**Title:**        **Enabling creative professional conversations around academic leadership through dialogue sheets**

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## Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Appreciate how dialogue sheets might contribute to professional conversations
- Outline how professional conversations can be used to facilitate discussion on organisational change
- Discuss their own experiences in a dialogue session
- Consider the application of the principles of professional conversations using Dialogue Sheets to an area of their own or their institution's practice or change agenda
- Appreciate the theoretical and evidential basis of professional conversations.

## Session Outline
Key issues to be addressed are:

Professional conversations are essential to the enhancement of practice in any profession (Shaw, 2002, Francis & D'Annunzio-Green, 2005) and can enable employee engagement, ownership and empowerment. But how can we support such professional conversations in academic development? And how best can we encourage them to be creative, democratic, purposeful – and enjoyable?

Participants at the workshop *Placing Student Voices at the Heart of Institutional Dialogue* in Spring, 2008 were introduced to Dialogue Sheets (Holtham and Courtney, 2006) by Flint and Oxley who described their use within their own institution (Flint & Oxley, 2009). Describing these as an innovative tool to change institutional dialogue which could be used by academic developers to adopt less traditional facilitation roles, the workshop leaders ably modelled this facilitative approach. In exemplary SEDA interactive style, participants had the opportunity not only to learn about but also experience Dialogue Sheets by engaging in active dialogue with fellow participants.

We left inspired and began employing Dialogue Sheets in our work and developing them further to engage, stimulate and challenge colleagues in multiple contexts including facilitating inter-sectoral debate and engaging conference, seminar and workshop staff participants with key aspects of our academic practice agenda. A case study with example

Dialogue Sheets is now held on our institutional Learning, Teaching and Assessment Resource Bank (available via JORUM: Campbell, 2011).

This workshop session provides an opportunity for participants to experience Dialogue Sheets as we are currently using them in the context of enabling conversations around reconceptualising Academic Leadership as a principle across our institution. Academic Leadership has been identified as critical for the development of the HE sector as a whole (Leadership Foundation for Higher Education Strategy 2010-2014) and has been identified as central to our institutions strategic direction. An increasing emphasis on a contextualised approach to academic leadership meant that a dialogic tool is particularly useful.

Our aim is to return to SEDA with an innovative strategy introduced to us at SEDA which we have further developed and utilised in a double hermeneutic (Giddens, 1987). By enabling participants to experience the potential of this facilitative tool, we hope to empower other developers to use them to develop effective professional conversations in their own contexts.

**Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

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| Introduction The evidence and sharing of practitioner experience | 10 mins |
| Presentation: Dialogue Sheets – how they have informed our academic practice | 10 mins |
| Group experiential activity: Dialogic activity | 30 mins |
| Dialogue across the groups | 15 mins |
| Presentation and exchange: How Dialogue Sheets informed our Academic Leadership institutional change work: process and outcomes | 15 mins |
| Closing discussion and dialogue | 10 mins |

**References**

Campbell, F (2010), Enhancing institutional conversations through Dialogue Sheets
JORUM case study
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Flint, A, Oxley, A (2008), *Placing Student Voices at the Heart of Institutional Dialogue*, SEDA Spring conference  May 2008, London
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Francis, H. and D'Annunzio-Green (2005) *HRM and the pursuit of a service culture: managerial encounters with competing discourses*, Employee Relations Journal, 27, 1, pp. 71-85

Giddens, A (1987) *Social Theory and Modern Sociology, Cambridge, Polity Press*

Holtham, C. and Courtney, N. (2006) About Dialogue Sheets. Quality in Business Education: available from http://www.qube.ac.uk/QuBE/toolbox/diags/dialogsheet/dialsht/

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Shaw, P (2002) Changing Conversations in Organizations: A Complexity Approach to Change (Complexity and Emergence in Organizations) Routledge