

SCOTTISH HIGHER EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT RESEARCH (SHEER)
Phase II

**Enhancing educational development for
new academic staff through the inclusion
and comparison of disciplinary pedagogies**

FINAL REPORT

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Executive summary

This pilot study investigates the perceptions of staff concerning the degree to which educational development opportunities, offered through in-house Postgraduate Certificate (hereafter PG Cert) programmes in higher education learning & teaching (or equivalent), should utilise discipline-specific pedagogies to enhance the provision for new lecturing staff. The study was undertaken in two Scottish pre-92 universities between January and July 2008, through a series of interviews and questionnaires with key staff from five disciplines represented in each institution. The use of Academy Subject Centre materials and other resources to support PG Certificate programmes was investigated through the involvement of five Subject Centres in this study.

Findings suggest that there are preconceptions about the notion of “generic” programmes such as PG Certificates, often held by senior staff in universities on the basis of second hand information and hearsay rather than direct engagement. Discussion with Heads of School, current and previous PG Cert participants in both universities indicate recognition that many aspects of teaching are in fact common across disciplines, and that “generic” approaches create opportunities for new lecturers from diverse disciplines to experience and discuss ideas fundamental to teaching and to observe teaching in areas other than their own. Such opportunities rarely exist outside the PG Certificate setting, and are viewed as very positive development opportunities. Disciplinary differences in teaching, where commented upon, exist at a broader scale (e.g. sciences vs. humanities vs. medicine) and are primarily differences in teaching method rather than approach. There may be merit in exploring these differences further with staff within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and also with colleagues in Academy Subject Centres.

Academy Subject Centres provide a range of materials targeted at new lecturers. Results from a questionnaire sent to participating Subject Centres indicated that these are well-received by their discipline communities, and a wide range of feedback mechanisms exist for the community to help direct the content of these materials. There is variability in the format and content of materials sent as packages to new lecturers, which causes some confusion amongst groups of new lecturers from diverse disciplines when brought together, for example during university induction sessions. Such variability is not viewed as problematic by the Subject Centres.

Quality assurance of the materials provided for new lecturers by the various Subject Centres remains important. Quality assurance mechanisms were in place in all of the responding Subject Centres and, whilst the mechanisms described were variable, all demonstrated a common functionality and expressed willingness to take on board comments from their user communities to shape future developments.

Taking the findings of this study forwards, suggestions were made by some participating academic staff that whilst they are broadly comfortable with the balance achieved between discipline-specific and generic elements in the PG Cert, they would be interested in investigating whether Academy resources and attendance at workshops might be credited in some way against their

home institution's PG Cert programmes. There was also support for continued production and wider use of digests and summaries by Subject Centres, which are viewed positively by time-pressured staff who find it sometimes difficult to engage with the volume of material produced by the Academy.

Scope for further work following on from this pilot is outlined at the end of this report. Four points are made:

1. Extend the study to include the views of staff from other, non-research-focused HEIs.
2. Extend the study to include the views of mid-career lecturers.
3. Extend the study to include the views of colleagues from all 24 Academy Subject Centres.
4. Further investigate the possibilities offered by incorporating Subject Centre materials, workshops or even staff into existing PG Cert Programmes, at a range of scales.

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1. Introduction

Postgraduate Certificates in Higher Education Learning & Teaching (or equivalent) are now a fact of professional development for lecturing staff in nearly all UK HEIs. Although designed to incorporate the skills and attitudes required by all staff who teach in higher education, and increasingly guided by the UK professional standards framework for teaching (see <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/professional/ProfessionalStandardsFramework.pdf>), these programmes are often the focus of professional development, particularly for new lecturers.

The current project is a small-scale scoping study, concerned with exploring the notions of disciplinary pedagogies and how these might be explored using the PG Certificate (henceforth PG Cert) as a vehicle. In particular, the project is concerned with ascertaining the extent to which staff perceive that discipline-specific elements of teaching and learning could or should be integrated successfully as part of a generic PG Cert programme. Further questions then emerge, concerning both the nature of any potential discipline-specific input, the mode of provision, the delivery staff and the use of resources or staff external to the host HEI e.g. Higher Education Academy (HEA) Subject Centre (SC) staff.

The project has been undertaken by educational development staff from two Scottish HEIs (Universities of Aberdeen and Dundee), in partnership with representatives from five Academy SCs:

- Bioscience
- Business, Management, Accountancy & Finance (BMAF)
- Engineering
- Geography, Earth & Environmental Sciences (GEES)
- History, Classics & Archaeology (HCA)

2. Methods

2.1 Selection of institutions and partner Subject Centres

This research is a small-scale scoping study, designed to investigate how educational development for new academic staff might be enhanced through the inclusion and comparison of disciplinary pedagogies. The focus on two universities, both with a research-driven ethos, both in the north-east of Scotland, will necessarily influence the results. Attitudes towards learning and teaching will, by definition, be different to other institutions whose focus might be less research-focused.

It should also be made explicit that attitudes towards the PG Cert programmes available in the two participating HEIs may also differ from other HEIs around Scotland and the wider UK. At the University of Aberdeen, the PG Cert programme was introduced in 2001. This programme is not a mandatory part of professional development for new probationary lecturers. Whilst numbers of staff undertaking this programme have historically been relatively low, the level of commitment from them, as a self-selecting group, is very high. At the University of Dundee the PG Cert has been available since 1997/8 and is now offered as a fully distance learning option in addition to face-to-face delivery. The first module is mandatory for new teaching staff (entering as lecturers or teaching fellows) on contracts of three years or more but a wide range of staff (both internal and external to the university) choose to undertake the programme.

Selection of Academy Subject Centres to take part in this research was driven by two factors:

- The desire to seek representation from arts, science and medical subjects
- The consequent need to have comparable disciplines represented at each participating HEI

As a consequence, the Subject Centres invited to take part in this study were:

- Bioscience
- Business, Management, Accountancy & Finance
- Engineering
- Geography, Earth & Environmental Sciences
- History, Classics & Archaeology

Following informal discussions with colleagues from these SCs, letters were sent by email to centre managers on 10 January 2008, inviting them formally to participate. All five agreed to take part. The project proposal is included as Appendix 1.

2.2 Project planning and timeline

Project planning was undertaken and a preliminary timeline and workload allocation proposed at the first project team meeting for discussion and agreement (see 2.4 below).

2.3 Gaining ethical approval for the study

With reference to work undertaken during the first phase of the SHEER projects (<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/aboutus/scotland/SHEER.pdf>), it was clear that good practice dictated that ethical approval was required for any further work of this nature, beyond compliance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and adherence to the British Educational Research Association (Revised) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004). As the research involved interviewing staff, audio recording of interviews for transcription purposes and the maintenance of transcripts, specific guidance was provided to staff involved in the project. These required careful wording in order to satisfy the above. Participant information sheets were provided in advance to any staff who volunteered to take part in the research, and signed consent forms were collected from them prior to interviews taking place.

Requests for ethical approval were therefore sent to the appropriate bodies within both participating HEIs to ensure that ethical permissions were in place. Ethical approvals were sought from:

1. The Convener of the Research and Ethics Committee for the College of Arts & Social Sciences at the University of Aberdeen on 29 January 2008. No ethical issues were identified, and good practice identified in the previous SHEER report (*ibid.*, p47) was followed accordingly.
2. Ethics approval UREC 8026 was submitted to the University of Dundee. A request for a minor change to be made to the participant information sheets was received by the project's principal investigators (PIs). Details to be added were with regard to the location and length of time the raw data from the project are to be held. These changes were made as requested. The final versions of the participant information sheets and the consent forms are presented as Appendix 2.

2.4 Schedule of Project team and other meetings

The first meeting of the project team was held at the University of Dundee on Wednesday 30 January 2008. All project team members were present. The

project team agreed the proposed timetable of work (see Appendix 3), prior to a wide-ranging discussion on the issues of provision of materials for new lecturing staff. A draft version of questions to be used in the semi-structured interviews with staff in HEIs was provided to all project team members, who provided critical perspectives which have been incorporated into the final interview protocols. Notes from this meeting are presented as Appendix 4.

An interim meeting of the project team was scheduled for April 2008, but due to commitments elsewhere by some members of the project team this meeting was unable to proceed. A further meeting was scheduled and took place on 4 June 2008 at the Universities Scotland offices (Edinburgh), timed to accompany a SHEER2 co-ordination meeting between the four SHEER2 projects. Notes from this meeting are presented as Appendix 5. An interim report on progress was presented at this meeting, and this is included as Appendix 6.

The final project meeting of this and the allied SHEER2 projects was held at the offices of Universities Scotland, Edinburgh on 5 September 2008.

2.5 Data collection

2.5.1 Interviews with Heads of School / Discipline

A cornerstone of this research has been the collection and analysis of qualitative data in order to better understand the conceptions held by Heads of School / Discipline (henceforth Heads of School) of the provision of PG Cert programmes for new academic staff. In particular the research has been focused on issues of disciplinary pedagogy; is there really a difference in pedagogy between disciplines, how do staff in the discipline conceptualise this and how are new lecturing staff made aware of this? By examining the responses to these questions, the research has provided an insight into how senior academics view the idea of the incorporation of discipline-specific materials into PG Cert programmes, and accordingly how the Subject Centres might be involved with this.

In order to capture these data, a semi-structured interview protocol was followed, taking an ethnographic approach and eliciting phenomenological data. All interviews were undertaken by the two PIs at their home institution. The interview protocols were initially drafted by the PIs during a scoping meeting in Aberdeen on 11 January 2008, and critiqued / modified by the project team during the first full team meeting in Dundee on 24 January 2008. All Heads of School from the five identified subject areas were invited to be interviewed, and a copy of the invitation is presented as Appendix 7. A copy of the interview questions is presented as Appendix 8.

Questions were structured to elicit the interviewee's views on learning and teaching in their discipline initially, before focusing on the ways in which such views are made known to new staff in their disciplines. Close questioning on their knowledge of institutional PG Cert programmes followed this, with the intention of establishing the knowledge base from which ideas on the further development of the PG Cert in a more discipline-focused manner might be undertaken. The interviews were closed with a discussion of the role of the Academy and how Subject Centres and their activities and resources might play a role in supporting PG Cert programmes in the future.

By taking an explicitly phenomenological approach, the PIs were included in according meanings to phenomena as well as the subjects themselves (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). The notion of analytical induction was seen as important here, building on an underpinning concept of grounded theory, i.e. any interpretations made are grounded in the data generated.

The data generated, and the inferences drawn from them, have followed Glaser's (1978) ideas on qualitative data collection, in that from the instant the first interviews were complete we were already attempting to identify key issues, recurrent themes and common areas that might become categories of data in themselves. This "constant comparison" is interesting, in that it might be seen as musing (idle or otherwise) as a natural process of an enquiring, active researcher, or as a process through which any subsequent interactions with research subjects are inescapably altered and modified. This idea will in turn affect the manner in which the data collected under the banner of this project are viewed henceforth.

2.5.2 Focus group discussions involving previous participants on PG Cert programmes

Focus group discussions with staff who had already completed their respective institutional PG Cert programme were planned to take place in both HEIs. Questions for the focus groups were drafted by the PIs during a scoping meeting in Aberdeen on 11 January 2008, and critiqued / modified by the Project team during the first full team meeting in Dundee on 24 January 2008. A copy of the interview questions is presented as Appendix 9.

In a similar approach to that taken with Heads of School, the questions were designed to investigate how new staff find out about key issues in learning and teaching, both at an institutional and School level. The questions then move on to explore new staff's experiences of the PG Cert, and how it might have been made more useful to them. In particular, these staff were questioned closely about their impressions of discipline-specificity of the teaching methods that they are using in their daily practice, and the views of this from their colleagues. Finally they were asked about their engagement with Academy and Subject Centre resources, and how they thought these might be incorporated into the PG Cert programme.

