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

Conference or Workshop Item

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

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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


Figure 2
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 OpenPAD participants.](chart.png)
Why OpenPAD?
Amalgamating responders’ top 3 reasons for undertaking OpenPAD

- Recognition
- Development
- Career
- Preferred route
- Scholarship
- Challenge
- Cost
- Other
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

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?

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