

Supporting Technical Staff toward D1 Applications at Strathclyde University

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Drivers

Science Council Employer Champion status (awarded 2016) led to creation of specific development opportunities for technical staff. This included a bespoke support network for technical staff to apply for AFHEA recognition

As a widening participation university, this aligns well with our institutional ethos and received strong support at University Senate level.

Key Challenges

- Overly descriptive writing**
 - Some very technical accounts!
 - Reflective writing difficult
- UKPSF interpretation**
 - Difficult to identify examples of practice
 - Needed support to link practice with UKPSF and to articulate practice in terms of students and learning
- Confidence**
 - Lots of reassurance required
 - Group structure supported this but sometimes individual support needed
 - Writing
- Laptop/PC Access**
 - Very little opportunity to write outside of sessions
 - Used all of our loaner laptops for the sessions
- Schedules quite inflexible**
 - Some 1:1 sessions required to support to finishing

What worked for us

- Provided formal external professional recognition of the role technical staff play in learning and teaching
- Raised professional esteem
- Supported technical staff in learning more about learning and teaching theories and practice
- Supported widening participation focus of institution

How we set up the group

- Initial Information session**
 - Support from developer
 - Lots of reassurance!
- Peer Support Network**
 - 2 Mentors (both experienced, both scientific background)
 - 6 x ½ day sessions pre-scheduled
 - Clear submission deadline
- Review**
 - Each application read by a mentor and rest of group
 - Peer review session

Things that went well

- Writing support**
 - Reflective writing
 - Structured writing techniques (free writing, pomodoro etc)
 - Support in structuring and refining writing
- Choice of Mentors**
 - Dual understanding of HEA Fellowships and laboratory work
 - 1 developer, 1 teaching-focused academic (who runs a teaching lab)
 - Different yet complementary skills
- UKPSF Mapping**
 - Initial focus on identifying examples – then writing focus
 - Mapping encouraged and supported

“I recommend others to apply ... it helps you to realise that as a technician you have an important role in teaching within the university”

“It has shaped my outlook and approach to teaching and learning. The assistance of colleagues and mentors was supportive”

“The mentoring was excellent, they were all so helpful and I never felt I was criticized; I was always given positive direction. Everyone was so supportive and positive”

“I wanted to have a professional qualification as I feel it is important to show that the work I do is recognized”

“I enjoyed the relaxed nature of the sessions, the peer review of my work, and peer reviewing others’ work”

“Our Dean and Head of School and other staff members congratulated me on my achievement. This made me feel valued at work”

“The mentors were very good at helping you to see where your skills fitted in with the requirements. It was useful to read others’ reflective writing to help revise my own”

“I enjoyed doing the reflective writing more than I thought once I got used to doing it. It was good to get verification of my practice”

“The award in itself has been of no practical benefit but the process ... has raised my awareness of teaching opportunities within my role, opened my eyes to different ways of framing and approaching those opportunities and raised my profile in respect of others considering me for further opportunities”