The focus group from the University of Aberdeen met on 3 April 2008. Due to timetabling issues, the Dundee group were unable to meet in a face-to-face environment. Instead, a questionnaire, based on the questions presented in Appendix 9, was developed and distributed to the intended participants. This questionnaire was also sent out to current participants on the PG Cert programme at Dundee. Whilst none of the previous participants contacted completed the questionnaire, three responses were received from *current* Dundee participants. In order to capture these data, the results from the Dundee questionnaire are presented alongside the results from the workshops held for current participants in section 3.3.3.

2.5.3 Investigative workshops examining disciplinary pedagogies

One of the advantages of running a project of this nature with PIs who are practising PG Cert co-ordinators was the opportunity to discuss the issue of discipline-specificity in educational development in a “live” teaching situation with current PG Cert participants. At the University of Aberdeen a new workshop, based specifically on this topic, has been built into the PG Cert programme. At the University of Dundee a workshop, following the same structure as that at Aberdeen, was made available to participants on a voluntary basis.

In advance of the workshops, all participants were provided with two papers to read. These were selected in order to stimulate thinking in advance of the session. Appendix 10 shows the email sent in advance of the session. The papers selected were:

Jolly, L. and Radcliffe, D. (2001). Reflexivity and hegemony: Changing engineers. In L. Richardson and J. Lidstone (Eds), *Flexible Learning for a Flexible Society*, 357-365. Proceedings of ASET-HERDSA 2000 Conference, Toowoomba, Qld, 2-5 July 2000. ASET and HERDSA

Parker, J. (2002). A new disciplinarity: communities of knowledge, learning and practice. *Teaching in Higher Education* 7 (4), 373-386.

These papers were selected as they both involve critical analysis of the concept of the discipline as a discrete entity. Whilst each paper takes an alternative approach to this, the important aspect from the perspective of this research is that they take the practitioner viewpoint, both from the humanities and from engineering. This made them particularly suitable for use with the PG Cert groups.

During both workshops, participants were provided with questions in groups to discuss issues around the notion of discipline-specificity in their teaching duties. The questions used are shown in the accompanying slides in Appendix 11.

2.5.4 Request for materials normally sent to new lecturers by the representative Subject Centres

In order to explore possible ways forward with the ideas forthcoming from both Heads of School and PG Certificate participants, it is important to know what materials already exist, in order to develop a baseline from which any further development work might emerge and be measured. At the Project team meeting on 30 January this was discussed with SC colleagues. Three approaches were indicated as possible:

- a. A full-scale audit of all materials labelled as relevant for new lecturers, undertaken in each participating SC.
- b. Reference to the “Supporting New Academic Staff” (SNAS) materials.
- c. SC colleagues to send materials to the PIs, following their own protocol for responding to a request from any new lecturer for materials.

There was considerable discussion over the relative merits of each of these approaches. It became clear that whilst a. would be advantageous, this information was already being collected under the auspices of the HE Academy Facilitation Group (King, 2008), with a specific remit to explore the Subject Centre network’s provision for early career staff. With this being undertaken, duplication of effort was deemed unnecessary. Option b. was not followed as the general feeling amongst the Project team was that these materials remain largely static, and so whilst providing a concrete resource base for reference purposes, are perhaps less engaging than shorter and apparently more directed materials also available from the SCs. Therefore in order to provide an alternative perspective, option c. was accepted as the representative data set that could be generated to represent “typically” sent out by SCs to new lecturing staff. Comparing the totality of materials available for new lecturers with what materials are actually sent out, questions regarding relevance, timeliness and inter-disciplinary differences between these can be engaged with.

2.5.5 Questionnaires to Subject Centre representatives, aimed at examining the selection and quality assurance of materials sent to new lecturers

At the Project team meeting on 30 January 2008, a proposal was made to the contributing SC colleagues that they consider completing a short questionnaire as part of this study, devised by the PIs. The questionnaire proposed to ask SC colleagues to reflect on how they generate resources for new lecturers, the effectiveness of the resources that their respective SCs generate for new lecturers, on how the SCs collect feedback on these resources and on the processes the SC uses to evaluate the quality of its resources for new lecturers.

These issues were discussed with participating SC colleagues, who expressed interest in exploring these questions further using a questionnaire.

A questionnaire was drawn up, and circulated to the participating SCs during May 2008. A copy is presented as Appendix 12. Three out of the five participating SCs produced responses to the questionnaire.

3. Results

3.1 Interviews with Heads of School

Ten Heads of School were interviewed, five from each of the participating HEIs. Their views on the subjects outlined in the interview protocols were recorded and analysed. In order to conceptualise the analysis pathways to be followed, the PIs brainstormed the key issues emerging for them following the completion of all ten interviews prior to formal analysis of the data. The resulting mindmap is presented as Appendix 13.

Key issues arising from this exercise surround the following subheadings:

- Communication of key issues: what are the key issues in learning & teaching for Heads of School? Are these the same across the disciplines? How do their staff find out about these issues?
- Perceptions of the PG Cert: how do the various stakeholders view the PG Cert programmes in their institutions? From where do these views come, and on what basis are they communicated to others?
- Professional identity: how do professional HE teachers view themselves, and are these views accommodated / challenged / ignored by the PG Cert?
- Professional learning (i.e. post-qualification / CPD): how is professional learning in the disciplines defined and by whom? Are there external factors (e.g. professional bodies) that drive the perceived need for learning? Are these factors more or less influential than those internal to the HEI or to the individual?
- Traditions of the disciplines: do disciplines take different approaches to their professional learning? Is the PG Cert looked on more favourably in some disciplines than others because of this?
- Barriers to learning and participating in PG Cert: what are these, and are they the same across all disciplines? Where do they come from and what is their status?
- Landscapes of participation: how does the world of learning & teaching look to a Head of School? Is it the same as the view of less experienced staff? What are the implications if the two are divergent, and how is this influenced through “enculturation” by established staff of less experienced staff?

3.1.1 Communication of key issues in learning & teaching

I don't perceive any great sense that someone stands up at the start formally and says "these are the principles of what we're trying to do and here's how we go about doing them."

Change in higher education, like most other professional fields, has become continuous. In particular the growth of bodies, legislation, guidance and prescription surrounding teaching in higher education has been very rapid, and continues apace. In the light of this, this study asked Heads of School about the issues in learning and teaching that they view as particularly important, and, more specifically, how these issues are communicated to new staff in their respective institutions. Clearly a PG Cert route might be one way to do this, but the questions were designed not to lead in this manner.

It was valuable during the interview to be able to differentiate classes of new staff; clearly a new probationary lecturer is in a different position regarding knowledge of higher education systems generally than, for example, a new professorial appointment. This said, when considering the international market and the position of the participating institutions, even relatively senior new staff may have limited understanding of the Scottish education system and wider sector.

From discussions with the Heads of School, a variety of mechanisms do exist to inform staff of the institutional and wider sectoral issues that affect learning and teaching in HE. The majority of these are informal, however, and collating those put forward from the respondents revealed the following range of approaches:

- Formal induction process (at both university and School levels)
- A well-frequented staff room (informal discussions therein)
- “It tends to be by osmosis...”
- Immersion in the environment in which they will work
- Mentoring system
- School staff meetings
- Management group meetings
- Discussion with older staff
- “...a sort of ad hoc and informal process...”
- An induction manual

We were unable to pinpoint a single process that appeared common to all Schools in either institution. For example, despite the existence in both HEIs of a mandatory, short course on teaching & learning for new probationary lecturers, new professorial appointments are not required to attend this. In the case of such appointments, as one Head of School pointed out:

I guess they'll find out about teaching through word of mouth...

3.1.2 Perceptions of the PG Cert

The Heads of School interviewed as part of this project provided a range of opinions on the PG Cert programmes in the two institutions represented. Underlying the comments made is a belief that CPD for academic staff should be considered as somehow different from the development needs of other staff; that academic freedom means that individual staff, rather than Heads of

School or others in a “line management” role, make the decision as to whether they need to attend CPD events:

Given the competing pressures for time on most academics these days...the glib answer is that you'd have to demonstrate somehow that their time spent there will give them benefits they would not otherwise achieve.

...largely staff are involved in other things, and I suspect frankly that some of these issues are quite low down on their priority list.

How do Heads of School perceive the PG Cert? Two of the responses were very direct:

...the people I know who've been on it have said it's a complete load of crap.

...it has not addressed the needs of history teachers.

Another Head of School made the point that the PG Cert is too “generic” in its approach. Such comments are, in the experience of the investigators, not uncommon at this level. However, what interested us was the source of such comments. Why are they being made and on what basis? Upon further questioning, and despite these negative comments, by far the majority of responses (including the respondents above) did admit that they perhaps didn't know enough about the PG Cert programmes to comment more fully, as the following quotes suggest:

All I know is what I've been told by those who have taken part...

It's the knowledge, the lack of knowledge rather than the lack of interest, and perhaps lack of time.

I would have to say that I don't know, that I don't have a detailed knowledge of what constitutes the programme here...

This is a telling point; that much of the criticism of the PG Cert programmes would appear to come second-hand to Heads of School. As one Head of School pointed out, with more than a little accompanying laughter;

Perhaps it's a good thing for a Head of School to be seen to be doing a Postgraduate Certificate (laughs).

The notion of established staff engaging with some form of development remains one of the issues for formal programmes in learning & teaching such as the PG Cert. Although the above point was made in good humour, another Head of School pointed out that these more established staff are often those who would benefit from more structured development:

...I think people at all stages would probably benefit from taking certain elements of a certificate or training...Certainly there is something to be said for experienced teachers going and doing some refresher training on things that they think they know well...

This is an important point: as with all effective CPD, timing is of the essence. Is it simply the case that with other pressures incumbent on probationary academic staff, being expected to attend a PG Cert programme at an early stage in their career is seen as a barrier to generating further research proposals? The relationship between the Head of School and their probationary lecturers is not a straightforward one in this case. Heads of School want to ensure that their new staff have the best possible opportunities for developing their research profiles, but at the same time appeared to recognise the need for these same staff to be able to work in what appears to be a rapidly changing landscape of HE.

3.1.3 The landscape of HE

This area, more than any other in the study, highlighted the tensions that Heads of School feel when trying to undertake their duties of care with regard to new probationary lecturers. Notwithstanding the negative comments made above, there appeared amongst the sample interviewed to be a deep concern for new entrants to the profession, and varying but definite understandings that the profession these new staff are joining is a very different one to that which Heads of School joined;

...people like me are so old, we have, we've never had to do anything like that [referring to the PG Cert programme].

Although a gap was acknowledged as existing between the profession on entry by Heads of School and current entrants, one comment commonly heard in universities more widely was summed up by one of the respondents in this study:

...most people who are bright eyed and bushy-tailed doing research are pretty good teachers. One goes with the other...they're pretty good at everything...

Teaching in this view is taken as read; talent in one area is taken as proxy for talent in all others areas of academic life. This was a minority view in this survey, however. Other Heads of School had different ideas about their probationary staff, and were able to identify some of the conceptual 'distance' that newcomers to the profession have to travel:

You know younger staff can come fresh from a PhD very, very focused and all they want to do is impart knowledge in the little bit of the subject that they know a lot about.it can take them a few years I think to get them, to get them broadened out. Maybe that's one of the roles that the Postgraduate Certificate in L&T can do.

It's not necessarily people that are older than me that are more traditional in their thinking. It's often people, it's surprisingly that often quite young colleagues are very, very focused on the discipline and can't see either side, a bit like a horse with blinkers...

With their combined experience spanning a considerable period, the Heads of School demonstrated insight and responsive attitudes towards teaching that they clearly know are important:

...lecturers, to be effective, have to be in a way good entertainers as well. I actually do think that now. Because modern students are not like the old breed; they have very, very short attention spans...I think we've got to adapt to what these people are like. They can't help that, they've been brought up differently. They're brought up in a really different world now...

Are you an entertainer, do you tell jokes, are you a conjuror, what are you trying to do, are you trying to create magic for 320 people, would you expect them to laugh, sigh, die? (laughs)

As well as the current situation of new probationary staff in their charge, Heads of School are clearly concerned about the wider HE sector and the changes that are taking place therein as well:

I think what we have to recognise is that the nature of careers has changed. [continues] I think there will be far more moving between universities, between this university and other universities, between this university and the public sector, private sector and so on. So if a PGC was an option for them it wouldn't be a bad thing for them to think about because it helps the portability of your career.

