Developing scholarship through professional recognition: Associate Lecturers in the Open University

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Developing scholarship through professional recognition: Associate Lecturers in the Open University

Pat Atkins
Director, Tutorial Developments Programme,

Jane Roberts
Senior Lecturer, Professional and Academic Development,
The Open University
Associate Lecturers (ALs) in the Open University UK

- About 5,000 ALs in the OU
- Fractional contracts (average less than one day a week)
- Facilitating learning of a group of students (average 20) on a particular module –
  - Assessment
  - Support
  - Tutorials (online or in local colleges/universities/conference centres)
- Based at home
- Managed/developed by staff in Faculties, based in the OU’s regional/national network of offices
The OpenPAD scheme for professional recognition

- Accredited by HEA in 2013 at D1 – D4

- Developed from OU CETLs’ successes in using practitioner inquiry to combine scholarship with professional development

- Open to academic-related and academic staff, including ALs

- Supported by 1-1 mentoring

- Access to relevant information and conversations online (e.g. literature, forums)

- Re-accreditation underway for September 2016
Practitioner Inquiry

Survey of OpenPAD participants

- Survey every six months
- Completers, plus participants registered for 6-12 months
- ALs only in this chart, n=66
- Intended Fellowship category of participants

![Bar chart showing the distribution of intended fellowship categories among ALs: 47 in FHEA, 10 in AFHEA, 8 in SFHEA, and 1 in 'Not decided'.]
Why OpenPAD?
Amalgamating responders’ top 3 reasons for undertaking OpenPAD
As a result of undertaking OpenPAD...

... I better understand the UKPSF
As a result of undertaking OpenPAD...

...I am more confident that I can undertake scholarly inquiry into L&T
As a result of undertaking OpenPAD... 

... I am more confident as a university teacher
As a result of undertaking OpenPAD...  
... I have made positive changes in my practice
As a result of undertaking OpenPAD...

... I am more confident about the academic basis of my teaching
Issues with OpenPAD

- Perceptions of Practitioner Inquiry as
  - complex,
  - esoteric
  - ‘social sciencey’

- Scalability of a model based on 1-1 mentoring

- Relatively low apparent progression rates

- Initial lack of structures to encourage progress
Influence others

D1: Associate Fellow HEA

D2: Fellow HEA

D3: Senior Fellow HEA
Forms of evidence building

- **D1 – Associate Fellow**
  - Professional conversation
  - Awareness of cycles of learning
  - Awareness of developing reflective practice

- **D2 – Fellow**
  - Fuller engagement with a range of evidence including some core texts

- **D3 – Senior Fellow**
  - Active engagement with a wide range of scholarship to drive explicit extension of the knowledge base
Questions and comments?

- Jane.Roberts@open.ac.uk
- open.ac.uk/iet
- Pat.Atkins@open.ac.uk