

# ALDinHE Bulletin

Newsletter of the Association for Learning Development in Higher Education

## Recent Steering Group Activity

**Christine Keenan—Chair**



I love this time of year when the students return to university and the campus becomes busy and active again. It's always great to see the new first years arriving and also, it's great to see students returning from placement eager to start their final year. All in all, a good time of year.

The ALDinHE Steering Group continues to be very active and busy, and I am really delighted that many more of our great community are joining different working groups and getting involved in our work. There is plenty to do, and we are always keen to welcome new working group members so if reading this newsletter inspires you to get involved, let me know!

Arrangements are well underway for our next annual Conference, **Celebrating Learning Development which will be held in Plymouth on 25—27 March 2013**. We have an excellent group of keynote speakers, **Stella Cottrell, Les Ebdon, and Dave Cormier**. We are looking forward to receiving your proposals and of course look forward to seeing you all again at the fantastic highlight of our year!

Watch out for news about our new Journal special edition to be published soon on the subject of writing in STEM disciplines, something that I think will be of interest to many of us.

It was great to see the results of the animation challenge this week, thanks to all the entrants and to everyone involved with this project. The animations will “live” on our brand new LearnHigher website. Watch out for news of the re-launch early in the new year.

One of our key priorities this year, is to encourage collaborations with students. I'm pleased to let you know that we are currently in very productive discussions with the NUS and the Student Learning and Teaching Network (SLTN), and we look forward to their engagement and contributions.

We are also developing collaborative links with international associations similar to ours – if you are connected to any such international associations and think there could be mutual benefit in developing formal links, please get in touch with David Bowers.

## Celebrating Learning Development 10th Annual Conference



**Kerry Bellamy—Vice-Chair**

Planning is well underway for our next Annual Conference and this one is going to be extra special as it will mark the LDHEN's 10th Birthday and it will be hosted at Plymouth University, where it all began!

**25—27 March 2013** is a definite date for the diary and we hope you would like to be a key part of our celebrations by submitting a workshop proposal, poster presentation or lightening talk. We're **accepting proposals until the 26 November** and we would love to have you on board. Not submitted anything before but fancy having a go? Get in touch and we'll explain the process, it's not complicated and we're here to help you if you need us to show you the ropes.

*“A very well organised conference with a friendly atmosphere.”*

*“Thoroughly enjoyed it! Was excellent chance to meet with likeminded people.”*

Never attended one of our conferences before? Don't be shy we're here to help you meet up with people, learn something new and have some fun along the way.

You can keep up to date with plans, programs and the all important booking details via the [LDHEN Jisc List](#) or by following [@aldinhe\\_lh](#) and [#aldcon](#) on twitter.

### Institutional Membership

#### 2012/13 – have you renewed yet?

Has your Institutional Membership been renewed? Fees have been frozen at last year's rate of £150 so don't miss out on all the benefits including reduced conference fees, priority booking at CPD events and loads more. Don't delay, renew today!

Not an Institutional Member yet? Why not consider joining the ever increasing list of universities who are showing their commitment to Learning Development and the Student Experience and join today! [JoinALDinHE](#)

### And the winners are....



Thank you to everyone who took part in our recent **Animation Challenge**. It was great to see that we are part of such a creative and innovative community! We are pleased to announce that the winners are:

- In **first place** - **Courtney Hopf from Brunel University** with her resource entitled the [Power of the Paragraph](#)
- In **second place** - **Michelle Reid from Reading University** with her Prezi with videos entitled [Structuring your report: A piece of cake](#)
- In **joint third place** - **Sally Dalton, from Leeds University** [The 3 minute guide to subject headings](#) and **Florence Dujardin from Sheffield Hallam** with her screencast entitled Using Google Scholar.

### Reflections on the Animation Challenge

#### Courtney Hopf, Brunel University



When the animation challenge was first proposed, I knew straight away that I'd want to enter the competition. I have a long history of interest in graphic design and filmmaking, and I have often tried to bring those influences into my work as a Learning Developer. I put far too much time into my Powerpoint designs, I love editing short videos, and I'm highly (and unfairly) judgemental of people who use Comic Sans as their main font.

In creating 'The Power of the Paragraph,' I set out to limit myself to approximately two minutes running time. I think video resources can be a brilliant tool for teaching academic skills, but I also firmly believe that far too often we employ them inefficiently. Personally, if I'm not hooked into a YouTube video in the first ten seconds, and a glance to the side reveals that it runs for another five minutes, I'm out of there. Sadly, I think my meagre, Internet-dulled attention span is relatively in line with most students today.

Further, I believe the teaching objective of any 'learning object' needs to harmonize with the form in which it is presented, meaning that a visual medium like film or animation should only be used to present visual concepts. In other words, I'm not convinced that all aspects of academic writing can be taught effectively through screencasts. Sometimes you really do just need a selection of text and some people sitting around a table reading and discussing it (ah, the good old days!).

