Developing HE practitioner confidence and skills to ensure effective online teaching and student support.

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Developing HE practitioner confidence and skills to ensure effective online teaching and student support
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• Increasing number of HE institutions offering online tuition.
• Important to prepare practitioners new to online education to ensure effective teaching and support for students.

Aims

• Identify previous experience and confidence in core online tuition tasks of new OU tutors and make recommendations for their induction.
• Draw parallels for student induction.

Methods

• 67 novice tutors surveyed in first month of new role in the STEM faculty at the Open University (OU) between October 2018 and November 2019.
• Questions asked about:
  ➢ Previous teaching experience
  ➢ Confidence in core online tuition tasks, assessed via Likert scale (5 categories not at all confident – very confident).
• Data summarised and analysed using Excel.

Results

N=29

Previous experience:
• 81% had worked in HE, 44% in FE, 19% in schools.
• 50% had other experience e.g. private tuition.
• 45% no experience of the OU, 38% were past or current employees, 17% had studied with the OU.

Fig. 1 Proportion of respondents with experience of core online tuition tasks.

Confidence levels

Table 1 Proportion of respondents who said they felt confident or very confident with online tuition tasks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online task</th>
<th>Proportion of respondents (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tutorials</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marking assessment</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderating discussions</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting students</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting disabled students</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team working</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 2 Proportion of respondents who said they felt confident or very confident based on previous experience (a), and knowledge of OU (b).

Conclusions and recommendations

• New tutors had varied previous experience of online tuition and of the OU which relates to their confidence levels.
• Tutors felt least confident about moderating discussions, marking assessment, supporting disabled students and delivering tutorials online.
• To support development of these skills we offered a bespoke induction programme comprising a web page, face to face and online workshops, and asynchronous support via discussion forums.
• As part of ongoing evaluation, tutors will be asked about their confidence levels and usefulness of the programme on its completion.
• Based on our research, we recommend training for HE practitioners new to online teaching that develops their skills and confidence in core tasks.
• Additional support for those with less experience should be considered.
• We suggest that student induction should also include similar, specific training for online study skills to ensure students have the tools and confidence to engage fully with online learning opportunities.