I think there is an awareness in younger members of the profession now that there are places that do require it [PG Cert], that you may enhance your prospects of getting jobs in those places eventually if you have it...

So to conclude this section, it is apparent that most Heads of School do recognise that the profession that they entered is very different to that which new probationers are now entering. Different skills and attitudes are required to teach the students of "Generation V" (see <http://www.gartner.com/it/page.jsp?id=721008>) than those of even 20 years ago.

3.1.4 Barriers to participation in PG Cert programmes

I could do all sorts of things, but I'm not going to spend my time doing that because it'll [referring to the PG Cert] bugger up my research.

The above is another widely-held view in HE. Despite a plethora of recent publications (e.g. Brew, 2001; Jenkins *et al.*, 2003; Kinchin & Hay, 2008) and indeed an entire Scottish sector-wide Enhancement Theme addressing research-teaching linkages, there remains tension in the sector between the two areas of activity, as indicated by the above quote from one of the Heads of School in the study. Whilst this is by no means true across the entire sector, within the two institutions used in this study it remains a commonly-held view:

But let's be honest, if you want a career in hard education you've got to be totally selfish and that means doing the absolute minimum you can get away with on teaching. And maximum is research. And if you're thinking anything other than that you'll never progress.

Most of them are interested in their research and the teaching is a secondary thing...

We may just be in part of the cycle where what is...perceived to be required of a university lecturer is very heavily research incomes, research outputs...

I know that material comes out from the [Subject] Centre, but largely staff are involved in other things, and I suspect frankly that some of these issues are quite low down on their priority list.

In addition to these barriers imposed by the wider demands of remaining research-active and the prevailing views of those who hold power, there are other barriers to participation; some of which derive from the attitudes of the Heads of School themselves. Whilst this study made no attempt to investigate or evaluate the claims of this group with regard to their own teaching abilities or qualities, one Head of School remarked:

If a new member of staff was to come [to him] and say "Professor _____, how do I engage my students?", what would you say? I'd take a day off, I've no idea.

Compounding this issue further, one Head of School remarked on the issue of innate ability to teach:

How one actually can or would turn an inherently poor lecturer into a much better lecturer I don't know. I don't know what you think the success rate or influence would be and I don't know in a sense how much they're born, not made.

The question of innate ability is compounded when Heads of School are faced with other, more established staff in their charge:

But I think the perception would probably be that yes, postgraduate certificates in higher education are things which are more suitable for probationary lecturers coming into the profession, and the old sweats

are probably saying thank goodness there wasn't that when I came in (laughter).

And there is a bit of this as well where when you get to my age, well is it worth, what do I need it for? [referring to the PG Cert]

In these cases it is suggested that age and experience are in some way a proxy for teaching effectiveness; or perhaps it is simply a reflection of the adage that an old dog cannot be taught new tricks.

The picture was not all negative, however. Heads of School were, in general, positive about professional development opportunities for teaching, even in the face of a strong research agenda. As one Head of School noted:

...I think if you asked staff privately I think they would all agree that we need to do more, we just haven't done it for, we can always make excuses as to why we haven't done it (laughter)...

This individual continued:

...I can't, from a fundamental point of view I can't see why people who come into university life as arguably a full-blown academic should not wish to take advantage of all the tools that are available to make them into as good a teacher as they can be...

The strategic use of professional development opportunities to support and motivate staff was one which became manifest during the interviews with at least two Heads of School. The first response concerned changing staff attitudes towards developing their teaching:

I think one of the potential advantages could be better use of teaching time...

Whilst not a positive motivation to engage with development, this is at least a pragmatic, not to mention diplomatic response. Two other Heads of School provided slightly different perspectives on a similar issue, that of staff in their charge who demonstrate research trajectories that are either flattening or going into decline:

Clearly someone who's employed under a normal contract like me, teaching and research, the research could lapse and they could move over to the teaching.

...I think that in their own internal calculations are that "I'm going to have to make a sustained contribution to this institution and if it's not going to be in research as much as it once was, I will pick up my interest in teaching". And it may actually genuinely reflect an interest in teaching that they've not been able to express much before because they were busy doing other research stuff.

Issues of motivation for staff in this situation were writ large on the latter conversation, and were a clear issue for a Head of School under pressure to maximise research outputs from his staff. Using the PG Cert as a positive route into a different career track, rather than as a stick with which to beat underperforming researchers, was not a perspective that this individual had previously considered. As noted in section 3.1.3, once again the definition of the role of Head of School and their relationship to the PG Cert programme is critical for better engagement and creative thinking around the use of such programmes in future.

3.1.5 Professional identity

...most professionals only identify with their own subject areas...

This statement is a strongly held view amongst many mainline academic staff (Becher, 1989). It is further compounded by the strong link between the self-perception of most lecturers as researchers first and foremost, and teachers only as a secondary function; a viewpoint that is endorsed and promoted by the strong research focus of many universities and their accompanying structures for promotion and systems for rewards. Heads of School were united in their response on the issue of research and its pervasive influence on the role of a lecturer:

... what is perceived to be required of a university lecturer is very heavily research incomes, research outputs, and those are things that most incoming staff both feel themselves that they want to achieve, feel that are being demanded of them and are the drivers for their being in the job ...

Me and my colleagues spend our lives thinking about research. Out of a nine hour day, eight hours and 55 minutes is thinking about research....

Clearly with limited time resource available, the identity of staff will be shaped strongly by the environment in which they are working. Such a territorial viewpoint, valuing the immediate and proxemic, is a key point emerging here.

As a result, there does appear to be a conception that educational development which can incorporate aspects of the discipline will be looked upon favourably:

I think there are definitely discipline-specific elements, things like ... how to teach a maths group certain techniques ... [which] would be very useful.

But there was also a recognition that PG Certs could not cater for the perceived needs of all of the different disciplinary backgrounds and related requirements of individuals who may enrol on a programme at any one time.

This was rationalised by a view that a bespoke approach could be achieved in a way that would relate to several related discipline areas:

But I think it would be, it would be useful for let us say a physical scientist ... to have something in there that was relevant to their subject as opposed to a medic, as opposed to a philosopher. I think where possible it would be nice but I can understand the practicalities of it from your point of view really. I think you'd have to lump disciplines into sort of cognate groups if possible.

This was a view shared by Heads of School from both science and arts & humanities backgrounds.

3.1.6 Traditions of the discipline

Backgrounds, or traditions of individual disciplines, are perceived as being very powerful and influential. This emerged to some extent from the interviews with Heads of School ...

... what a lot of people don't, I think, appreciate in the university – some do, many don't – is that [subject] research is very well established. It's an old research discipline.

... although this was commented on in the light of limited understanding around the traditions or histories of other disciplines:

And it's 70, 80 years history compared to say the education, social work, nursing is like three, four years history.

This feeling of disciplinary tradition is intimately bound up with what are perceived to be distinctive aspects of teaching within the discipline:

Field teaching is a big issue for my School.

In the likes of [subject] there's quite a lot of spanners and hammers and tools in terms of intellectual development that you need.

Ultimately bound up with professional identity, traditions lead to teaching being seen as an extension of the discipline:

You can be inspirational in a tutorial and in a large class and I think that comes from being an advocate, I think, for your own discipline.

3.1.7 Professional learning

Professional learning in teaching and learning within the discipline was not a topic which featured large from any of the participants in this study. One Head of School, when asked how many of his colleagues engaged with professional learning within their discipline, mentioned only two individuals.

And while one Head of School referred to his experience of observing colleagues' teaching there was also surprise expressed at the idea from another. In response to being asked if he thought inviting newer members of staff into his class when teaching, this Head of School acknowledged the potential benefit, but also the realities of the situation as he saw it:

Could be, could well do, could well do. Yes I know what they'd say though. Haven't got the bloody time.

There was also little enthusiasm for professional recognition as university teachers, for example through the Academy.

... and I was going to do it [fast track route] and the only thing that stopped me was that I found I didn't really have time to do it and to be honest and I also felt does it really matter to me at my stage? And that was why I didn't bother.

Interestingly there did not appear to be a feeling that senior colleagues should model behaviours or good practice in this respect.

In contrast, links with industry and developments in “real world” practice were identified by several Heads of School as being 'incredibly important'. This is perhaps not surprising as several of the subject areas covered in the study have clearly identified professional bodies. Furthermore, these links are not only viewed as important but are essential to the validation of programmes and to an extent dictate the strictures of teaching and learning approaches within the discipline.

...actually the staff here just continually tell me that they cannot possibly forego another lecture in level one [subject]. They can't give up anything else if they are to tick the box for accreditation [by the professional body]

With regard to maintaining “traditional” approaches to learning and teaching there may be some element of conflation of course content with teaching methodologies that inhibits educational development beyond the “traditional” approaches:.

... so accreditation in some courses will require that the content of the course does not change ...

At our next accreditation visit ... one of the questions we'll be asked will be how much of our curriculum is being delivered by what they will just loosely describe as by alternative means ... so there's a push from our professional side as well.

3.2 Interviews with previous participants on PG Certificate programmes

3.2.1 Responses from the individuals who had undertaken the PG Certificate programmes and were in a position to reflect on their experiences

Two formats of responses were collected under this heading, one from a face-to-face group interview at one HEI and one from a questionnaire implemented at the other HEI.

Results from the group interview

Staff induction, in particular with regard to teaching and learning issues, was an area that the group felt could be improved. The group was supportive of the efforts of educational developers in running, for example, mandatory introductory sessions to introduce issues in learning and teaching. They did, however, point out that such activity does not take place at School level in their experience, although at College level there are opportunities to engage with some methodological issues. Being aimed at a broad audience, however, it was noted that these sessions were not always effective at attracting the appropriate staff, and indeed “the usual suspects” were frequently amongst the audience.

When focusing on their experiences of participating in the PG Cert, this group indicated that they had benefited in a number of ways. Firstly, the mixture of staff from different disciplines was seen as one of the most useful aspects of the programme. Respondents commented on both the conversations, the ideas and also the process of being peer-observed when teaching by staff from outwith their own discipline, and peer-observing others in a similar position, as a very useful aspect of the programme. Other positive elements identified by this group included:

- Finding out about and using educational terminology in order to engage with a wider literature
- Having to reflect on their own teaching
- Finding out about the wider university structure and processes
- Being placed in the position of a student again
- Being shown and told about different ways of teaching
- Undertaking an action research project

One unexpected, though valuable, aspect identified by one individual was the impact of using a more systematic and consequently effective model of reflection:

...and that certainly helped my own research as well.

What was important to this group, and the point which was made particularly strongly, was that, having moved on in their day-to-day teaching practice since completing the PG Cert, they were now more convinced that most teaching issues that they had encountered are really ones that are common across all disciplines. When questioned further, one participant noted that her colleagues frequently cited the unique nature of teaching their discipline as a reason for not engaging with other colleagues from around the institution. However, the participants were unanimous that most teaching skills do transfer between subjects quite readily:

...once you strip it all away it probably is going to be generic.

Having been along to [subject], I don't think there's that much difference at all.

Again I think it's pretty much general, people are doing similar things...

There was one notable exception to this point, and this was the teaching of practicals; the group indicated that there are sufficient differences between disciplines to make this particular teaching technique differ from area to area. This point is followed up below.

Use of Academy and Subject Centre materials

The respondents were asked about the use they have made of teaching resources and materials made available by the Academy and the various Subject Centres. As this group had followed the PG Cert route, they were all familiar with both Academy York and the Subject Centres; indeed some had completed the PG Cert sufficiently long enough previously to remember the Generic Centre. However, they remained unclear as to the relationship between Academy York and the various Subject Centres, and the two were referred to consistently by this group as “the HEA”. Differentiation, even if pursued by the Academy between these various bodies, is not seen as one which is important to practising academic staff.

Members of the group were asked about their use of the various resources available from the Academy. Answers were weakly positive:

I drop in now and again...