As a result of these two convictions – that the video needed to be snappy and that it needed to present a visual concept – I decided paragraphs were a worthwhile subject. They allowed me to eschew the specifics of what a text says and think only about its form, and why that matters. Powerpoint was an ideal, easy tool for meeting this goal, and I made liberal use of the

'animations' tab to keep it all moving quickly. I tried to ensure that there was always something moving on the screen at any given time – it's the only way to keep your viewer's eyes on the screen when they are used to the rapid-fire editing of today's television and film.

As Learning Developers, we are increasingly finding ourselves tasked with being graphic artists, filmmakers, web designers and animators, and I think we can lead the way in meshing these forms with academic content. At the same time, I think there is a conversation to be had about which forms work best for which content.

### Another Exciting (Quality Code) Chapter for ALDinHE

**Steve Rooney, University of Leicester**



As reported previously, ALDinHE has been working with the **Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)** on the new **UK Quality Code for Higher Education**. In particular, we were asked to consider and respond to the draft *Chapter*

*B3: Learning and Teaching*, the final version of which was published in October. As members will see, there is a great deal within the chapter which is directly relevant to the work of learning developers. Indeed, there are a number of Indicators which refer directly to areas of work for which learning developers often play a leading role within their respective institutions. You can view the full chapter on the QAA website (<http://tinyurl.com/c2tkpqr>) – members are strongly advised to do so, in order to consider how their own practices and activities relate to the themes and indicators outlined in the code.

By way of summary - and as reported via the LDHEN list in October – some of the key themes in the chapter, of particular relevance to learning developers, are:

- a strong emphasis on engaging students as active participants in their own learning

- and their own development as learners
- a recognition of the need to provide students with opportunities and resources to develop their approaches to learning
- an emphasis on encouraging critical reflection and 'learning how to learn'.

Early on, the chapter makes explicit the recognition that student learning takes place in a variety of forms and settings and that learning is facilitated and promoted by a wide range of people, working in a wide range of contexts (in the curriculum, as part of central services, contributing to educational development etc.)

It is, of course, testimony to ALDinHE's growing profile across the sector that we were invited to participate in the consultation process for this chapter. We are delighted to report that we have, likewise, been invited to respond to the draft *Chapter B4: Supporting Student Achievement*. Once again, this is an area for which ALDinHE members very often provide practical and strategic leadership. The consultation for this chapter is currently underway and members can view the draft chapter by visiting: <http://tinyurl.com/d6suvmb>. A report on progress with this chapter will appear on these pages during the months to come.

### Tell us, we're listening

As an association that is ever growing, we are keen to find the right blend of communication channels that allows us to actively engage with our members and operate as effectively as possible. With this in mind we have extended the work of our Membership and Publicity working group to include the development of a Communications Strategy.

Over the coming weeks we will be seeking your input into this project. We need to know how **you**, our members, want to receive information and updates about association activities, opportunities etc. Share your thoughts via your chosen channel, we are listening.

## Research & Development

**Carina Buckley, Working Group Chair**



The Research and Development Working Group is pleased to announce an exciting new opportunity for all those working in Learning Development who would like to carry out some research.

We will shortly be **accepting bids for up to £500** to carry out a short 12-week project, with an opportunity to present your findings at our annual conference in Plymouth at the end of March. The call for proposals will be circulated via the LDHEN list very soon - keep an eye out, we're looking forward to hearing from you!

## New editor for JLDHE

We are extremely pleased to announce that we have appointed a new member to our editorial team for the JLDHE, the association's professional journal. **Dr Stephanie McKendry** currently works as an Academic Development Tutor at Glasgow Caledonia University and is an experienced learning developer, actively engages with our community through events, list posts and through her array of publications, books and conference presentations to her name. We extend a warm welcome to her and look forward to working more closely with her over the coming months.

## Student Perspective

**Francesca Keirle, University of Wales Newport (Steering Group Member)**



As a recent graduate, I have been forced to think about employability of late and to think about the way in which studying has prepared me for the big wide world. There always seem to be buzz phrases floating around, and one I have been

hearing more and more about is 'Learning for Employment.' My understanding of this is that there should be a drive towards embedding skills which will be of use in the work place into

learning at Higher Education level, however there are limits to how useful this embedding can be; limits imposed by the individual, not the institution.

From my experience, I have found that one of the most useful ways in which studying has benefited me and prepared me for employment is that I have had the opportunity to engage with co-curricular activities which have supported me in developing an understanding of what skills and attributes I will need to succeed in my chosen career. These opportunities are out there, and there is never a better time to propose projects and new incentives, as there is a drive towards student led activities across learning in the UK right now, and funds available to support these.

So my advice? Get out there in your institution and find a way to volunteer, or research funding and make your brilliant idea happen.

## Share your student experience / views

Are you a student or do you know someone who has something to say about their student experience? We are looking for short pieces for future newsletters (*approx 150 word limit*) that reflect on life from the students' perspective so if have an opinion, observation or experience you would like to share, we want to hear from you. Email your pieces to [Newsletter Editor](#) for inclusion.

## Member Hot Topics

There has been lots of discussion on the LDHEN list recently around the question of "**Academic contracts for Learning Developers**" It has been great to see so many people sharing opinions, experiences and resources.

