

Title: **A new frontier for professional development: developing flexible pathways to recognition for those who teach in Higher Education**

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Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Discuss the enablers and barriers to participation in professional development activities, prompted by the results of the research presented.
- Compare professional development activities offered to academic staff in different institutions and consider the strengths of various models adopted.

Session Outline

This discussion paper is based on research undertaken as part of a project funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education entitled 'Professional Development Capacity Building in Higher Education: extending provision for national impact through a flexible pathways approach' project. The project aims to develop flexible pathways for those in teach in Higher Education, providing opportunities to gain credits for formal and informal learning and through recognition of prior learning.

Strong calls for flexibility in the provision of PD for academic staff in teaching, learning and assessment emerge from the literature (Rientes, 2013; Teräs, 2016) and both new and experienced HE faculty cite time constraints as a significant barrier to engaging in PD (e.g. Brownell and Tanner, 2012). As part of the development of relevant and flexible pathways to PD, academic staff in our three partner institutions in the Shannon Consortium were invited to share their views a) the possibilities and opportunities for the design, delivery, recognition and reward of PD in teaching and learning in HE and b) which aspect of teaching, learning and PD are challenging, and why.

This session will initially present the findings of this inter-institutional research project, summarising key findings and insights of relevance to the SEDA community. Presentation of our research will act as a catalyst for a discussion with conference delegates and participants will be invited to share perspectives from their own experiences and institutions, leading to a discussion of how we, the academic

development community, can engage academic staff in relevant and flexible PD which recognises the range of learning undertaken by those who teach in Higher Education.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The early part of this discussion paper (approx. 20 mins) will focus on the findings from research undertaken as part of the 'Professional Development Capacity Building in Higher Education' project, focusing particularly on the possibilities and opportunities for the design, delivery, recognition and reward of PD in teaching and learning in HE.

We will then invite delegates to spend approx. 15 minutes in small groups considering several questions focused on the theme of flexibility in the provision of professional development for staff, e.g.

- What works and why in your institution?
- How can we recognise and reward those who engage in professional development activities?
- How can we recognise and accredit informal/non-accredited PD previously undertaken?
- How can we utilise flexible and online delivery modes to engage academic staff in professional development opportunities?

For the closing 10 minutes of the session, we plan to facilitate an interactive discussion whereby participants can exchange perspectives and successes from their institutions in a spirit of collaborative idea-sharing among the SEDA community.

References

Brownell, S.E. and Tanner, K.B. (2012) 'Barriers to faculty pedagogical change: lack of training, time, incentives and.... tensions with professional identity?', *CBE – Life Sciences Education*, 11, pp. 339-346.

Rientes, B., Brouwer, N. and Lygo-Baker, S. (2013) 'The effects of online professional development on higher education teachers' beliefs and intentions towards learning facilitation and technology', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 29, pp. 122-131.

Teräs, H. (2016) 'Collaborative online professional development for teachers in higher education', *Professional Development in Education*, 42(2), pp. 258-275.