Title: **What makes a great module leader and how can we best support others ?**

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Reflect on the key characteristics of the most highly student rated student modules at one university
- Appreciate the key attributes and characteristics of great module leaders at one university
- Consider provision for staff development for module leaders at their own universities.

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

Why are some module leaders so much more successful than others? There is little research into the role of the module leader which is surprising because modules (or units) are at the heart of the student learning experience, the vast majority of lecturers run them and they are significant within the NSS area of Organisation and Management.

In-depth interviews with leaders of the top thirty student-rated modules at Southampton Solent University were undertaken in 2010. We wanted to know why these module leaders felt that their module, out of a potential 1600 modules at Solent, were so highly rated by students. We also asked these module leaders how this good practice should be disseminated. The research team, led by a Dean, comprised seven recently appointed lecturers from across the university. The findings were presented to groups at all levels across the university to share good practice, reflect on the key themes and discuss effective staff development for new lecturers.

Key findings from this study are briefly presented in this workshop. Areas such as module organisation and ethos, communication with students, attitudes to assessment design and feedback, IT innovation, and module leader attribute will be explored in more depth through interactive exercises. Comparisons with other studies will be made where possible (e.g. Hefferman 2009). The Solent approach to staff development for module leaders and materials will be discussed.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

5 minutes: Overview of the research project (Powerpoint presentation)
10 minutes: Interactive post-it exercise exploring characteristics of great modules
5 minutes: Group reflection
10 minutes: Interactive post-it exercise exploring attributes of great module leaders
5 minutes: Group reflection
10 minutes: Summary of research findings and implications for developing new lecturers*.

* Handout provided with research findings and illustration of staff development tools at Solent.

References

Heffernan, T., Morrison, M., Charles, Sweeney.,&, A Jarratt, A (2009) Personal attributes of effective lecturers: The importance of dynamism, communication, rapport and applied knowledge *International Journal of Management Education* 8(3)