

# ALDinHE Bulletin

Newsletter of the Association for Learning Development in Higher Education

## Recent Steering Group Activity

**Christine Keenan—Chair**



It was great to see so many old friends and meet new ones at the annual Conference in April. Leeds was a wonderful venue for our conference and I'd like to thank Julia Braham and all the Conference working group team for another superb

conference. The post conference resource is now available on our website, including a post conference dinner resource! We are already busy planning for our 2013 conference, which will be in Plymouth in March 2013 – make a date in your diary now!

Since our last newsletter we have said goodbye to Steering Group stalwarts Michelle Reid, Pauline Ridley and we all wish them well in their new ventures. I am delighted to say that we have also welcomed new members Carina Buckley, Louise Frith, Francesca Keirle, Janette Myers and Amanda Pocklington to the Steering Group. The Association's work centres on the activities of the Conference, LearnHigher, Journal, Professional Development, Research and Development working groups. I'd just like to remind everyone that the contributions and support of the wider learning development community is key, and there is information in this newsletter about how *you* can get involved.

Our Membership and Publicity group has been busy again this year and thanks to their efforts we now have over 40 institutional members. If your institution is not yet affiliated, please encourage them to get involved, there are many benefits in doing so!

ALDinHE continues to represent our membership nationally as well, and currently, our members and LDHEN subscribers are being asked to comment and feedback on an evaluation of the HEA National Teaching

Fellowship scheme. The HEA are particularly interested to hear the views of learning developers and I am sure that many of you will want to contribute to the survey. This newsletter contains links to many of our current activities, I'm sure you'll find it an interesting summer read!

## 9th Annual Conference (April 2012)

**Kerry Bellamy—Vice-Chair**

What a conference! Over 170 attendees arrived in Leeds to be greeted with an exciting and packed programme of keynotes, parallel sessions, poster displays, social activities and networking opportunities. Friendships were made and rekindled and collaboration opportunities discussed over coffee and cakes, what more could you ask for? A chance to throw off your cares and dance the night away I hear you say.... Well, we delivered that too! With a fabulous dinner at The Royal Armouries that saw delegates enjoying a delicious three course meal in a unique and impressive location followed by the now legendary conference quiz and topped off with dancing into the small hours.

*"A very well organised conference with a friendly atmosphere."*

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

*"Just the most impressive example of a community of scholars, teachers and learning developers coming together to honestly discuss ideas and come up with practical solutions."*

If you weren't able to join us this year, worry not! The [post conference resource](#) is now available via our website so grab yourself a cuppa and have a nose through papers and presentations available, you could even put on your headphones and have a sneaky dance round the office when no one's watching so you get the full experience, I won't tell anyone!

## Stop, think, ask questions: Feedback

Janette Myers—St George's University  
London

I had one of those experiences that make you think. The course teaching team had told me that they had given 3 forms of exam feedback to their students, the students told me they had received none. The project that grew out of this experience, carried out in collaboration with the Royal Veterinary College and funded by the HEA MEDEV subject centre used a questionnaire to ask new students what activities they consider to be feedback. A student researcher, Farah Kassam, asked them again after a year.

Students were most likely to consider activities to be feedback if they were both direct and personal. This immediately tells us that cohort feedback (direct but impersonal) and review of feedback with a personal tutor (personal but indirect) are less likely to be considered feedback. This helps explain my experience in front of that class. Farah found that little changes for students after 1 year of higher education; just being at university and experiencing feedback is not enough. We also found, through open questions, that previous educational experience creates a complex set of expectations about feedback. It is not a simple relationship, some things are expected to be different, some the same, and there are no obvious patterns. We concluded that students' definitions of feedback may differ from staff definitions and that we should develop explicit teaching on forms of feedback that can be expected on a health care course.

For examples of materials please contact Janette Myers [jmyers@sgul.ac.uk](mailto:jmyers@sgul.ac.uk)

## Embedding a firm success!

With over 40 delegates from as far away as Canterbury and Edinburgh gathered at the University of Leicester on 22<sup>nd</sup> June for a day of discussion and sharing ideas on what embedding means to us and how we can do it more effectively, it is safe to say that the

ALDinHE 'Embedding Skills and Integrating Learning Development' day was definitely embedded as a firm success.

The event was opened by Dr Mark Rawlinson (Academic Director of Leicester's College of Arts, Humanities and Law) who made an engaging speech proposing embedding as a means of facilitating a review of the curricula with a focus on a design for learning, not simply content coverage. Dr Pat Hill from the University of Huddersfield then explained more about the on-going work of the ALDinHE Embedding Task and Finish Group which contributed to the organisation of the event. There was a real buzz throughout the day as delegates swapped their different embedding journeys and found new solutions to embedding challenges. Feedback comments suggested the day was very worthwhile, and the material produced at the event is being captured to contribute to a national embedding learning development resource.

A big thank you to Steve Rooney and colleagues at the University of Leicester for making us so welcome, and to Pat Hill and the Embedding Task and Finish group for organising the programme for the day. If you are interested in the work of the Embedding Task and Finish group, please contact Pat Hill [p.a.hill@hud.ac.uk](mailto:p.a.hill@hud.ac.uk)

Check the **Dates for your Diary** section for details of up coming events and look out for further updates via the LDHEN list and association website.