One respondent announced that they had the box of “yellow assessment books” (referring to http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/ourwork/tla/assessment_series) but that they sat on the shelf rather than being used actively. When questioned over uptake of resources from the Academy, responses were centred around issues of:

- time required to read up on new techniques
- the time required to read through the materials in order to extract the elements relevant to them

- limited time and interest due to other time pressures, especially research.

When questioned on how the Academy might make it easier for these respondents to use their materials, two clear responses emerged:

- targeted emails from the Academy / Subject Centres with bullets and hyperlinks to specific materials
- workshops held at their home institution.

In response to the first point it should be noted that many Subject Centres do provide regular email digests with hyperlinks to resources and events as a sign-up service. Academy Scotland also produces a regular hard copy and online newsletter. The second point was particularly interesting; the respondents were keen to point out that budgets simply do not exist to support attendance at events relating to teaching, particularly if travel was required. As such, this group were unanimous in their belief that large teaching-themed conferences such as the annual Academy conference in Harrogate were probably not going to be attended by mainline academic staff from the north of Scotland. This point was made emphatically. However, if events could be made available closer to home then there might be more interest in attending, and more chance of gaining and / or using funds to support this.

Using Academy resources as part of the PG Cert

Extending the point made above regarding attendance at Academy events, one respondent asked whether attending Academy events (workshops, conferences) might in some way accrue “points” that could be used as credits against a PG Cert programme in their home institution. Beyond this, however, there was little further enthusiasm for including Academy resources in any formal way within the PG Cert programme. The point was made by some members of the group that they had already used Academy resources when completing their assessments for the PG Cert, and formalising this would add little to the existing programme.

3.3 Workshops with current participants

3.3.1 Workshop held at Institution 1

Initial views within one of the groups reflected those commonly found in the literature:

- some disciplines (e.g. visual arts and medical science) are so wide apart on the spectrum of experience that their needs must be discipline-specific

- initial approaches to educational development in learning and teaching could be generic but would require discipline-specific aspects at a more developed stage.

Some of the participants also made interesting comments in relation to somewhat stereotypical views of colleagues from other discipline areas; engineers are not reflective (from an individual working in the health sciences area) and that graduates aiming for a career in surgery had less need of problem solving or critical thinking skills than purely motor-related technical skills (a comment supported by individuals from several different disciplinary backgrounds). However, these comments did not go unchallenged by others in the workshop.

Despite these comments which could be interpreted as insular and demonstrating little understanding of disciplines other than their own, everyone could see the benefits of multi-disciplinary working on the PG Cert as they had met individuals, encountered ideas and made collaborations that they would not “normally” have had the opportunity to do.

At the end of the session, the participants looked at a range of Subject Centre materials to support learning and teaching and came to the conclusion that the majority of the content, while branded under different discipline-specific headings, was broadly generic in nature. This was further reinforced by showing the group an extract from a discipline-specific guide to learning and teaching which had been anonymised; it was not possible to tell to which discipline the materials related and it was agreed that the guidance would be useful to all disciplines. It was also suggested, however, that the discipline-specific branding was useful in order to initially engage colleagues.

Following the workshop the group was convinced as a whole that:

- graduate attributes, or transferable skills, are common across all disciplines
- teaching is a generic skill across all disciplines but contextualisation within the discipline is also required e.g. through case studies and questioning
- a discipline-specific approach to educational development could be too safe
- they had learned more about learning and teaching from colleagues outwith their discipline area

which was summed up as:

It doesn't matter what you teach it's how you teach it.

3.3.2 Workshop held at Institution 2

Comments from participants in this workshop centred initially on the provided readings. Without exception all participants admitted that they had not

thought about the differences between their subject and their discipline, seeing the two terms as essentially interchangeable. Having begun to unpack this concept, the group was split into six triads and asked to interview each other using the questions presented in Appendix 11 as a framework. One member of the triad was asked to take notes from each interview, and common themes were then summarised within the triad and presented in plenary to the entire group.

The discussions were summarised in different ways, but the common themes that emerged from the discussions centred around:

- Methods of teaching
- Role of the lecturer / degree of control when in class
- Feedback skills
- Critical analysis
- Reflective practice
- Learning from peers and practitioners
- Different learning interfaces between knowledge and application
- Impact of knowledge in a wider context (e.g. higher level thinking & questioning)

One group, a mix of humanities and sciences, was particularly keen to point out that as a result of their discussion they:

Identified lots of overlap and generic skills applicable to different disciplines and not much difference.

The differences between the various disciplines represented were listed as:

- Differing first hand experience and knowledge
- Case studies
- Professional policy practice
- Simulation and practical applications
- Clinical cases
- Jargon, language and styles of communication
- Own cultures
- Degree of student engagement (active or passive)
- Open-ended or objective concepts / ideas

Reflecting on these responses, it is apparent that the common areas share the characteristic of being methodological, focusing on the mechanics of teaching. By contrast, the differences identified can be grouped around three cognate areas:

1. Subject matter, particularly relating to the individual's experience
2. Subject-specific methodologies, in particular practical elements of the disciplines
3. Respondents' own views of their and other disciplines, whether accurate or not.

Whilst 1 & 2 are clearly legitimate differences that can make teaching across disciplines problematic (although not impossible), there does remain an element of generalisation (and possible misconception) under the third heading. To take an example, the headings mentioned under the topic of teaching science were listed by one group as “lectures, practicals, own research, factual”. Alongside this, the teaching of education, according to the same group listed “let go”, discussions, small groups etc, philosophical”. Without wishing to bias the data, these ideas were left unchallenged at the time, but it was clear that there was an assumption that the techniques belonged firmly within each discipline area; these are the techniques that the group conceptualised as being used in each situation.

3.3.3 Questionnaire responses

There were three responses to the questionnaire, provided by current participants following the PG Cert programme at one of the HEIs. The results of these are included under this section as they comprise additional, unintended data captured during the research.

In terms of what the respondents were hoping to gain from their engagement with the PG Cert, the responses were unanimous in one aspect; a deeper understanding of teaching. Other points raised here included:

- The opportunity to critically reflect on one’s own teaching
- Sharing ideas about innovative ways to engage students
- Improving skills in communicating with students
- Gaining a qualification in order to improve opportunities to become a teacher in HE.

Since starting the programme, all three respondents indicated that they had looked at Academy materials, although two of these stated that they had done this very briefly.

When questioned over the nature of their own disciplines, and whether there are unique aspects to teaching within them, the responses were varied. One respondent highlighted extensive use of a VLE in their discipline. A second suggested that in sciences the issue of teaching practicals differentiates it from other disciplines:

Well the practical side of science teaching would be different to other disciplines but other than that no.

The third, again apparently from a science-based discipline, suggested that information transmission is important in science teaching, and as such it lends itself less to interactive teaching methods and discussion. The difference between the sciences and humanities was made explicitly by this respondent.

In terms of how disciplinary differences might be reflected in a PG Cert programme, the responses were again varied. One respondent was unclear about the question and did not answer directly. A second suggested that the science / practical issue might be addressed through a piece of coursework in the Programme. The third suggested that making such a link explicit would be difficult beyond highlighting the issue of alignment between teaching method and subject, which this individual considered was already being done within the programme.

3.4 Request for materials normally sent to new lecturers by the representative Subject Centres

Three out of five SCs responded to the request to provide materials under this heading. Materials provided are those that would be sent under a “business-as-usual” scenario, as a response to a request from any new member of lecturing staff at any HEI for some supporting materials to help them during their initial induction to teaching in their discipline.

The findings from this sample of SCs demonstrates variability in the format, approach and content of materials provided to new lecturers.

Format of the packs

The format of materials provided varied between the three SCs; one provided a plastic-covered, bound folder, and a second a loose-leaf folder. The third provided a coversheet and supporting materials, but these were provided electronically in the first instance and should not be viewed as typical in this respect.

Approach and content of the packs

In terms of approach and content, all three examples provided were different. One SC provided a series of materials labelled and classified according to methods of teaching (e.g. lectures, tutorials, assessment & feedback, plagiarism). Other “useful materials” were included at the end, in the form of a list with brief (one or two sentence) descriptors, e.g. the SNAS database. A second SC provided a package of materials, consisting of a welcome letter outlining available support from the SC, a list of forthcoming SC events, a flyer for a journal in teaching and two copies of the SC newsletter. The third SC pack included a welcome and contact details sheet, followed by a series of resource examples relating directly to teaching in the discipline, under 13 headings including teaching methodology, assessment, research-teaching linkages and more.

3.5 Questionnaires to Subject Centre representatives, aimed at examining the selection and quality assurance of materials sent to new lecturers

Three SCs responded to the questionnaire. Responses were made to all questions, and the level of engagement with the issues raised was high. Although responses below are not identifiable to a specific SC, it should be noted that one of the respondents was BMAF, which does have a current, ongoing project which targets specifically new lecturers. As such, there is some emphasis at present on new lecturers from specific SCs, with resource and effort being focused on this group.

In terms of the amount of resource that SCs considered to be allocated to new lecturers, responses ranged from 1-5%. Two SCs indicated that 1% and 4% of their staff time specifically was allocated to resource for new lecturers. All three SCs thought that this is an adequate allocation, two suggesting that all or nearly all of their materials and resources are available to all lecturers anyway. One SC indicated that it would like to do more work with new lecturers, and in particular through closer links with PG Cert leaders.

Sourcing materials for new lecturers, SCs indicated a diverse range of inputs that included:

- SC own publications (web-based and other)
- From learning & teaching projects
- From discipline community's suggestions
- The Staff & Educational Development Association (SEDA)
- From links to other materials (global)

The questionnaire probed SCs about the issue of quality control on materials provided to new lecturers. Measures used to ensure quality again varied between the three respondents. Two SCs indicated that contracted and collated materials were subject to quality review as an integral part of the process, with one SC pointing out that their policy was in keeping with the existing Resource Discovery Network (RDN) protocol. The third SC indicated that it used peer review to ensure quality, although this was not elaborated upon further. Keeping the materials up-to-date is an annual task undertaken by two SCs, whilst the third noted that whilst it tries to stay aware of what is available, it "...needs a QA system that does not yet exist". Feedback on the utility of materials in terms of supporting and enhancing practice is provided by a range of individuals, including lecturers themselves, senior university staff, SC representatives and educational developers. This is collected mainly on an informal basis, described as anecdotal by one SC. One SC indicated that regular feedback on the impact of the materials on new lecturers' practice specifically is collected annually, with the other two SCs noting that they do not collect information in a targeted manner from new lecturers. One SC pointed out that it does not have the capacity to collect data to this level of precision. Critical review of materials is again undertaken by a variety of individuals and groups, including practitioners, "the entire community", vignettes from targeted members of the community (including a new member of staff), external consultants and, where appropriate and relevant, Special Interest Groups (SIGS).

Looking to the future, SCs were asked about how they would like to see their materials evaluated. The response to this varied between all three SCs. The New Lecturer project (above) was noted as one mechanism via which needs might be assessed and evaluation undertaken. One SC indicated that it was happy with its existing model, whilst the third highlighted a desire to follow-up on new lecturing staff directly.

Evaluative data that are generated are used in an apparently consistent manner, with feedthrough to a “core team” plus Senior Advisors and individuals responsible for new lecturer development. One SC noted that feedback is included as part of the development of the following year’s Operational Plan.

Finally SCs responded to questions concerning the notion of other reviewers being included in the process of quality assurance, with educational developers being suggested as possible (although not the only) groups who might do this. All three SCs responded positively to this suggestion, although distinctions are clear here. One SC was very keen on this idea, and indicated that this was indeed already ongoing. A second suggested that this would be appropriate in the developers’ own contexts, and also to encourage staff in the home HEI to do so too. The third SC indicated that whilst it would be happy to receive feedback, suggested that a formal exercise in this area would be “disproportionate to the level of subject centre activity focused towards new lecturers”.

4. Discussion

4.1 Discipline-specific or “generic” development for academic staff – which is most appropriate?

What do academics think teaching *is*? Is it a matter of practical skills or a performance? Or is it in reality a much more complex picture of attitudes, perceptions and knowledge wrapped up in a covering of bravado; with a dash of apprehension or perhaps a peppering of reluctance?

