

Title: Promoting teaching excellence through the development of digital capabilities: can it be done?

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Session Learning Outcomes

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

- articulate what the terms 'digitally capable' and 'teaching excellence' might look like when mobilised in educational development contexts they are familiar with
- design potential action-orientated inquiries aimed at developing digital capabilities with which to promote teaching excellence among academic staff
- propose ways in which a network of inquirers might be established to share inquiry experiences and practices.

Session Outline

This workshop is for academic developers seeking to use action-orientated inquiry approaches to explore the relationship between digital capabilities and teaching excellence in educational development contexts. For the purposes of this workshop, we define teaching excellence as "evidence of enhancing and transforming the student learning experience" (QAA, 2016:7), and digital capabilities as "the capabilities which fit someone for living, learning and working in a digital society" (JISC, 2014). By action-oriented, we propose inquiry approaches which aim to "create participative communities of inquiry in which qualities of engagement, curiosity and question posing are brought to bear on significant practical issues." (Reason & Bradbury, 2008:1).

We seek to create a discursive space where participants debate the conceptual slipperiness of terms 'digitally capable' and 'teaching excellence' with a view to understanding their application in practice-based contexts participants work in. These discussions will involve considering how to manage potential tensions emerging as a result of promoting teaching excellence through the development of digital capabilities at a time, when within certain sections of the Academy, resistance to the use of technology in seems to be emerging (Bryant, 2016). Building on these discussions, the group will begin designing action-orientated inquiries aimed at operationalising academic development strategies promoting digital capabilities which can underpin teaching excellence. These activities also aim to lay

the foundations of an inquiry network in which participants share experiences, knowledge and insights gained as they pursue similar lines of inquiry within their own institutions.

We draw on our experiences designing a blended learning component on a Post Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) course to provide a frame for our discussions and the focus of the workshop. Through the workshop, we aim to create a space where participants can share experiences, knowledge and practices in order to support their own development as academic developers.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is as follows;

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- **Introduction (5mins):** outline of session aims and clarification of what we mean by the terms teaching excellence, digital capability and action-orientated inquiry.
- **Setting the context (10mins):** In small groups, participants consider the question, “What does teaching excellence underpinned by the development of digital capabilities potentially look like?”
- **Task (20 mins):** group activity aimed at identifying and informing the design of action-orientated inquiries, with the participants being asked to consider the following questions:
 - What questions could we ask as part of action-orientated inquiries seeking to promote digital capabilities that can underpin teaching excellence?
 - What would a potential inquiry design look like?
 - How would data generated from any potential inquiries be used to inform staff development strategies?
- **Plenary (10 mins):** Discuss potential ways in which a network of inquirers might be grown out of the session as a way to share inquiry experiences and practices.

References

Bryant, P., (2016). It doesn't matter what is in your hands. *The Digital Stranger* [blog] 29 September. Available at: <http://peterbryant.smegradio.com/?p=667> [Accessed 28 October 2016].

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JISC, (2014) Developing digital literacies [online] Available at <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/developing-students-digital-literacy> [Accessed 26 January 2017].

QAA, (2016). *Subscriber Research Series 2016-17: Digital Capability and Teaching Excellence*. [online] Available at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=3115#.WBNTwS0rLcu> [Accessed 28 October 2016].

Reason, P & Bradbury, H. eds., (2008). *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.