

Title: Tribes and tribulations: developing early academics

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Produce an outline definition of early academic identity with reference to their own institution
- Suggest ways in which the development of excellent teachers could or should be integrated with their developing academic identity
- Develop models of supporting early academic practice related to work-based learning

Session Outline

Glynis Cousin (2012) challenges the way in which many educational developers use the established principle of 'constructivist alignment' (Biggs, 1999) to produce PG Certs in Learning and Teaching for our new staff which can then often be open to accusations of being predominantly functional and technicist. Cousin suggests that 'students may be subject to stronger forces than that of alignment and consistency' and suggests, not that we should ignore Biggs' work, but that we should progress it to take greater account of the socio-cultural context in which we all exist and practice.

Taking this challenge on board, the PG Cert team at the University of Wolverhampton built their new PG Cert around ideas of academic identity. Using a framework of research based in this university, we looked at the early years of academic identity and the concept of 'The Reluctant Academic' (Gale, 2011). In discussion with our own new staff from the last 5 years our 3 module design became: 'The Academic as Teacher; The Academic as Designer and The Academic as Researcher.

Further evaluations this year seem to suggest that there are still major discussions to be continued around the purpose of our development plans for 'excellent teachers':

- What is the relationship of the development of 'excellent teachers' to their socio-cultural context?
- What is the responsibility of a PG Cert to develop 'excellent teachers' within a more long-term holistic career development and institutional direction?
- What is the responsibility of the continuing support of 'excellent teachers' to an institutional signature pedagogy?

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

- 5 minutes: Icebreaker (re Academic Identity)
- 20 minutes: Presentation: Redefining of the PG Cert at the University of Wolverhampton – a work-based learning and academic identity model
- 10 minutes: Paired discussion: Your first 5 years - significant influences on your academic identity?
- 10 minutes: Whole group discussion: The first 5 years – supporting early academic identity in context

References

- Biggs, J. (1999): What the Student Does: teaching for enhanced learning, Higher Education Research & Development, 18:1, 57-75
- Cousin, C. (2012): Getting our students to engage: a review of two key contributions 10 years on, Higher Education Research & Development, 31:1, 15-20
- Gale, H. (2011): The reluctant academic: early-career academics in a teaching-orientated university, International Journal for Academic Development, 16:3, 215-227