We wanted you to know that the ALDinHE Steering Group is aware that there are serious issues currently effecting and impacting on the work of our LD Colleagues and, in fact, this topic was discussed at length during our recent planning meeting in August.

Whilst we are obviously not a representative organisation as such, we do take these concerns seriously. As such, we are currently in the process of actively gathering data in order to

produce guidance notes and case studies that will form part of an overall best practice guidelines document that we hope will help colleagues to present their cases when entering into discussions with their institutions or line managers.

Please watch this space for updates on our progress and let me know if you would like to work with us, your help in the data gathering would be extremely valuable. If you missed these or any of the discussions catch up by visiting [LDHENSignUp](#) and join the list.

### Take the leap... I joined a Working Group

*Elizabeth Jones, University of Wales Newport*



"I actually joined the Professional Development working group as a replacement for someone else but it's definitely been an interesting and positive experience so far and I'm really glad I got involved. The group meets via a

web conferencing site so it was very easy to join - I actually attended the first meeting from my kitchen table! Everyone was very friendly and happy for me to join in and get involved. I'm really looking forward to working on the new 23 things training as I think it's a great course concept and something I've already put into practice in my day job as a Learning Technologist."

### Webinar Success

ALDinHE held the first of its new webinar series recently, via Blackboard Collaborate, and tackled the issue of using iPads in the Classroom and according to your feedback the session was a huge success.

*"It was really informative and worthwhile. Thank you to everyone who organised it."*

This new venture has been developed in conjunction with our recent DDL work and based on your feedback we are now exploring ideas for a more regular monthly webinar series so send us your ideas on what you'd like to see on the programme.



### Reflections on a Resi *Amanda Pocklington*

"What a fantastic experience the ALDinHE residential meeting in Ipswich was. This was my first chance to really meet the other members face-to-face and to get

acquainted. I also had another first during this meeting – having just been assigned an iPad for these types of activity I took it along. There were as usual the normal 'getting to know your technology' issues. However, the iPad proved to be invaluable enabling me to make notes electronically that I could email to myself or others. No more trying to decipher my notes when I got back! Just one simple use and you can start to see the value of such gadgetry. I'm now also using it to check emails on a more regular basis as it's so much faster to connect than the PC – why is that? My digital literacy has taken one small step forward....others are sure to follow!"

### New resource for the Professional Development Working Group

*Janette Meyer—Working Group Chair*

The PDWG has been aware of a need for PD materials for more experienced Learning Developers wishing to take the next steps in their career, for example, towards being manager of a service or to disseminating and embedding good practice. The Strategic Stories resource is a collection of LDers explaining principles or giving an example of a key practice from their own experience. It is intended as a way of providing LDers with the benefit of the experience of the wider LD community. The Leeds Conference was a good place to 'persuade' some of you to make videos, and others have contributed from their desks.

Thanks to everyone who took part and a special shout out to Michelle Reid for all her hard work in the editing and uploading of the final resource.

We hope you find it useful, look forward to your feedback and encourage you to contribute your own videos. [Strategic Stories](#)

Please contact [Michelle Reid](#) or [Janette Myers](#) if you would like to make a video.

### Top Tips from you...

*"I've started using IFTTT.com to automate my social media posts. It's really easy to set up, worked first time and its saved me having to do multiple updates."*

*"I input into conferences and workshops without saying a word by using twitter backchannels (hashtags)—great for us shy types"*

Got a **hot topic** or **top tip** to share? Found new resources or got advice to share on pitfalls to avoid, engagement techniques or perhaps a review of something thought provoking that you've read, we want to hear about it.

### Could you Get Involved?

Have you got ideas, skills or fancy broadening your professional network by meeting and working with likeminded people? We would like to hear from you! We are looking for people to get involved with our working groups and you could be just who we need.

Just look at the diverse range of activities you could turn your hand to....

- **Conference**
- **Journal**
- **LearnHigher**
- **Membership and Communications**
- **Professional Development**
- **Research and Development**

If you are interested in joining a working group and would like to find out more, get in touch.



### A little birdie told me...

You can keep up with everything that is happening and update us on your activities via our twitter feed [@aldinhe\\_LH](#) If you want to hear more about our conference plans and developments follow [#aldcon](#)

Why not share your LD thoughts and updates with the world using [#LoveLD](#) or join in discussions with an online community [#edchat](#)

### Final thought...

**'To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment'**

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

### Dates for your Diary

26 November	Deadline for conference proposals
20 December	Confirmations of accepted proposals to be sent out to individuals
Early January	Conference bookings to open (watch out for LDHEN posts to give you full details)
25-27 March 2013	Annual Conference (Plymouth)



### Get in Touch

We'd love to hear from you! You can contact any of the Steering Group by emailing us at: [info@aldinhe.ac.uk](mailto:info@aldinhe.ac.uk)

**Christine Keenan** (Chair) Bournemouth University  
**Kerry Bellamy** (Vice Chair) University of Wales, Newport  
**Andy Hagyard** (Treasurer) University of Lincoln  
**David Bowers** (Secretary) University Campus Suffolk  
**John Hilsdon** (Journal) University of Plymouth  
**Carina Buckley** Southampton Solent University  
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