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People, Partnerships and Pedagogies

There has to be a better way

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With your laptop open in front of you, you're ready to take notes on the new teaching intervention being introduced at today's session. You're feeling distracted by the research ideas you wanted to work on this morning, and the assessment grading you need to finish this afternoon. Today wasn't a good time to focus on course development, but it was the only time this professional development session was being offered. At the end of the session you leave with a collection of notes, some great ideas, and the enthusiasm to implement changes that really make a difference. You go back to your grading, your research, and your teaching. Weeks later you look at your notes and wonder how you're going to actually make those changes. There has to be a better way.

As a TELedvisor, you find these one-off professional development sessions just as frustrating. Fresh teaching ideas are presented, champions share their exemplary practice, and opportunities for collaboration are provided, but often the same fully engaged academics attend each session. Overall improvement in course development across the institution doesn't take place. You could run a day or three of focused course design sessions, if lecturers could commit to attending. You could have instructional designers develop the online or blended elements of a course, but if the teacher isn't invested, or doesn't understand the reasoning behind the design or the activities that have been implemented, then time-poor lecturers often teach in the way that they've been used to. Formal qualifications in tertiary teaching can support the development of a greater understanding, but only a few lecturers have the time or the enthusiasm to undertake these. There has to be a better way.

The Academic Development team are trying something different at the University of Canterbury. We are implementing a learner centric process for professional development for teaching and course development. We have designed a flexible, blended, learner driven professional development process, in which lecturers are invited to take part. This process utilises many of the recommended practices for effective professional development (Cordingley et al.,2015; Darling-Hammond et al.,2017; Hertz et al., 2022; Richardson & Díaz Maggioli, 2018) as well as strategies we recommend for tertiary teaching, and is undertaken at a time and pace that works for the lecturer(s) of a course. Through both format and content, the process provides examples of good practice, involves lecturers in flipped learning, offers expert support, incorporates collaborative course development, and promotes reflective practice.

How has this process been designed? How does it work? How is it being implemented? Is it having an impact? Commit seven minutes of your time to finding out (and bring your laptop to take notes).

Keywords: Professional development, Blended learning

References

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