Title: **Enhancement in a challenging context: evaluating the outcomes of a refreshed Peer Supported Review process**

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Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Consider the role and impact that the national and institutional culture and context around HE can play in shaping the nature and authenticity of staff engagement with L&T enhancement;

- Recognise the need for and value of undertaking institutional research that expose contextual traits and dynamics within their respective institutions;
- Appreciate the need to continuously reflect on and evaluate strategies for academic development and enhancement.

- Consider new approaches that can be utilised to harness the power of the dynamic context in which academic development operates.

Session Outline

There is a view that the marketisation of HE and the resulting metrics driven context is detrimental to the enhancement of L&T (Field, 2015; Vardi, 2011). Located in the context of a large UK university with a strategic focus on teaching excellence and the student experience, this study is concerned with the particular challenge of engaging staff in enhancement activities in an increasingly target and performance driven environment. The literature suggests that such a context encourages a culture of compliance whereby staff 'comply without engagement' (Roxa and Martensson, 2011: 36; Di Napoli, 2014). Indeed, existing institutional research suggests that the issue of compliance exists among some staff across a range enhancement activities and, as such, the activities may not be achieving their full potential in terms of supporting and contributing to strategic L&T enhancement objectives. With this challenge in mind, this paper focuses on the enhancement outcomes arising from a longstanding institutional Peer Supported Review (PSR) initiative that was refocused and underpinned by a holistic quality model, which fully integrates and assimilates the usually discrete areas of quality assurance and enhancement (Elassy, 2015; Williams, 2016; Gosling and D'Andrea, 2001).

The methodological approach includes a quantitative and qualitative analysis and comparison of enhancement activity reports submitted by staff via the PSR process, and an online survey of staff experiences and behaviours around engagement with enhancement activities and PSR.

The analysis has shown that the refreshed PSR approach has resulted in:
- a marked increase in levels of staff engagement with PSR;
- growth in the amount and extent of collaborative enhancement projects;
- a greater number of detailed and comprehensive enhancement reports.

Collectively, the results suggest that the holistic quality model, which emphasises explicitly the alignment and interconnected value and relevance of staff, departmental and institutional objectives, can bolster meaningful and authentic staff engagement with enhancement.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

5 mins – setting the scene: the national and institutional context for the case study and our aims and objectives.

15 mins – introducing the refreshed Peer Supported Review process and the findings from the evaluation of the enhancement outcomes arising from the revised approach

20 mins – facilitated discussions on tables (or as a whole group depending on the number of attendees) about how the institutional context, use of institutional research and holistic quality approach used at Ulster reflects or resonates with participants' experiences in their own institutions. The discussion will be structured around the following indicative questions and will provide the audience with opportunities to discuss and respond both verbally and via the audience response software Mentimeter:

- How do you perceive/ experience the L&T culture and context at your own institution?

- To what extent are individuals or groups engaged in institutional research to inform and support strategies for enhancement?

- How feasible is the wider application of such a holistic quality model?

- How might greater and more effective dissemination of enhancements be achieved?

5 mins – The remaining time minutes will allow time for any further Q&A.

References

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