So I think a teacher does have to have a strong degree of personality and acting ability. You do act when you go and stand out in front of 70 odd people ... And I don't think there's any easy ways of learning that.

It comes back to that idea of I don't think teaching and all that is that complicated.

To what extent are their ideas on teaching related directly to their discipline or perceptions of same; and in particular how are those perceptions shaped? And, most importantly, how have these perceptions informed academics' views of a disciplinary versus generic basis of teaching practice?

Proponents for the disciplinary approach to developing teaching are vocal. The Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) and its associates supports the view that 'teaching is not a generic technique, but a process that comes out of one's view of one's field and what it means to know it deeply' (Taylor Huber, 1999). This view is mirrored by Stefani & Elton (2002: 118), who suggest that continuing professional development for academic staff in HE might become a more self-initiating process if these staff could in some way engage with issues in their teaching through a problem based approach. Healey & Jenkins, 2003 (in D'Andrea & Gosling, 2005: 60) suggest that in order to take a scholarly approach to developmental change, there must be an engagement with academics' discipline identity. If this is absent, they argue, the resulting generic approach simply reduces teaching to 'the technical matter of performance'. Stephen Rowland (2003, in D'Andrea & Gosling, 2005: 60) has also argued that a “generic” approach 'often leads to one or the other of two false conclusions being drawn'. The first that teaching and learning is 'primarily a practical, rather than theoretical, activity', and the second that teaching and learning are 'the special concerns of educationists and educational researchers who develop educational theory'.

To what extent is this a view that is promulgated by the sector? In relation to educational development for learning and teaching, D'Andrea & Gosling (2005: 61) note that the major UK and US national initiatives to support teaching have been directed through the disciplines e.g. the former LTSN, the Carnegie Scholars program and the FDTL. It should also be noted, however,

that in Scotland the approach of the QAA in relation to the significant work undertaken in recent years on the Quality Enhancement Themes has generally been much more of a broad brush generic approach.¹ Furthermore the very idea of “disciplines” itself is increasingly coming under challenge, not least as a result of increasing inter-professional working and the ingress of “new” discipline areas into the university fold, such as community education, nursing and fine art, which are introducing or helping to shape new conceptual approaches to disciplinary boundaries.

Data from this study have shown that this tendency to favour discipline over the generic can also be the reaction of academics from a number of disciplines. However, it has also shown that that response is very much an initial and often superficial one, and indeed one which, when challenged, can provide alternative insights into the issues raised by the assertion that discipline-specificity is essential for effective development of new lecturers in HE. When asked whether discipline-specific PG Certs, and other forms of discipline-related educational development opportunities, would be preferable, one Head of School thought there could be potential in:

Maybe hav[ing] somebody from the Subject Centre coming here perhaps for a day or [to] give a master class or something like that

while another felt that case studies and guest lecturers provided by the Subject Centres could be useful. Yet, apart from these rather vague comments, when pressed on the development of a discipline-focused approach Heads of School tended to favour the general in their responses.

I would want a new lecturer to learn about good and bad lectures, what you can do in tutorials, how to deal with challenging situations ...

This view was further reinforced when the Heads of School were asked about their views on the key aspects of learning and teaching in higher education. The responses invariably included a non-discipline focused element which acknowledged, and in some cases stressed, the importance of graduate attributes with one individual reluctant to 'privilege' his discipline over the development of 'transferable skills' in levels of importance to undergraduates in his area and another firmly placing generic graduate attributes above those he considered to be discipline-specific:

Right well I think the key aspects are to produce graduates that are fit for purpose... And I think team working, communication skills and this, what I call this 'can do' attitude come first and foremost. And I have put those above discipline-specific skills. Now if you'd asked me that question 10 years ago I wouldn't have said that ...

The evidence from this study, taking into account the views of Heads of School, current and previous participants in PG Cert programmes, suggests

¹ The exception being the Research-Teaching Linkages Theme which introduced discipline-specific projects. Interestingly this is also the only one of the Themes which has engaged directly with research.

that the notion of greater discipline-specific focus within PG Cert programmes is not necessarily what is actually required. Whilst reference to disciplinary differences is desirable, and incorporation of discipline-specific materials is useful in order both for inclusivity and interest, it is the approach to teaching that is what really interests staff in HE. Approaches can and do differ, and the opportunity to talk about, watch and reflect on the practice and experience of others from outwith one's immediate discipline area is seen as valuable by the respondents in this study. The differences that do exist between disciplines are seen as an issue that might be discussed if considering disciplines collectively, for example differences between sciences, humanities and medical subjects.

The current emphasis on employability in the curriculum, triggered by closer working with graduate employers and changes in the diversity of the student body, sponsored and supported by initiatives from the HE Academy and the Scottish Funding Council, are clearly impacting on the views of the Heads of School. The views of this group of senior staff were not markedly different, however, to PG Cert participants. While some initially advocated a discipline-focused approach, the process of discussion and dialogue with peers in the workshops saw the emergence of the view that whilst the technical aspects of some disciplinary work may be highly context-specific, for example practical laboratory work, dissection or experimentation, the principles of effective learning and teaching approaches are generic. However, for some participants in the workshop this conclusion was one that was mediated through the power of interaction with colleagues from other disciplines; something in which, more generally, a significant number of lecturers get little (or give themselves little) opportunity to engage. The effectiveness of discussion with colleagues from different disciplines, and the opportunities to watch them teach, is an important aspect of PG Cert programmes which can be easily overlooked when undertaking formal evaluation of their effectiveness. This point is also made by Warnes (2008), whose study of the effectiveness of PG Cert programmes highlighted non-formal and experiential learning opportunities offered through participation in PG Cert programmes as an important outcome (Warnes 2008: 44).

All lecturers enter a university context as lecturers in a disciplinary area. Although a job or an institution may be new to them, the familiar landscape, terminology and parameters of the discipline provide a familiar 'face'. It should come as little surprise then that on entering the world of what is often perceived as 'jargonistic' educational development, perhaps against their 'better judgement', that they will cling like drowning men to what they already know – the disciplinary base. The issue of ownership is important here. As noted by Elton (2008: 228):

...arguably – 'academics create disciplinary departments'.

The creation of a space - real, virtual, academic - and working in that space instils discipline loyalty. Academics own this space, and when faced with what to them might appear to be an encroachment forced upon them by external forces over which they have little or no control, the instinctive reaction

is resistance. Elton (2008) notes that the university community might indeed have to change in response to external forces more quickly than it might do if left to its own devices. Heads of School in this study indicated that they were indeed open to such ideas:

They wouldn't baulk at doing [staff development] in terms of doing their research but there's this innate notion that "well I can teach but I don't need to have any formality to it, I just do it." And it seems a rather perverse notion these days with, you know, with pressure on numbers and retention and all of that. We need to try and deliver as good teachers as we can, and make them formally aware of pedagogy which they simply are not at the moment...

PG Cert programmes have existed in the HE sector since 1997, as a direct result of the Dearing report (NCIHE, 1997). Whilst welcomed in some institutions as a supportive and positive structure to help the development of professional teaching staff, others have viewed the rise in such qualifications as an indicator of the creeping inroads made into HE by "new managerialism" (expounded more fully by Turnbull *et al.*, 2008:17), and see little value in imposing an externally-perceived need for a qualification for its own sake. This latter point is particularly important in the light of the demographic profile of the likely population affected by the decision or requirement to undertake a PG Cert, with some Heads of School, being necessarily older than the new probationers whom they manage, making the point that they didn't have to engage with such a programme. One Head of School made the distinction clearly:

I think there is awareness in younger members of the profession now that there are places that do require [a PG Cert], that you may enhance your prospects of getting jobs in those places eventually if you have it.

However, the largely autonomous nature of the role of the academic means that such decisions are often left in the hands of the individual, as opposed to the line manager, and that as a result of this approach a mandatory requirement to engage with a PG Cert (or part thereof) may be met with resistance or hostility, regardless of any stress on the developmental focus and benefit for the individual. One Head of School pointed out that in a previous institution in which they had worked, new staff were forced to undertake a PG Cert :

...that caused enormous problems, issues and resentments...

This is an interesting aspect of the CPD landscape of HE that either does not exist or is certainly less prevalent in other areas of the public or private sectors. The independence of the academic is such that it is them, rather than their immediate line manager (if indeed such a position is even recognised) who generally decides their development needs. As such, the implication from the above quotes is that development opportunities somehow need to market themselves to the academic body, who will then pick and choose which they will attend. The position of the Heads of School

themselves is interesting in this regard; comments made indicate that the development of staff for teaching in their School is not always a subject that they consider as part of their role:

It needs...it probably needs some sort of managerial intervention, not...not to tell people to do it but at least persuade them that this is a...their life has to change a bit.

The environment in which PG Certs operate - and indeed any form of development opportunity that promotes teaching - is not necessarily at the forefront of staff attention or interest within the environment in which they find themselves. This in itself creates its own inertia:

...I don't think it can be done simply by expecting staff to find things out for themselves or do it from their own initiative, I think there's got to be an element of push.

Willingness to learn is key and if new lecturers are made to engage with educational development without that willingness being present, then many different reasons will emerge as to why discipline is best. Cassidy *et al.* (2007: 225), with reference to Michael Polanyi, writing over forty years ago, suggest that 'One feature of "academic tribes" may be that their norms are in the "tacit dimension"; that is, experts in the discipline all recognise and act on them, but do not necessarily know that they are doing so'. Whilst there is little doubt that new staff will learn about the system in which they are working by working in it, it is clear that they will also become initiated into the cultural norms of that environment, and learn from their peers and colleagues. This includes learning about the wider education system in which they work, nuanced by the understanding of those with whom they choose to surround themselves. For example, having discussed the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework with one Head of School the response was:

Some of the things we've talked about already are a bit of a mystery to me in terms of what are the university structures in terms of the management of teaching programmes at the higher institutional level.

Whilst it would be unreasonable to expect encyclopaedic knowledge of both the internal and external drivers (in this case of quality / Quality), questions do remain over how well information is transmitted to new starts, at all levels, using the variety of methods shown above. Compounding this issue, the quality of what is transmitted may also be varied, depending on individuals' base knowledge and keenness to engage with these issues initially. What form might this mechanism then take? Some Heads of School saw the link to the PG Cert here, and in the case of a mandatory PG Cert there was little issue. With established staff joining the institution from another HEI, however, a more cautious note was struck:

I wouldn't see it really being applicable to somebody who was well established from another university particularly if they had a lot of

lecturing experience, maybe were SL or professor or something like that. I really don't think so.

This idea appears to have had a persistent resonance. Taking this idea further, Kahn (2008) explored the opposing positions of Bourdieu's 'social conditioning' versus Archer's 'critical realism' and 'individual agency' through a small sample of exploratory interviews with staff undertaking an initial professional development programme for new lecturers, found a more directly evidenced connection with Archer rather than Bourdieu. This is further developed as the idea of 'negative agency' where an individual has difficulty in identifying with or imagining themselves as, for example, an experienced or 'expert' teacher; therefore, the identity they create for themselves is partly based on what they 'can't be'. As Wareing (2005: 11) explains, 'the discipline of pedagogy ... is *soft* and *applied*, being a functional subject with relatively low paradigm consensus (i.e. there is usually more than one acceptable approach to tackling a given research question). Wareing (2005: 13) goes on to note that 'There are a number of arguments which suggest that the perception of disciplinary differences in learning and teaching is social not epistemological in origin, and a convincing argument ... is based on the untidiness of discipline groupings'. This social definition of disciplinary differences, and in particular the issue of education in a subject, is further reinforced by the notions of disciplinary "traditions" as noted throughout this study, and also through the teaching / research divide. As noted by Harvey (2002: 9), the generation of metrics to record research output quality is more straightforward than a similar process to record teaching quality.

