

Title: University Teaching Fellowship Schemes: do they promote developments in pedagogic research and development?

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify benefits and possible areas for improvement of teaching fellowship schemes
- Reflect on our evaluation project and its findings in context of their own experience of such schemes
- Discuss how the findings relate to relevant literature
- Formulate recommendations to support educational development as well as to encourage colleagues to engage in pedagogic research

Session Outline

Teaching fellowship schemes (TFS) are widely used within the university sector to reward teaching and learning and to promote pedagogic research (D'Andrea, 2007). They were introduced to raise the status of teaching and learning, providing opportunity to gain recognition for commitment as a university teacher which has been cited as a primary motivator for people's engagement (McArthur *et al.*, 2004). TFS commonly provide financial awards supporting small-scale educational research projects (D'Andrea, 2007). Their outcomes are expected to benefit individuals' practice, and therefore enhance the student experience (Skelton, 2005). They have become established features of many universities and several research studies report on the positive impact of TFS, such as encouraging collaboration and contributing to development of communities of practice (Dexter & Seden, 2012; Morris & Fry, 2006; Jones, 2010). These studies also identify barriers and others contest the contribution TFS have made to promoting pedagogic research. (e.g. Skelton, 2005). They have faced criticism for not leading to long-term changes in teaching practices and for poor dissemination (e.g. Skelton, 2005; D'Andrea, 2007).

We will start the workshop by inviting delegates to reflect on their experience of such schemes, identifying benefits and possible areas for improvement. We will provide further context by reporting the findings of a small evaluation project of Plymouth University's TFS. This project examined the contribution this scheme has made to the promotion of pedagogic research and development. In particular, we aim to discuss how the findings resonate with delegates' experience, the extent to which they relate to benefits and criticisms found in the literature, and to which the scheme has succeeded in raising the exposure and status of PU's

pedagogic research activities. We will also formulate suggestions to address some of the barriers identified and to continue to attract applications and engagement across faculties.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

10 mins: Introduction and round-robin to identify benefits and possible areas for improvement of teaching fellowship schemes as perceived by delegates

5 mins: Outline briefly aspects of the evaluation project at Plymouth University

15 mins: Presentation of main findings interspersed with discussion (inviting delegates to contribute based on their experiences and practice)

10 mins: Formulate suggestions to improve such schemes to address perceived weaknesses, to attract interest, and to better support educational development

Possible Questions:

- Who has experience of / has been awarded a Teaching Fellowship or similar award? In your opinion what are the benefits of this scheme and are there any areas which can be improved?
- Does your experience resonate with our findings and if so how? If not, what are the main differences?
- Based on the areas of improvement we identified earlier, how can we address these? How can we attract a wider interest (from across our institutions)? How can we better support such initiatives?

References

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