SEDA Autumn Conference 2024

Session Title: Supporting the teaching development of PhD students through an asynchronous online course: reflections on its development and implementation

Session Type: Lightning Talks (10 minutes)

Main presenter(s): Rebecca Turner, University of Plymouth

Co presenter(s): Emily Pinn, University of Plymouth

Session Summary: In this lightening talk, we will provide an overview of course designed to support PhD students to actively engage in their development as teachers. Drawing on student feedback, we will discuss their experiences of engaging in teaching development through this format and discuss plans for development of this course to ensure it continues to provide timely and inclusive PhD teaching development.

Session Outline: PhD students play an integral role in supporting teaching and learning. They can participate in a variety of teaching, learning and student support activities which may involve them working as a demonstrator, assessor and seminar lead. Engaging in these activities can provide important professional development, complementing the research skills and disciplinary knowledge they are gaining through their PhD studies (Allgood et al., 2018). This is recognised through the inclusion of teaching within Vitae's Research Development Framework, which highlights the value of engaging in teaching and learning to support the development of knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers (Vitae, 2011).

Providing teaching development for PhD students is far from straight forward (Homer, 2018). Compared to lecturers and other HE Professionals, PhD students represent a transitory population, part of the university community for a relatively short period of time. Likewise, the are supporting teaching alongside their PhD studies, which may require them engaging in extended periods of fieldwork, laboratory or research work. Such work can be inflexible and time sensitive. This has meant that traditional classroom-based workshops, or extended course commonly implemented for lecturing staff, do not align with the teaching-development requirements of out PhD students (Hill et al., 2019).

In 2023 we developed an innovative fully online, asynchronous teaching development course for PhD students. In this lightening talk, we will provide an overview of course content and the methods used to support PhD students actively engage in course content. Drawing on student feedback, we will discuss their experiences of engaging in teaching development through this format. We will conclude by considering plans for the on-going development of this course to ensure it continues to provide timely and inclusive PhD teaching development.

References: Allgood, S., Hoyt, G., & McGoldrick, K. (2018). Teacher training for PhD students and new faculty in economics. The Journal of Economic Education, 49(2), 209–219.

Hill, L. B., Austin, A. E., Bantawa, B., & Savoy, J. N. (2019). Factors of success: building and sustaining teaching professional development opportunities for doctoral students and postdocs. Higher Education Research & Development, 38(6), 1168–1182.

Homer, S.R. (2018). Should PhD students teach? Psychology Teaching Review, 24(2): 77-81

Vitae. (2011). Researcher Development Framework. https://www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/rdf-related/researcher-development-framework-rdf-vitae.pdf/view