Role and identity are strongly related within academic communities in higher education, and in the light of perceived encroachments on academic practice by externally-imposed systems and frameworks (Turnbull *et al.*, 2008), then the growing sense of plurality of role does appear to have generated some tension amongst the Heads of School, as noted by Castells (1999). The identity of the academic is one of independence in the sense that professional activity, particularly in research, results in an attitude of self-reliance:

It's again the wider view of how do you make staff development...structured staff development attractive to a bunch of people who essentially see themselves as capable of teaching themselves?

Such self-reliance also has its counterpart in the individuality that is allowed to flourish within the staff body at universities. Whether this is a cause or an effect is beyond the scope of this project; suffice to say that it exists and makes the environment a colourful one:

I think academic staff are an unusual breed because they are very individual...

The notion of professional development for academic staff remains contested ground. Crawford (2008) provides "the academic perspective" on this topic,

implying that somewhere along the way the voice of lecturing staff is being lost in the face of external demands and an expending quality “industry”.

However, the notion of a high degree of self-reliance by academic staff, although admirable, has to be set against a background of increasing demands on the individual’s time:

...largely staff are involved in other things, and I suspect frankly that some of these issues are quite low down on their priority list. I think over the last few years obviously RAE was the focus of everyone’s attention, and next year it will be something else

As noted by Maffesoli (1996), it is the local which determines the life of societies, rather than wider, projective issues. When faced with large scale, externally-instigated change to their modus operandi, for example through increasing scrutiny of teaching quality, widening access, quality enhancement etc. (Turnbull *et al.*, 2008), then inevitably those who champion the discipline (as opposed to the subject) typically act defensively in the first instance (the ‘resistance identity’ of Castells, 1999)

4.2 Supporting new lecturers: the role of the Academy Subject Centres

All of the SCs involved in this study indicated that they have resources which are allocated specifically to new lecturers. One SC, BMAF, is currently undertaking an extensive project, entitled “Identifying the development needs of new academic staff in Business-related disciplines”, whilst others are actively developing materials and other resources to support new lecturers, and consulting widely across the sector to best inform this. There is much merit in this approach, and clearly the feedback received from the discipline communities represented is supportive of such an approach.

The variability in resource packs available for new lecturers from the various SCs is highlighted in this study. Through the questionnaire sent to the various SCs, it is clear that they remain comfortable with their provision, and the feedback and scrutiny that they receive on materials. There remain opportunities for feedback on materials from external sources (such as educational development units), and these were viewed positively by the respondents. Again there is variability in the source and degree of external scrutiny used by SCs in the validation of their materials, which might be an issue to be taken forwards as a result of this study.

It is instructive to reflect on the variability in content of the new lecturer packs in the light of the findings of this study. With regard to teaching, the SCs sampled in this study provide very different materials to new lecturers in their fields. With one SC providing materials almost akin to an instruction manual of teaching, a second pointing to resources allied to teaching and the third providing information primarily about the SC, clearly the expectations on new lecturers regarding how they then follow up the information provided will vary.

From a single SC perspective the above situation appears logical. Viewed through a different lens however, one might see a different picture. New lecturers at a single HEI will typically be provided with packs of SC materials during an introduction to learning & teaching programme early in their career. A variety of approaches will be evident, and new lecturers, like any other group, inevitably compare materials. Although not the focus of this pilot study, anecdotal evidence from the PIs in this study (who both run such sessions) indicate that the responses to such variability are often ones of confusion. As noted by the previous participants of PG Cert programmes, they view the Academy as a single body. There is often surprise expressed by new lecturers that SCs do not provide a standard package of materials for them, particularly as they face similar challenges when starting to teach.

Beyond this initial receipt of new lecturer packs, SCs have produced an immense amount of material relevant to teaching which is available to new lecturers. King (2008) produced a survey of the extensive materials available to early career teaching staff in HE (including for example GTAs in addition to new lecturers). This survey highlights the vast amount of information available for new lecturers by individual SCs. Whilst such an abundance of materials is of potential benefit to the individual discipline communities (noting the issue of information overload highlighted by the previous PG Cert group in this study), it does also make a telling point regarding the interface between SCs and the educational development community based in HEIs:

Respondents [educational developers in HEIs] were not all cognisant of the specific range of activities and resources Subject Centres were able to offer to support initial and continual professional development. There was a sense that they did not all have the time / resources to keep trawling 24 websites for information.

(King 2008: 3)

The issue of information overload remains one which both HEI educational developers and the SCs are taking steps to work around (e.g. regular information digests from SCs are circulated). However the interface for new lecturers, many of whom will not have heard about the HE Academy or the SCs, can still appear daunting. With time at a premium as highlighted through this study, it would be valuable to further investigate this interface as a medium for engagement rather than simply as a conduit for information.

5. Conclusions

This study was a pilot, involving two Scottish, research-focused universities and five Academy Subject Centres. With such a small sample the results and inferences drawn should be viewed accordingly. However, many aspects of the interviews held with staff will resonate with readers in others HEIs, with whom discussions around many of the topics and emergent issues raised in this study have been held by the PIs.

The issue of discipline-specific development for academic staff has been questioned closely. Heads of School, current and previous participants of PG Cert programmes have indicated that, whilst superficially a desirable concept, there are many benefits to running PG Cert programmes in a manner which allows participants to explore issues within their own teaching, but to do this in a manner which allows them to listen to the voices of colleagues from outwith their immediate discipline. There are differences in teaching between disciplines, but these are often differences in approach rather than absolute differences in method, many of which are common across disciplines. Differences in methods do exist, for example the use of practicals and laboratories in the sciences, but these are at a different (wider) scale to those commonly perceived, i.e. between sciences, humanities and medicine, rather than between individual disciplines within these broader groupings. This point is in accordance with the findings of Warnes (2008), whose findings indicated that whilst PG Cert participants were aware of the issue of discipline-specificity vs generic provision, noted that participants were “not overly critical” of this (Warnes 2008: 47).

The discipline remains a strong “home” for academic teaching staff, and they view this territory very much as their own. This includes teaching the subject material, and encroachment on this by “external” bodies and regulations can be unwelcome, and is rarely seen as positive. PG Cert programmes have frequently been grouped amongst these external interferences, although it is clear from this study that the perceptions of Heads of School are generally in favour of supporting their new lecturing staff as far as possible, and see that changes in the wider HE sector are making demands on them at an operational level. The opportunity to reflect on the PG Cert with the PIs in this study has, in some cases, cleared up preconceptions and quashed rumours which have (mis-)informed the knowledge of some Heads of School. A minority remained sceptical of the benefits, particularly in the face of the pressure on new lecturers to produce research outputs as well as teach effectively. In contrast to this latter group, younger entrants to the lecturing profession appear to perceive the need for change in terms of development of their teaching skills.

Supporting the development of new lecturers is seen as an important element of the work of the Academy Subject Centres. Materials developed specifically for new lecturers are abundant (King, 2008), and more are being developed. Previous participants in PG Cert programmes indicated that whilst such abundance is encouraging, the need to produce accessible and targeted

digests of these materials remains high, as pressures on their time make sifting large volumes of case study materials difficult. Such digests do exist, and their use is to be encouraged if maximum utility is to be gained from the resources of the SCs.

Quality assurance of these materials remains important. SCs indicated that they have review methods in place to ensure quality, and all appear to invite various constituent parties in their discipline communities to provide feedback. The mechanisms for doing this are varied.

The provision of packs of materials from SCs for new lecturers is a practice that all parties support and is to be encouraged. This study noted that the content of these packs varies, and with the inevitable comparison that occurs within single HEIs between materials during induction courses for new lecturers, a standardised, corporate front in terms of providing these materials might serve the SC network better in future. Individual lecturers do not recognise the differences between SCs, Academy York and Academy Scotland; their perception is that there is one body ("The Academy"), and they have little time to unpick the differences between the various elements.

To conclude, the study has met its aims. Recapping from page 5:

To investigate notions of disciplinary pedagogies and how these might be explored using the PG Certificate as a vehicle. In particular, the project is concerned with ascertaining the extent to which staff perceive that discipline-specific elements of teaching and learning have the potential to be integrated successfully as part of a generic PG Certificate programme.

6. Scope for further work

The questions that this study has uncovered are extracted and expanded below. There are a number of areas which deserve further scrutiny if the results of this study are to be used as evidence to inform practice.

1. The views of staff in this study are from two pre-92 universities with a research focus. It would be valuable to contrast these with the views of more teaching-focused institutions to investigate whether the views put forward in this study are common across the sector as a whole.
2. The views of lecturing staff in their mid career have not been heard during this study. Using PG Cert participants (current and previous) as the voice of lecturers placed the PIs in an unenviable position of either holding, or having held certain power over the group. Although discussions were seemingly robust (most PG Cert participants don't tend to hold back with their views!), the PIs remain aware that either consciously or unconsciously the views of these groups may have been coloured by their experience of working with us. Additionally the group of previous PG Cert participants and current PG participants who responded to the questionnaire and attended the optional workshop at one of the HEIs self-selected.
3. The approach taken in this study to analysing the production, quality assurance and engagement of the SCs could be expanded to incorporate the views of all 24 SCs. This information would provide a useful adjunct to the work of King (2008), who has collated the content of the various SCs with regard to new lecturer provision.
4. The possibility of PG Cert programmes incorporating SC materials or other resources more directly was mentioned by various staff during this study. The question of whether SC materials, or attendance by HE staff at SC (or wider Academy) events might be in some way credited against the PG Cert in their home institution, would be a logical progression from this study.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1. Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Research (SHEER) project proposal

Phase II

Enhancing educational development for new academic staff through the inclusion and comparison of disciplinary pedagogies.

Principal investigators: Dr Darren Comber (University of Aberdeen)
Dr Lorraine Walsh (University of Dundee)

Rationale

This project aims to investigate ways in which discipline-specific pedagogies can be used to enhance educational development activities for new academic staff.

Educational development opportunities often arise through the analysis of issues that are pertinent to everyday staff activities. Turning such analyses into opportunities for development sessions, in the form of discussions, workshops or other fora remains an important aspect of the work of educational developers. This is particularly important when working with new academic staff, who tend to focus on the immediacy of their role during the early stages of their appointment (Elton, 2001). Sensitivity to such contexts is recognised as essential if staff are to buy in to the opportunities so offered.

Proposal

Educational developers from two Scottish HEIs (Universities of Aberdeen and Dundee) are undertaking a pilot project, involving working closely with a five HE Academy Subject Centres, in order to select, embed and evaluate discipline-specific materials within development frameworks available for new academic staff in these institutions. Subject Centre partners who have expressed an interest in the project are BMAF, Engineering, Biosciences, GEES and History, Classics & Archaeology.

The development frameworks under scrutiny in both the Universities of Aberdeen and Dundee are centred around their respective Masters' level programmes in higher education learning and teaching. The principal investigators in the project are programme co-ordinators for these programmes, and are well placed to understand both the general operating environment and also the institutional perspectives on support requirements for new academic staff.

Methodology

In order to explore the possible ways forward, a common approach will be taken in each institution.

1. Interviews with heads of discipline in the selected subject areas.
2. Focus group discussions with current participants and previous graduates of the respective postgraduate certificate programmes.

These proposed activities will form a scoping exercise based around the Subject Centre partner discipline areas in order to ascertain the extent to which staff perceive that discipline-specific elements can be integrated successfully as part of a generic postgraduate certificate in teaching in higher education programme.

A third strand of the work will involve:

3. Examination and analysis of existing and potential Subject Centre resources, in conjunction with key staff from the Subject Centres represented by the discipline areas, around the ways in which such resources could be utilised with postgraduate certificate programmes.

This will involve liaison meetings with identified individuals from Subject Centres. As the areas of interest will overlap between the participating HEIs, this exercise need only be undertaken once.

Feed-forward: parallel activities being undertaken and potential benefits of the project

The proposed project will support work to be undertaken at both the Universities of Aberdeen and Dundee. Specifically it will support a pilot workshop at each institution, delivered as part of their respective Postgraduate Certificate programmes undertaken by new academic staff. Discipline-specific materials will be used in order to challenge participants to identify aspects of their own disciplinary pedagogy, highlighting and critiquing similarities and differences between this and two other disciplines represented on the programme. The benefits of this will be:

1. to provide the opportunity for staff to investigate and articulate the pedagogy of their own discipline,
2. to provide staff with the opportunity to evaluate critically the perceived and real differences in pedagogy between selected disciplines,
3. to learn from and make use of alternative methods of learning and teaching in disciplines outwith their own.

