Designing a Teacher Led Reward and Recognition Scheme for Higher Education Lecturers, in a Further Education College

Background

With the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) (Success as a Knowledge Economy, 2016), the mechanisms for measuring the quality of higher education institutions (in the United Kingdom at least), has shifted from the traditional research framework to a focus upon the standards of teaching. Its intention is to provide greater emphasis upon how assessing the economic, social and cultural impact upon teaching and research enhances the student experience (Smith et al, 2011).

Within the publication of the White Paper, Success as a Knowledge Economy (2016), key strategic aims targeting (1) the levels of information universities provide for students, (2) excellence in teaching and (3) support for innovative pedagogic research (Johnson, 2016) are highlighted. With this new focus upon learning and teaching, higher education (HE) institutions needs to re-evaluate their strategic approach to pedagogic practice.

One of the quality indicators stipulated within TEF is for institutions to evidence how they reward and recognise excellence in teaching. Therefore, this case study highlights University Centre Weston’s (UCW) inception of an institutional reward and recognition scheme that identifies teaching excellence within a higher education department, in a further education college. The reward and recognition scheme is underpinned by the title “UCW Learning and Teaching Fellow”

The process, in its pilot stage, involved action research, consultation with existing staff, external representatives and students to form a focus group and define the criteria that determined teaching excellence, and construct an appropriate method of assessing this. This is currently being piloted by volunteer teachers who meet regularly with the focus group to report on the scheme. The pilot is ongoing and due to be formally launched to existing staff in September 2017 through a research and scholarly Continuing Professional Development (CPD) event. It is the intention to align the criteria of the scheme to Fellowship of the HEA. At present, achieving Fellowship is a condition of completion.

Aims of the UCW Fellowship Scheme

- To embed a teacher-led reward and recognition scheme enabling staff to share, support and develop within an institutional community of practice.
- To enable staff to enhance their teaching, and students' learning, through reflection, professional critical discussion and the implementation of new and innovative strategies.
- Recognise, support and disseminate best practice within UCW.
• Provide opportunities that enable experienced staff to enhance their pedagogical practice.
• Provide opportunities for staff to research, through scholarly activity, innovations in learning and teaching.

The proposal will provide an enhanced focus on developing excellence in teaching in higher education at UCW, which is conversant with the expectations outlined in the TEF.

The proposal will align with the TEF through teaching quality (TQ) in the following ways:
• Provide a robust overview of teaching observations in addition to the Peer Observation of Teaching process that measures impact and effectiveness.
• Provide reward and recognition for pedagogical excellence embedding an institutional culture that identifies impact and effectiveness.
• Enable opportunities for staff to develop their pedagogical practice.
• Have a specific focus on learning and teaching staff development.

**UCW Fellowship Learning and Teaching Fellowship**

The “Fellow” title was determined by the focus group, sharing parity with other HE institutions teaching titles such as “Teaching Fellow”. The focus group recommended a scheme that met the culture of teaching at UCW, a college HE provider, and devised an ongoing scholarly commitment where staff can submit a portfolio for consideration by an assessment panel. The process was segregated into three sections (1) application to the scheme, (2) portfolio completion (3) assessment and presentation.

**Application**

The UCW Fellowship mirrors the TEF in that staff are required to produce three years’ worth of institutional data for consideration onto the scheme. The scheme is not intended as an open invitation for all staff to engage, but to recognise experienced UCW teaching staff who have successfully engaged with learning and teaching, and can evidence this over time. The criteria for application are:

• 3 years of teaching experience at UCW.
• 3 years of tangible evidence highlighting successful teaching, for example, National Student Survey (NSS) data, module review, student voice, successful engagement with UCW’s Peer Observation of Teaching process and contributions to learning and teaching CPD.
• A recognised higher education teaching qualification.
• 500 word expression of interest discussing the above and why they should be considered for the scheme.
• Written submission from a line manager validating the application content.
The applications are reviewed over the summer by the selected panel (learning and teaching manager, students and external representation) and the scheme starts again the subsequent September.

UCW Fellowship Portfolio

Staff on the scheme are paired and the portfolio consists of the following criteria:

- Three professional discussions
- Three peer observed teaching sessions
- Staff reflections/evaluation on teaching and implementation of new practices
- 1000 word reflective commentary evidencing teaching innovation
- Successful certification of Fellowship of the HEA
- Contribution to scholarship and UCW CPD.

Assessment stage

Staff present their UCW portfolio of evidence to the assessment panel for consideration. The panel consists of a College Leadership Board member, the Learning and Teaching Manager for Higher Education, external representation, and students. Staff portfolios that are accepted, against agreed criteria, are invited to a 10 minute presentation to further discuss their practice. Upon successful completion of this, UCW Fellowship is awarded.

Becoming a UCW Fellow

Successful applicants are awarded the following:

- UCW Learning and Teaching Fellowship Title
- A three year financial honorarium
- Increased access to scholarly activity remission and chance to lead upon small scale research projects
- To lead on learning and teaching CPD
- To disseminate best practice among the wider academic community
- To reengage as an assessor or mentor with the UCW Fellowship Scheme.

References


*Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*, Department for Education (2016). Available from
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