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

Conference 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 –
  o Assessment
  o Support
  o 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
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 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 of a wide range of scholarship to drive explicit extension of the knowledge base
Questions and comments?

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