.2024.