

**Title:**                    **A comparison of two academic support team models: Peer delivery and 3rd space professionals**

**Presenter:**            **Anna Limpens, Simon Gamble**  
University of Portsmouth, University of Bristol

### **Session Learning Outcomes**

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

Use evidence from two diverse models to evaluate and apply the considerations, arguments and approaches required to develop and support a dynamic and varied academic support team in their own institutional context.

### **Session Outline**

The changing landscape of Higher Education has intensified institutional commitment to student support services. Since 2011, the University of Portsmouth has recruited 30 Learning Support Tutors, situated within Faculties, to support generic skills and specific disciplinary needs. At the University of Bristol, the newly created Study Skills service similarly employs a team of faculty-based Student Advocates to facilitate academic skills development.

In Portsmouth, Academic Development created a year-long professional development programme (LSProf), aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF). An initial induction period is followed by monthly peer learning sessions and self-directed individual tasks. These sessions afford a sense of a “central position” and group affiliation even though the tutors are widely dispersed both in disciplinary terms and location. Similarly, in Bristol peer delivery is coached in the context of being a team but with flexibility to acknowledge the academic literacies of each subject area (Lea & Street, 1998).

Central to the philosophy of both programmes is self-regulated learning and recognition of the wealth and diversity of prior experience and knowledge of the facilitators. Coaching sessions are highly dialogic in nature and based on an approach of meta-cognition i.e. a cycle of processes, allowing facilitators to evaluate their practice, plan and explore methods and strategies to further their understanding and practice, before reflecting on the efficacy of these (Ambrose et al., 2010). This process is further enhanced by intentional questioning and creating a stage of disequilibrium or “healthy tension” to help the facilitators question their beliefs, approaches and principles, thus generating personal meaning and understanding (Frankl, 2014).

This session will compare the development, perceived status and experiences of the two teams.

Aspects for consideration include:

- Disciplinary differences in supporting academic development
- The application of pedagogies for coaching and support in training peer and embedded academic support teams
- The status of facilitators as academics and 3rd space professionals (Whitchurch, 2013)
- Arising issues

### **Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

The outline of the workshop is as follows;

Introduction: The context and current models for student support at the University of Portsmouth and the University of Bristol (5 mins)

Presentation: Comparison of the two models, including: the framework and pedagogical approach, the process, academic literacies and their influence on the experiences of the facilitators, revisions to subsequent iterations, and ongoing support structures. (20 mins)

Discussion: Sharing current models and practices at delegates own institutions (5 mins)

Discussion: An opportunity for delegates to critique or ask questions about the models, share their own practice, and identify the key considerations and elements required in supporting a cross-institution facilitator team. (15 mins)

### **References**

Ambrose, S.A., Bridges, M.W., De Pietro, M.C., Lovett, M., & Norman, M.K. (2010). *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Frankl, F. (2014). *The will to meaning*. (expanded ed.) New York, NY: Penguin group.

Lea, M.A., & Street, B.V. (1998). Student writing in higher education: An academic literacies approach. *Studies in Higher Education*, 23:2, p157- 164.

Whitchurch, C. (2013). *Reconstructing Identities in Higher Education: The Rise of Third Space Professionals*. London: Routledge/SRHE