Findings from the institutional activities will be compared to provide feedback on the potential utility and practical aspects of developing discipline-specific educational development activities as part of other Postgraduate Certificate programmes.

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D. Comber, University of Aberdeen
L. Walsh, University of Dundee
12 December 2007

APPENDIX 2. Participant consent and information forms

SHEER II

Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Research (SHEER) Project

Project Participant Consent Form

Aim of the Project

This project aims to investigate ways in which discipline-specific pedagogies can be used to enhance educational development activities for new staff.

Methodology

The project will involve two Scottish HEIs, five discipline areas and the five associated HE Academy Subject Centres.

The project will involve semi-structured interviews with heads of discipline in the selected subject areas; focus group discussions with current participants and previous graduates of the institutional Pg Cert programmes; and examination and analysis of existing and potential Subject Centre resources from the five associated HE Academy Subject Centres. **If you consent to your interview being audio-recorded, tapes and / or digital records of the interview will be held in the Centre for Learning & Teaching, University of Aberdeen, for a period of five years. After this period has elapsed the audio records, along with any accompanying notes and transcriptions, will be destroyed.**

The purpose of this form is to ensure that you are willing to take part in this study and to let you understand what it entails.

Signing this form does not commit you to anything you do not wish to do.

Have you read the Project Participant Information Sheet?	YES/NO
Have you had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the project? (If appropriate)	YES/NO
Have you received satisfactory answers to your questions?	YES/NO
Are you willing to have this interview audio-recorded?	YES/NO
Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the project at any time without having to give a reason for withdrawing?	YES/NO

If you agree to take part in the project please sign and date below. Thank you.

Signature _____ Date _____

Name in Block Letters _____

SHEER II

Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Research (SHEER) Project

Project Participant (Interview) Information Sheet

Aim of the Project

This project aims to investigate ways in which discipline-specific pedagogies can be used to enhance educational development activities for new staff.

Methodology

The project will involve two Scottish HEIs, five discipline areas and the five associated HE Academy Subject Centres.

The project will involve semi-structured interviews with heads of discipline in the selected subject areas; focus group discussions with current participants and previous graduates of the institutional Pg Cert programmes; and examination and analysis of existing and potential Subject Centre resources from the five associated HE Academy Subject Centres.

During the interview your response will be recorded both by the interviewer as written notes and on audio media using a digital recorder. You will be required to give both verbal and written consent for use of the information gathered during the interview, by declared means. If you consent to being audio-recorded, tapes and / or digital records of the interview will be held in the Centre for Learning & Teaching, University of Aberdeen, for a period of five years. After this period has elapsed the audio records, along with any accompanying notes and transcriptions, will be destroyed.

However, you should also note that:

1. You may withdraw from the interview at any time and for any reason, without having to give an explanation.
2. You may refuse consent to being audio-recorded.
3. Your data will be treated with full confidentiality and will be completely anonymised.
4. Only members of the project team will have access to the raw data. All data will be stored digitally (in transcribed wordprocessed files, database files and in summary form in final reports) in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act (1998).
5. The data collected will be used to compile summary statistics and anonymised responses and quotations to illustrate the extent of knowledge of the ways in which discipline-specific pedagogies can be used to enhance educational development activities for new staff through project reports, research publications, conference presentations, HE Academy and University website entries etc.

The SHEER project will be carried out in accordance with the British Educational Research Association (Revised) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004) and in compliance with the Data Protection Act (1998). All participants will be informed of the nature of the project and are required to consent to their personal information being used. No living individuals will be identified from the results of the study, excepting cases where explicit permission for this has been obtained from the individuals concerned. Furthermore, no institutions, individual subject areas or

individual HE Academy Subject Centres will be identified from the results of the study excepting cases where explicit permission for this has been obtained from the institutions, individual subject areas or individual HE Academy Subject Centres concerned.

Do you have any questions?

Please contact:

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**Email – d.comber@abdn.ac.uk
Tel: (01224) 273672**

APPENDIX 3. SHEER 2 project timeline

SHEER II Proposed Project Timeline

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August
Letters to Heads of Discipline								
Letters to Directors of Subject Centres								
Ethical Approval								
Full project team meeting								
PI meeting								
Interview Heads of Discipline								
Focus group: current PG Cert								
Focus group: previous PG Cert								
Transcription of interviews								
Examine current SC materials								
Run PG Cert workshops								
Project write-up								

APPENDIX 4. Notes from Project team meeting held on 30 January 2008.

Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Research (SHEER) Phase II

Enhancing educational development for new academic staff through the inclusion and comparison of disciplinary pedagogies.

Notes from a meeting held on Wednesday 30th January in room 2F14 in the New Teaching Block, University of Dundee.

Present: Dr Darren Comber (Project Director, University of Aberdeen), Dr Richard Atfield (BMAF), Dr Sonja Cameron (History, Classics & Archaeology), Dr Kehinde Oduyeme (GEES), Dr Joy Perkins (Biosciences), Dr Jane Pritchard (Engineering), Dr Lorraine Walsh (University of Dundee).

1. The Project Director welcomed the Project team. A broad-ranging initial discussion was held, addressing the questions that Project team members had about the details of the project. This included:
 - How to define a “new” lecturer; new to the profession, the role, the institution, the country?
 - The status of the Supporting New Academic Staff (SNAS) project and materials and its relationship with SHEER. It was established that SHEER might draw on some SNAS materials, but its scope is wider.
 - The requirements of new lecturers: physical or virtual materials, and the badging / branding of Academy materials
 - Issues around the time required for staff to undertake PG Certificate programmes.
 - How do Subject Centres interface with their respective communities? How are materials selected and in what format? Sustainability issues and cost.
 - Communication and “openness” of ideas exchange between some SCs and some EDUs are not always ideal. Personality and institutional culture issues.

It was noted that several Academy activities are ongoing in this area:

- BMAF are planning a nationwide project focused on new lecturers/part-time teachers project (RA will keep the group informed)
 - academic coordinators group are currently looking at what is available for new lecturers (JP sits on this group).
 - SCs are being encouraged to map their activities to the Professional Standards Framework.
2. Draft sets of questionnaires prepared by DC & LW were circulated for feedback from the Project team. The questions were intended to shape semi-structured interviews to be held with Heads of Discipline in the participating HEIs, and also with both current and previous participants on these Institutions' PG Certificate programmes. Useful discussion took part around these questions and some modifications were suggested by the wider Project team.

Further discussion around the roles of the Subject Centres centred around reviewing current provision for new lecturing staff. Subject Centre colleagues agreed to send copies of materials / links typically sent to new lecturers to the Project Director in the first instance by the end of February 2008 in order to compare Subject Centre approaches. A further review of materials in each participating Subject Centre deemed useful for new lecturing staff will form a follow-up activity.

3. There was general support for the notion of a questionnaire, to be developed by DC & LW, to investigate the manner in which materials for new lecturers are generated and selected by Subject Centres, and to probe the mechanisms in place for assuring the quality of these resources.
4. DC suggested that an approach to granularising discipline-specific materials for use in PG Certificate programmes is an area that the project might explore in its later phase. The concept of SCs developing their own materials which might in turn be recognised as forming recognisable, “credible” elements with PG Certificate programmes was considered a useful area for exploration by the Project team. Initial exploratory discussions at the University of Aberdeen have suggested that this might be possible.
5. The timetable for the project was agreed by the Project team. Stress was placed on getting dates for an April and June meeting as soon as possible. DC also pointed out that representatives from all four SHEERII projects will meet in April in order to discuss common areas of interest.
6. The dissemination strategy for the Project was discussed, including the suggestion of the SEDA autumn meeting. An Academy event will be held in Dundee in Autumn 2008.
7. There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 1610.

Dr Darren Comber
4th February 2008

APPENDIX 5. Notes from Project team meeting held on 4th June 2008

Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Research (SHEER) Phase II

Enhancing educational development for new academic staff through the inclusion and comparison of disciplinary pedagogies.

Notes from a meeting held on Wednesday 4th June 2008 at 1030am in the Committee Room, Universities Scotland, 53 Hanover St., Edinburgh.

Present: Dr Darren Comber (Project Director, University of Aberdeen), Dr Richard Atfield (BMAF), Dr Lorraine Walsh (University of Dundee).

Apologies: Dr Sonja Cameron (History, Classics & Archaeology), Dr Kehinde Oduyeme (GEES), Dr Joy Perkins (Biosciences), Dr Jane Pritchard (Engineering).

1. The Project Director welcomed the Project team.
2. A verbal report was provided by DC & LW on progress in the five main areas of project activity.
 - a. Interviews with all ten Heads of School / Discipline were now all complete. Nine interviews have been transcribed, and data analysis has now started. The preliminary outcomes from the data generated were discussed. Heads of School / Discipline indicate broad support for Pg Certificates, and provided supportive and varying ideas as to how discipline-specific elements might be built into PG Certificate programmes. The workload that this would generate on EDUs was raised as an issue by this group.
 - b. Focus group discussions with previous PG Certificate participants were discussed. DC facilitated the Aberdeen meeting on 3/4/08. LW reported that a questionnaire survey of Dundee participants was undertaken. Data from these groups has been of limited use to date, but further analysis is planned.
 - c. Workshops involving current Pg Certificate participants have been held in both Aberdeen and Dundee. Both groups recognised the utility of discipline-specific materials, but were supportive of generic approaches which allowed for cross-fertilisation of ideas. Both groups also recognised that many themes in learning and teaching are common, and that discipline-specificity is not necessarily an advantage when considering such issues.
 - d. Materials sent by Subject centres to new lecturers were discussed. DC has received materials from three Subject Centres to date, and will chase up the remaining two.
 - e. Questionnaires sent to Subject Centres as agreed at the previous meeting have been sent out. To date only two responses have been received. DC will chase up the remaining three.
3. DC reported that contact with Michael Grove from MSOR Subject Centre had been established, and that a date was being sought for a meeting between DC, RA and MG to discuss the MSOR model of engagement with Birmingham's PG Certificate programme, and ways forward emerging from their experiences and the data generated by this project.
4. The project timetable was reviewed. The project is currently on track for write-up in July 2008. RA noted that, with the small amount of additional funding from Academy Scotland, further data analysis might be undertaken beyond the July deadline.
5. A dissemination strategy for the project was discussed. DC to present initial findings at the BMAF Key Contacts meeting at the University of the West of Scotland on 11 June 2008. DC is pursuing a possible slot at SEDA annual conference in November 2008, with a contingency of SEDA Spring conference 2009. A formal dissemination

event will take place in October / November, to include all SHEER2 projects. DC agreed to contact SEDA to discuss possible day workshop on PG Certificate developments in the light of project findings.

6. There was no further business. The meeting closed at 1210.

Dr Darren Comber
6 June 2008

APPENDIX 6. Interim project report requested by 2 June 2008

SHEER 2 Project: Enhancing educational development for new academic staff through the inclusion and comparison of disciplinary pedagogies

**Dr Darren Comber, University of Aberdeen
Dr Lorraine Walsh, University of Dundee**

Project aims

This project aims to investigate ways in which discipline-specific pedagogies can be used to enhance educational development activities for new academic staff.

The project is a small-scale scoping study, concerned with exploring the notions of disciplinary pedagogies and how these might be explored using the PG Certificate as a vehicle. In particular, the project is concerned with ascertaining the extent to which staff perceive that discipline-specific elements of teaching and learning can be integrated successfully as part of a generic PG Certificate programme.

