

Title: **Developing an Effective Community of Practice for the Uptake of Technology Facilitated Learning**

Presenter: **Dr Clare Carruthers, Professor Heather Farley, Mr Chris McLean, Dr Una McMahon-Beattie, Mr Steve McPeake, Mrs Claire Scott-McAteer, Mr Ronnie Patton and Mrs Christine Wightman**
University of Ulster

Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Appreciate the growing significance and value of Communities of Practice (CoPs) in the HE arena;
- Explore, in relation to the use of technology facilitated learning (TFL), what a CoP might incorporate;
- Explore ways in which a CoP could engage staff in the use of TFL in their own institutions;
- Identify with the concept of CoPs in other areas of activity.

Session Outline

This workshop intends to explore the concept of Communities of Practice as they apply to HE institutions. The concept of sharing practice and knowledge through the development of effective Communities of Practice (CoP) is gaining ground in the HE arena, focusing on the ability of a community to “cultivate organisational knowledge” (Puspitasari and Numao, 2012: no page cited). A growing body of evidence suggests that it is an effective mechanism to share knowledge and help support aspects of teaching and learning (McDermott, 1999, 2000, Wenger et al, 2002, Tremblay, 2007, Nugent et al, 2008, Puspitasari and Numao, 2012 and Swan et al, 2012).

This project arose out of the recognition that an informal CoP already exists in the Ulster Business School, University of Ulster and elsewhere in the University, in relation to the uptake and adoption of technology facilitated learning (TFL). This session will share the experience of galvanising progress already made and the further establishment of a CoP. This CoP focuses in particular, on the development of guides, case studies and wikis on the implementation of particular aspects of TFL. Additionally, the aim is to pilot a mentoring system to help staff who may be less familiar and/or more resistant to the use of the technology, allowing them to learn more about its functionality and key benefits in order to make informed decisions about its utilisation.

The session is aimed at exploring the effectiveness of such CoPs and will focus on staff reflections and evaluations of the process. It is also intended that the concept of CoPs elsewhere will be explored through discussion of best practice in relation to CoPs, where their effectiveness can be exchanged and shared through this discussion.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

- 5 mins. Introduction: Introduction to the concept of Communities of Practice;
- 15 mins. Context: A CoP in action – an Ulster Business School case study – emergence, experiences, reflections and evaluations;
- 20 mins. Discussion – A focus on CoPs in the HE arena;

Indicative discussion questions:

What key areas might a CoP focus on in your Department/Institution – A&F, placement, T&L, student engagement, employability, teaching practice etc.?

Do you recognise any formal/informal CoPs in your institution?

Does anyone have any experience of developing a CoP?

What might be the benefits of the development of a CoP in relation to the uptake of TFL in your department/institution?

What challenges/barriers might you envisage in establishing a CoP?

How might you address such challenges?

- 5 mins. - Summary and close.

References

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