

**Title:** **Changing the academic landscape at Abertay: academic change management from three different perspectives**

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### **Session Learning Outcomes**

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

1. Have an understanding of Abertay's novel approach to change management
2. Have an understanding of the lead role of its central academic development unit
3. Appreciate the benefits of developing teams as opposed to individuals within the context of curriculum reform
4. Have had an opportunity to reflect upon similarities and differences within their own context and identified areas for future enhancement.

### **Session Outline**

The session will consist of three interlinked presentations looking at change management within an organisation from the perspective of 1) institutional vision and strategy, 2) the role of the central Teaching, Learning and Enhancement (TLE) unit and 3) the journey of an individual programme team through the process.

#### **Session 1**

Abertay's strategy for teaching and learning has transformed recently, catalysed by the university's new teaching and learning enhancement (TLE) strategy. This presentation will give an overview of the changes implemented with emphasis on the change management approaches employed and a focus on our recent curriculum reform.

The key features of Abertay's approach include:

1. Increased flexibility and student choice
2. A suite of new interdisciplinary electives
3. Move from 15 to 20 credit modular structure
4. A suite of new accelerated degrees
5. New academic calendar including mid term feedback weeks
6. New assessment principles, policy and practice to support deeper student learning
7. New literal grading scale and implementation of Grade Point Average (GPA) for degree awards
8. Staff centred approach to academic professional development
9. Professional recognition CPD scheme aligned to all four descriptors of the UKPSF

10. Support for scholarly communities of practice including seminars, workshops, resources, blog, funding scheme for teaching and learning innovation

The change management for this transformation has been characterised by Abertay's unique 5Ps approach i.e. Purpose, Principles, Participation, Practice and Pace. Involving staff in the development of our change initiatives and policy development via a combination of short life task groups, seminars and more formal consultation through university governance systems, and the relatively small size of the university (3500 students, 200 academic staff), have all enabled whole institutional change to be implemented remarkably quickly and with much more ownership than would otherwise have been possible.

The presentation will outline the 5Ps approach, with emphasis on our recent whole institutional curriculum reform.

## **Session 2**

Since its creation in 2013, Abertay's central TLE unit has played a lead role in the development and implementation of the university's TLE strategy which has transformed pedagogic practices and policies. TLE's novel and complex role throughout these significant changes has necessitated taking on the challenges of thought leadership, facilitation, mentorship, providing advice and guidance, brokerage and providing direct resource (funding for t&l innovation) for staff.

The presentation will focus, in particular, on the role of TLE through the university's recent whole institutional curriculum reform and the work that has been done to support programme teams move to more flexible, subject-based curricula. Curriculum reform has also involved portfolio review (against an evaluation matrix developed in-house), changing module credit structure (from 15 to 20 credits), introducing a new suite of interdisciplinary electives and agreeing a new set of Abertay Attributes that apply to both students and staff.

A major feature of Abertay's transformation has been the creation of a new scholarly community of practice, Network for Teaching and Learning Enhancement (NetTLE) which has helped to build capacity and improved the sharing of good practice in the institution. Examples of the kind of activities of NetTLE include:

- Monthly TLE seminars (regularly attended by 20-25% of our academic staff)
- Guidance
- Funding for t&l innovation- aligned with both the University's strategic priorities and the national quality Enhancement Themes
- Support for individual programme teams
- Facilitation of various short life working groups e.g. internal student surveys, learning analytics, academic calendar, Abertay Attributes etc.
- Embedding of Electronic Management of Assessment (EMA) and new technologies which promote active, deeper approaches to student learning.

Abertay's pedagogic reforms are ongoing and challenges remain, however, there are already very positive signs of impact as evidenced e.g. by the university's latest NSS results.

## **Session 3**

Curriculum reform and the introduction of problem and enquiry based learning is dependent on the skill set of teaching staff. This session describes how staff development was used to support curriculum reform for an accredited Biomedical Science programme.

Problem based learning (PBL) is most effectively used by embedding it in all stages of a programme so that students develop skills in independent learning as they progress through their academic careers. Effective introduction therefore requires that a number of staff can confidently deliver this style of learning (Akil 2013, Murray and Savin-Baden 2000). Some (staff) will be motivated to develop their own skills in this however this will not generate the critical mass of expertise within the group to instigate changes to programme-wide delivery. At Abertay a Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund (ATLEF) grant was used to fund an intensive hands-on 2 day workshop on problem and enquiry based learning for all staff teaching on the BSc Biomedical Sciences programme. A member of staff was identified to attend an additional 2 day external workshop on PBL. This member of staff was able to champion PBL within the programme (on a first year module) and provide informal advice and support to the team.

The initial training occurred in 2014 and the programme now has delivery by PBL at all stages. In the initial stages some of the feedback from students was mixed. Colleagues were able to reflect on implementation as a team and share practices that had proved successful with our students.

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

The session will comprise:

1. Three short presentations (10mins each)
2. Structured reflection in small groups focussing on challenges and opportunities presented by the approach presented- could this work in participants' institutions? (10min)
3. Sharing of participants' take home messages (5min).

The presenters will mingle with the groups to answer questions arising.

### **References**

A.D.Robertson, '[Developing a new whole institutional approach to Teaching and Learning Enhancement](#)', *HEA* (2016). and references therein

S. Olivier, '[How to manage rapid change](#)'(2015). Times Higher Education <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/how-to-manage-rapid-change> (accessed 21/07/17)

Akili W. Problem-Based Learning (PBL): How to implement, strategize, and infuse PBL in an engineering program?, *Qscience Proceedings (World Congress on Engineering Education 2013)* 2014:2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.5339/qproc.2014.wcee2013.2>

Murray, I& Savin-Baden, M (2000) Staff Development in Problem-based Learning, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 5:1, 107-126, DOI: 10.1080/135625100114993