

“They are a lifeline to busy academics.”

“It is subject specific, staffed by people from the discipline, designed to assist and not audit.”

The Subject Network



**The
Higher
Education
Academy**



“Something I make time to include in my work, because of the high quality of the service and the relevance of the materials to my own development and that of my colleagues.”

The Subject Network

The Academy aims to improve the student learning experience in higher education through the development and transfer of good teaching and learning practices in all subject disciplines.

Discipline-based support is provided through the Academy's Subject Network of 24 Subject Centres. These are a mix of single-site and consortium-based centres located within relevant subject departments and hosted by higher education institutions (HEIs).

This subject focus recognises that for many academic staff in higher education it is at this level where most networking and exchange takes place. Originally set up in 2000 as part of the Learning and Teaching Support Network, the centres have made a considerable impact over the last five years.

The Subject Centres are client-oriented, providing pro-active as well as responsive services, meeting current needs and anticipating future needs. Each centre engages in a wide variety of activities to support practitioners, subject departments and discipline communities. A core set of activities and services exists across the subject network.

Information and resources

All Subject Centres provide information and resources. Every centre has its own website and many have active databases and knowledge banks of learning and teaching practices, case studies, question banks and materials. All Subject Centres produce newsletters and updates of their services, emerging issues and subject-based information. They also produce research journals and issue-based reports, briefings and learning and teaching guides. In addition, most Subject Centres run well-used and active enquiry services.

Engagement with the community

Engagement with the academic community is vital as it is this interaction which ensures that Subject Centres have an understanding of community concerns. There are a variety of ways in which Subject Centres do this, from events and departmental workshops to teaching awards and student awards.

Between them, Subject Centres have over 3,000 key contacts in departments acting as conduits for information both to and from the Subject Centres. There are a further 40,000 actively interested participants.

Brokerage and collaboration

Subject Centres are brokers; they connect practitioners, experts, developers and innovators. They forge links between generic and subject-specific interests, and build bridges across institutions.

www.heacademy.ac.uk/subjectnetwork.htm



Subject Centres: Core activities include

- collation of information
- building online databases and resources
- workshops, seminars & conferences
- staff development
- advisory service
- supporting practitioner networks
- supporting development & research projects
- links with professional bodies and subject associations
- advising on current and future developments
- interdisciplinary work with other Subject Centres.

All Subject Centres actively engage in collaborative activities such as funding mini-projects, establishing partnerships and initiating special interest groups on different themes and issues.

Examples of activities in this area include External Examiner databases, student surveys, lecturer surveys, and the development of high risk projects which result in prototypes that practitioners can take further.

Interdisciplinary Collaborations

Subject Centres also broker interdisciplinary collaboration. A number of disciplines face similar challenges and have similar concerns. Many Subject Centres work across subjects to address these issues.

For example, mathematics is a core subject and is a prerequisite for learning within many other disciplines. Therefore, a number of centres have worked together to provide mathematics support and resources.

“The subject focus is attractive to staff who for years needed this kind of subject focused support mechanism and forum to share and hear about best practice.”

Another area of interdisciplinary collaboration is ethics. The requirement to teach ethics is growing, yet little has been done to develop provision systematically. Six Subject Centres have worked together to fill this gap.

Subject policy and development

In addition to responding to the immediate needs of their communities, Subject Centres try to anticipate future needs. It is important to identify the challenges facing each discipline and develop the appropriate tools and services to help communities respond to those challenges.

It is also important to provide practitioners with a voice. Many Subject Centres already provide input and evidence to policy development and contribute to policy making in the areas of teaching and learning in higher education. This is a key priority for the future and it is expected that the Subject Centre role in policy development will increase.



The 24 Subject Centres

Art, Design and Media
www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk

Bioscience
www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk

Built Environment
www.cebe.heacademy.ac.uk

**Business, Management,
Accountancy and Finance**
www.business.heacademy.ac.uk

Economics
www.economics.heacademy.ac.uk

Education (ESCALATE)
www.escalate.ac.uk

Engineering
www.engsc.ac.uk

English
www.english.heacademy.ac.uk

**Geography, Earth and
Environmental Sciences**
www.gees.ac.uk

Health Sciences and Practice
www.health.heacademy.ac.uk

History, Classics and Archaeology
www.hca.heacademy.ac.uk

**Hospitality, Leisure,
Sport and Tourism**
www.hlst.heacademy.ac.uk

**Information and
Computer Sciences**
www.ics.heacademy.ac.uk

**Languages, Linguistics
and Area Studies**
www.llas.ac.uk

Law (UK Centre for Legal Education)
www.ukcle.ac.uk

**Materials (UK Centre for
Materials Education)**
www.materials.ac.uk

Maths, Stats & OR Network
www.mathstore.ac.uk

**Medicine, Dentistry
and Veterinary Medicine**
www.medev.ac.uk

**PALATINE - Dance,
Drama and Music**
www.palatine.heacademy.ac.uk

Philosophical and Religious Studies
www.prs.heacademy.ac.uk

Physical Sciences
www.physsci.heacademy.ac.uk

Psychology
www.psychology.heacademy.ac.uk

Sociology, Anthropology and Politics
www.c-sap.bham.ac.uk

Social Policy and Social Work (SWAP)
www.swap.ac.uk

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