

Title: Empowering programme leaders through institutional dialogue

Presenters: Fiona Campbell and representatives of the Programme Leading Working Group
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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will have:

- Celebrated the commitment and shared the challenges of the Programme Leader
- Explored how Programme leaders can be empowered through better support at school and institutional level
- Experienced an innovative tool for engaging staff in effective institutional dialogue and reflected on its value for use within their own institutional contexts

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

Programme Leaders have a pivotal role within universities and how they carry out that role can significantly impact on their programmes, their teams and their students. But the Programme Leading role is rarely well-defined and as a result many incumbents express feelings of isolation and uncertainties over their responsibilities and their position within their institutions believing themselves to be unsupported and their work unrecognised. Some question if they are leaders at all. The same concerns seem to hold true in both UK and international institutions (Eriksson et al 2010). But despite the challenges and dilemmas which Programme Leaders experience they remain committed to their students and to their subject disciplines.

This session will use Programme Leaders' voices to engender debate as to how they can be empowered and supported by different groups - both local and central - within an institution and by external organisations. The debate will be primarily enabled through the use of Dialogue Sheets, a simple but powerful tool which stimulates conversations by structuring discussion, encouraging contributions and logging outcomes. Dialogue Sheets were introduced to SEDA in the workshop *Placing Student Voices at the Heart of Institutional Dialogue* at the SEDA Spring Conference in 2008 (Flint and Oxley 2008) and were very positively received. Since then they have been developed for different purposes and used in a variety of fora at Edinburgh Napier University including facilitating inter-sectoral debate, for team-building and to engage participants with key aspects of our LTA agenda in conferences, seminars and workshops. The Dialogue Sheet developed for this session will provide quotes

and questions to stimulate debate and structured space for groups to record their views, ideas and solutions.

The session will be highly interactive and all contributions to the activities will be captured and made available to participants after the conference.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The workshop will be organised around the use of a Dialogue Sheet to enable participants to experience the tool and consider its use for their own purposes.

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| 30 mins | Introduction to session
Group activity: <i>Programme Leading: the big picture</i>
DVD excerpts: challenges of Programme Leading |
| 30 mins | Dialogue Sheet group activity:
<i>Who can support and empower Programme Leaders – and how?</i> |
| 30 mins | Feedback and discussion on activity
Reflection on Dialogue Sheet tool
DVD excerpts: celebrating Programme Leading |

References

Flint, A and Oxley, A (2008) *Placing Student Voices at the Heart of Institutional Dialogue* SEDA Spring Conference 2008 Engaging with Student Expectations

Eriksson, S Henriksson, A-S; Elmgren, M (2010) Supporting Pedagogical Leaders International Consortium for Educational Development: *Enhancing strategies for global quality learning in higher education* 28-29 June 2010, Barcelona