The project is being undertaken by educational development staff from two Scottish HEIs (Universities of Aberdeen and Dundee), in partnership with representatives from five HEA Subject Centres:

- Biosciences
- Business, Management, Accountancy & Finance,
- Engineering,
- Geography, Earth & Environmental Sciences,
- History, Classics & Archaeology

Brief methodology

1. Semi-structured interviews with Heads of School / Discipline in the five areas represented above, in the Universities of Aberdeen and Dundee.
2. Focus group discussions with previous participants of PG Certificate programmes in the Universities of Aberdeen and Dundee.
3. Investigative workshops examining disciplinary pedagogies, involving current participants of PG Certificate programmes in the Universities of Aberdeen and Dundee.
4. Request for materials normally sent to new lecturers by the representative Subject Centres.
5. Questionnaires to Subject Centre representatives, aimed at examining the selection and quality assurance of materials sent to new lecturers.

Key findings to date

1. Interviews with Heads of School / Discipline.

All ten interviews are now complete, and nine have been transcribed. This group were asked about the issues facing higher education generally, how new staff are made aware of these issues, and how the PG Certificate programmes might be used and developed to address these issues.

Preliminary data analysis indicates that there is wide variation in the issues put forward by this group as important, including:

- Student engagement

- Developments in practice
- Skills development vs. subject knowledge
- Issues and tensions around professional accreditation of programmes

New staff are made aware of these issues mainly on an informal basis; as noted by one interviewee:

“I don’t perceive any great sense that someone stands up at the start formally and says ‘These are the principles of what we’re trying to do and here’s how to go about doing them.’”

Although as another interviewee noted, if they were asked to do this:

“I’d take a day off. I’ve no idea.”

There was a range of mechanisms put forward, from formal induction programmes (two respondents), through to mentoring, staff meetings, advice from older colleagues, osmosis, hearsay and folklore.

Heads of School / Discipline were split over their knowledge of both Academy and Subject Centre materials pertinent to their disciplines. Those that did profess some knowledge recognised that using such materials within the PG Cert structure might be of benefit, but were cautious over the resource implications on EDU staff to undertake such work.

Development of discipline-specific elements of a PG Certificate were similarly treated with caution. Respondents appreciated the difficulty in providing programmes tailored to the various and competing demands within universities. They were also aware that many issues faced by teaching staff are common, and that whilst discipline-specificity is desirable, the benefits of cross-disciplinary investigation of issues through a more generic PG Certificate programme should not be lost.

2. Focus group discussions.

These have been completed at both institutions. Those who responded to the call to be involved in this project have been supportive of the notion of PG Certificate programmes providing the opportunities for discussions between peers from different disciplines. Whilst the discipline-specificity of some teaching methods was discussed and unpicked, this group stated that, with the benefit of hindsight, they felt that the discipline-specific materials offered through the Subject centres were more easily approached, understood and digested by having discussed the underpinnings of effective teaching and learning in a more generic environment first.

3. Investigative workshops examining disciplinary pedagogies

These have been completed at both institutions. Allowing for inter-institutional variability, the findings from both workshops suggest that participants enrolled on PG Certificate programmes perceive many issues in learning and teaching to be common across disciplines, and welcome the opportunities to discuss issues with peers from outwith their immediate sphere. With increasing focus on specific aspects of teaching, then discipline-specific elements are perceived as being of greater utility, but the underlying similarity of issues is recognised.

4. Request for materials normally sent to new lecturers by the representative Subject Centres.

Three sets of materials have been received to date.

5. Questionnaires to Subject Centre representatives, aimed at examining the selection and quality assurance of materials sent to new lecturers.

One completed questionnaire has been returned to date.

Reflections on the project to date: some theoretical perspectives

The majority of the work to date has been focussed on capturing interview data from the ten Heads of School / Discipline. Exploring the materials derived from these wide-ranging, semi-structured interviews has followed an ethnographic approach, eliciting phenomenological data and involving us the researchers in according meanings to phenomena as well as the subjects themselves (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). We are now in a position to begin to codify responses in order to elicit both specific cases, and construct generalisations, from the data. The notion of analytical induction seems to be important here, building on an underpinning concept of grounded theory, i.e. any interpretations made are grounded in the data generated.

The data generated, and the inferences drawn from them, have followed Glaser's (1978) ideas on qualitative data collection, in that from the instant the first interviews were complete we were already attempting to identify key issues, recurrent themes and common areas that might become categories of data in themselves. This "constant comparison" is interesting, in that it might be seen as musing (idle or otherwise) as a natural process of an enquiring, active researcher, or as a process through which any subsequent interactions with research subjects are inescapably altered and modified. This idea will in turn affect the manner in which the data collected under the banner of this project are viewed henceforth.

References

Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. 2000. *Research Methods in Education*. (Routledge Falmer, London).

Glaser, B.G. 1978. *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory*. (Sociology Press, Mill Valley, CA).

APPENDIX 7. Letter requesting participation in the SHEER2 project by Heads of School at the University of Aberdeen



**UNIVERSITIES SCOTLAND
Educational Development
Sub-Committee**

Professor [Name]
School of Geosciences

Dear Professor [Name]

**Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Research (SHEER) Project
Phase 2**

The SHEER project is part of work currently ongoing in Scotland which seeks to establish a baseline of activities supporting the implementation of the Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF) at the discipline level. The aim of Phase 2 of the Project is to investigate how institutional Postgraduate Certificates in Higher Education Learning and Teaching (or equivalent) can be enhanced through critical engagement with, and incorporation of, discipline-specific materials

The study will involve semi-structured interviews with Heads of School, and current and previous participants on PG Certificate programmes. These will be carried out by institutional representatives from Universities Scotland Educational Development Sub-Committee, at the Universities of Aberdeen and Dundee. Additionally, examination and analysis of existing Higher Education Academy Subject Centre resources, undertaken in conjunction with key staff from the Centres, will help to inform the ways in which discipline-specific materials and approaches could be utilised with postgraduate certificate programmes. The Subject Centres involved in this initial study are Biosciences; Business, Management, Accountancy & Finance, Geography, Earth & Environmental Sciences, Engineering and History, Classics and Archaeology.

I am writing to you to request your agreement to be interviewed as part of this study, in order to gain your views and ideas on ways in which current PG Certificate programmes might be enhanced through critical engagement at the discipline level. I hope to set up interview dates for either February or March, and therefore I would be grateful if I could have your reply as soon as possible please.

If you have any questions or issues regarding the Project please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Darren Comber

Project Director
Deputy Convener
Universities Scotland Educational Development Sub-Committee
Senior Educational Development Adviser
University of Aberdeen
Tel: 01224 273672
Email: d.comber@abdn.ac.uk

APPENDIX 8 Interview Protocol: Heads of School

SHEER II

Interview protocol: Heads of Discipline

1. Thinking generally, what do you think are the key aspects of learning & teaching in H.E.?
2. Focussing down on (discipline), which of these do you think are the most important?
3. Do you think that this is different in other disciplines?
4. How do you think staff find out about these aspects?
5. How are new staff inducted into learning & teaching in your department / school?
6. (Explore what happens with different levels of “new” staff, e.g. new TFs through to new Professoriate).
7. The perception of the PG Cert seems to be that it is aimed at new probationary lecturers. Do you see it as something that more experienced staff would be interested in?
8. (Do you think that the current PG cert isn't covering the right things to attract a range of staff?)
9. What do you think the key elements of a PG Cert should be?
10. Do you think that incorporating more subject-specific elements into the PG Cert would be a useful way forwards? What form might this take?
11. What is your familiarity with materials available from the Higher Education Academy? What is your familiarity with the HEA Subject Centres? Do you use or have you used Subject Centre materials / events / people?
12. In what ways could SC materials be incorporated into PG Certs?

APPENDIX 9 Interview Protocol: previous PG Cert participants

SHEER II

Focus group protocol: PG Certificate participants (completed)

1. How are new staff inducted into learning & teaching in your department / school?
2. Thinking about the materials covered in the PG Certificate, which elements did you most enjoy? Which do you think you most benefited from?
3. Thinking about the structure of the PG Certificate, which elements did you most enjoy? Which do you think you most benefited from?
4. What elements of the PG Cert do you think should have appeared but didn't?
5. Do you think that there are particular aspects of learning and teaching in your discipline that are unique? Have your views on this developed since joining the university? Have your views on this changed since undertaking the PG Cert?
6. What use do you make of HEA resources (v. broadly)? What use do you make of SC resources?
7. Thinking now about the SC resources, which of these come from your own discipline? Which ones, if any come from disciplines outwith your own?
8. What is that you gain from an SC resource that you don't get from a "generic" resource?
9. Do you think that SC resources could be incorporated into the PG Cert? What form might this take?
10. How much of a genuine difference do you think exists in learning & teaching between disciplines?

APPENDIX 10. Email to participants at the University of Aberdeen, sent 20 May 2008

Dear All

1. A reminder that we have the final workshop of the first course comprising the PG Cert next Wednesday 28th May. [Name] and I will be jointly running the session, which will be based around the notion of pedagogy in the disciplines. In order to help you to frame your thinking in this area, there are two papers that we'd like you to read in advance of the session. Both are available online. The first is by Jolly & Radcliffe (2000), which is available here:

<http://www.ascilite.org.au/aset-archives/confs/aset-herdsa2000/procs/jolly2.html>

The second is available via the university library as an electronic copy:

Parker, J. (2002). A new disciplinarity: communities of knowledge, learning and practice. *Teaching in Higher Education* 7 (4), 373-386.

During the session we will be asking you to discuss with your colleagues your ideas on what makes teaching in your discipline unique; please give this some thought in advance of next Wednesday.

2. If you've been checking dates, you'll appreciate that the second, final summative assessment is due in on 6th June. This is a reminder to be thinking about what you'd like to use as material for the assessment, and perhaps to discuss it with your tutor if you're still unsure.

3. A prompt for those who aren't up-to-date with the formative assessments, please get them finished and let us know when you post something in your portfolio.

4. Class reps for the course staff-student liaison committee. [Name] and [name] have kindly volunteered to act as class reps. We will be holding one meeting before the summer (date TBC), so if you have anything you'd like to feed back to the course team in this forum, please let [name] or [name] know. You will have the chance to feed back via both the "formal" SCEF, _ , and through a rather more detailed form that has used previously with this course.

See you next week

Best wishes

Darren

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<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/clt>

please don't print this email unless you really need to

APPENDIX 11. Questions used in the PG Cert workshop on investigating disciplinary pedagogies



Centre for Learning & Teaching

“Interview ” questions to think about

1. What teaching methods and approaches would someone from outside your discipline have to know before they could teach your classes?
2. What do you think is core to your teaching methods / approaches?
3. How do your students learn? What are the learning norms in your discipline?

www.abdn.ac.uk/clt



Centre for Learning & Teaching

So what are the differences in teaching that exist between the disciplines represented here?

www.abdn.ac.uk/clt



APPENDIX 12. SHEER2 Questionnaire for Subject Centre Colleagues

1. Approximately what proportion of your Centre's resources are aimed specifically at new lecturers?
2. Do you think that this is too much / about right / not enough?
3. From where do you obtain materials that are made available to new lecturers?
4. What internal quality controls does your Subject Centre use to ensure:
 - a. that materials are obtained from high quality sources?
 - b. that materials are of a high quality in themselves?
 - c. that the materials are up-to-date and maintained as such?
5. What evidence do you have that the materials you provide for new lecturers are effective in supporting and enhancing their practice?
6. How regularly do you collect data from new lecturers to ensure that the materials provided by your Subject centre are deemed useful?
7. How regularly do you collect data from new lecturers to ensure that the materials provided by your Subject centre are considered to have made an impact on the quality of teaching? What form does this take? Is it sufficient or are there other data you would like to collect?
8. From whom does your Subject Centre invite critical comment on the quality of its materials?
9. How would you like to see the quality of your materials evaluated in future? Do you have an evaluation plan that builds on 4c?
10. How does your Subject Centre use any evaluative data which is collected? How is this used to inform the collection / development of further materials for new lecturers?
11. Do you think that (for example) EDUs should provide feedback on the provision of materials for new lecturers?
12. Do you think that (for example) EDUs could provide feedback on the provision of materials for new lecturers? Might a group such as HEDG, or maybe SHED in Scotland, be an appropriate one to undertake this task?

APPENDIX 13. Mindmap used to structure findings from interviews with participating staff.

SHEER II - OUTCOME OF DISCUSSION 2/7/08.

