Title: **Engaging the wider academic community in a PGCert in Academic Practice**

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:
- Have gained insight into one university's PGCert in Academic Practice and the principles and strategic drivers underpinning its design
- Consider both the affordance and problems of designing and delivering a PGCert in Academic Practice which relies on close collaboration with and engagement of Faculty based academics
- Critically review whether a shared understanding of standards exists in the assessment of academic practice and in judgements about professional recognition within their own institutional contexts, in particular when a wide range of diverse assessors are involved
- Consider possible strategies which may help to achieve such a shared understanding of standards and the role of the academic developer within this

Session Outline

This discussion paper will provide insight into a PGCert in Academic Practice which was developed in close consultation with the University Executive, Deans and Human Resources. This resulted in a design which combines pathways through the programme tailored to individuals, a workshop-based approach to teaching, and active involvement of the Faculties in teaching, support and assessment. One intention was to adopt a 'practice frame' for academic development by moving away from a focus on individuals and what they need to know, to 'the embodied, contextualised activities academics engage in with others' (Boud and Brew, 2013: p.214). The paper will provide an overview of the main features of the programme and a critical discussion of the benefits and tensions arising from its specific nature. The discussion will focus on the challenges arising from the involvement of a wide range of contributors in formative and summative assessment. We will consider the issue of academic standards in the context of PGCerts (and CPD frameworks as they raise similar issues) and who the holders of the standards are. Recent research about marking (e.g. Bloxham and Boyd, 2012) has shown that standards are tacit and discipline specific. This paper will argue that key to a successful programme of this kind is an examination and shared understanding of the standards, and that these are brought to the fore through the assessment process. A debate about the standards can only be achieved by actively involving diverse

members of the academic community in the role as assessors. This also has implications for the role of academic developers.

Key issues:
The challenges of
- Designing a 'situated' PGCert in Academic Practice
- Incorporating the conflicting needs and wants of several stakeholders
- Engaging a wide range of individuals in its delivery, support and assessment
- Developing a shared understanding of standards

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Presentation:
- History and key features of the PGCert ('10)
- The challenges of involving the wider academic community in the programme ('5)
- Issues arising from assessment and standards ('5)

Discussion:
- Feedback on the design of the PGCert: how different/similar is it to PGCerts in participants' own institutions? How 'situated' do you find it?
- Participants' own experiences of involving a diverse and wide range of Faculty/discipline and Faculty or Service based support staff in their PGCerts and wider CPD frameworks
- Are standards an issue in academic development? Do we have a shared understanding of the standards that underpin assessment and professional recognition judgements? (How) are / can standards be examined and interrogated? Are there any concrete strategies which would contribute to the development of shared understanding of standards? Are established ways of upholding and maintaining standards (e.g. internal and external moderation) still appropriate and sufficient in these situations?

References

Boud, D., and Brew, A. (2013) 'Reconceptualising academic work as professional practice: implications for academic development' *International Journal for Academic Development* 18(3), pp. 208-221.

Bloxham, S., and Boyd, P. (2012) 'Accountability in grading student work: securing academic standards in a twenty-first century quality assurance context' *British Educational Research Journal* 4(38), pp. 615–634.