Title: **The ripple effect: developing a peer network for cascading digital skills practice**

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

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

1. Develop an understanding of the peer network model and the roles associated with enabling it;
2. Gain insight into experiences and impact of supporting practice sharing;
3. Consider the role of academic developers in supporting evaluation and dissemination of practice;
4. Identify and explore the benefits to individual development, faculty needs, service agendas and institutional aims in their own context.

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

A peer network model has been developed to support the development of academic colleagues' digital skills in the University of Cumbria's Faculty of Health. The work focuses on scaffolding a culture of practice exchange that contributes to individuals' scholarship, addresses faculty staff enhancement and capacity needs, and provides a platform for cascading and sharing effective practice within the University. Simultaneously there is a need to evaluate how this development benefits the student learning experience (McAlpine et al, 2008).

The model encourages sustained academic development support for contributors around the evaluation of their professional practice, and design for sharing of practices and approaches amongst peers. By providing platforms for dissemination, colleagues have been able to produce valuable outputs that contribute to the professional development of their peers (Boud, 1999), a body of sustainable practice-based resources, and personal scholarship. These outcomes directly support the dissemination of activities that enhance teaching in practical ways. Equally, practices that did not enhance learning and teaching have also been disseminated along with the reasons why.

The driver for cascading practice has been to enhance digital literacy amongst colleagues (Krumsvik, 2008). However, wider benefits are also emerging. These include the increased visibility of the often hidden impact of academic development activity, and a ripple effect not

only limited to the primary beneficiaries of that support, but also to those whose practice is subsequently influenced (Gray & Radloff, 2008; Gunn & Donald, 2011). The process has also provided individual scope for recognition and reward for excellent teaching by using outputs in professional development reviews, applications for teaching excellence awards and in working towards professional standards.

This session outlines the process developed and examples of it in action. It incorporates stakeholder experiences of the process, and provides opportunities for participants to consider the potential implications and benefits of adopting the process in their own practice.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Participants will be able to engage actively with the themes arising in this paper throughout the session, enabling understanding and prompting dialogue about the peer network model and its implications.

Introductory presentation: Outline of the context and rationale for the peer network model and the challenges it has sought to address.	10m
Discussion: Small group discussion activity using case examples and practitioner experiences to help develop understanding of the model	10m
Presentation: Exploration of the benefits to stakeholders, including a focus on addressing the need of the academic developers to make the impact of their work more visible.	10m
Discussion: Small group discussion exploring how this approach intersects with participants' current practices, and the potential benefits and implications in adopting the model.	10m
Summary of discussions and Q&A.	5m

References

Boud, D. (1999) 'Situating academic development in professional work: using peer learning', *International Journal for Academic Development*, 4(1), pp.3–10

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Krumsvik, J.R. (2008) 'Situated learning and teachers' digital competence', *Education and Information Technologies,* 13(4), pp.279–290

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