## A Virtual Reflection

Stepping into a virtual world and engaging with colleagues from around the country is par for the course in some practices, but could it work for a writing retreat? Visit the ALDinHE blog to read about the experiences of three of the participants <http://bit.ly/VirtualWriting>.

## Institutional Membership

*2012/13 – join now!*

We are now taking applications for Institutional Membership for the new academic year 2012/13. Please use this “early bird” opportunity if it would benefit you to be invoiced for next year’s membership before 31<sup>st</sup> July 2012. Please use the application form available on our website at [www.aldinhe.ac.uk](http://www.aldinhe.ac.uk). Institutional Membership fees have been frozen at last year’s rate of £150.

As well as the usual benefits of reduced conference fees, priority booking at CPD events and more, the first 20 institutions who take out or renew membership for 2012/13 will also receive a free copy of the rare printed edition of issue 3 of the Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education, our flagship, peer-reviewed academic publication. So don’t delay, join today!

## QAA Quality Code: how ALDinHE are helping to shape policy and practice across HE

*Steve Rooney, University of Leicester*

As many Learning Developers will be aware, the QAA’s revised Quality Code for Higher Education is currently open for consultation. Of particular interest to ALDinHE are sections B3 and B4 of the code, which deal with Learning and Teaching and Student Support, respectively. We are delighted to announce that QAA have invited ALDinHE to discuss and provide input for section B3: Learning and Teaching. Members can view the draft version of this section by visiting: <http://tinyurl.com/7hhrvhq>.

As you will see from the draft, there is much to enthuse and interest the learning development community, including explicit references to the

vital role that academic support services play in supporting both students’ learning and – perhaps even more crucially – institutional approaches and policies towards learning and teaching. Also of huge interest to learning developers is the consistent focus on engaging students as active participants in learning – including the design of learning. This emphasis is, of course, consistent with so much of the work our members undertake.

The consultation period lasts until 25 July. In the coming weeks, the ALDinHE Steering Group will be drafting a response which will aim to ensure that: a) the role of learning developers as key strategic partners in the development of learning and teaching policy and practice is strengthened and deepened; and b) the relationships between the Learning and Teaching and Student Support sections of the Quality Code are, likewise, strengthened and deepened.

## Feedback from the NUS/ HEA Student Engagement Conference

*Lucy Chilvers, University of Brighton*



The two day Student Engagement Conference run in partnership by the NUS and HEA was inspiring and thought provoking. There was an energetic atmosphere with a wide variety of delegates including students, SU staff, academics and professional services staff. Sessions were full of lively discussion about creating a culture shift in HE so that students are actively involved as partners with their institutions in shaping their academic experience.

Only being able to go to day two myself, the first session I attended was a consultation on the Learning and Teaching chapter of the [QAA’s UK Quality code for HE](#) which is currently under development. I found it a rewarding experience to provide feedback, reminding me of the sense of satisfaction that students also feel when knowing their voice is valued and taken

seriously. I would particularly recommend reading the [new Student Engagement chapter](#) which is also currently open for consultation. It is helpful in provoking questions about your own institution's current practice.

I ran a workshop with two of my colleagues from the Brighton SU in which we explored student engagement from the perspective of the four most common motivations for students choosing to attend university, as identified in the [NUS Student Experience Report 2008](#). We worked with the participants to produce timelines of the student journey mapping key opportunities and challenges for engaging each of these four groups of students.

A following session for institutional staff provided a great opportunity for networking and discussing the barriers we each face to enhancing student engagement at our own institutions and sharing ideas of things to try ourselves.

The day concluded with a panel debate questioning the issue of power imbalance and whether or not there can be true partnership in the academic community between students and staff. A number of barriers to partnership were identified including tokenism of student representation, the underuse of student charters, the marketisation of HE and closed-mindedness to new approaches. Despite the challenges, most felt there was cause for positivity and optimism for the future, the majority agreed the answer to the debate question was yes.

### Reflections from a Keynote Presenter

*Paul Andrews Head of Centre for Digitally Enhanced Learning (CDEL). University of Wales, Newport.*



*What were your impressions of the ALDinHE conference?*  
I thought it was very well put together and organised; very human. Everyone was really approachable and there were no egos. I particularly liked

that there were plenty of practical sessions that enabled people to get hands on and take ideas back to their institutions afterwards.

#### *What were the highlights of the event for you?*

For me, I enjoyed the social aspects of the conference. Having specific time and space built into the programme that allowed people to get to know each other in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. The Animation Challenge session was really practical, Twitter was used to share updates between sessions which really made you feel connected to everything that was going on. The location was an excellent choice, the team were really approachable and the conference dinner was great fun, loved the quiz and dancing and, of course, I really enjoyed giving my keynote!

#### *If someone missed your keynote what would be the top three things you would want to let them know?*

Hmm, three things?... Well in no particular order....

- 1) Stop the tail wagging the dog and check out Scenario Based Design.
- 2) Don't be afraid of getting involved in an online community.
- 3) Have faith in your ability to do it (whatever "it" is) and finally, yes I know that's four but... Be honest with yourself and others, don't say "I don't have time" say "it's not a priority."

#### *How has attending the conference changed or influenced your practice?*

Well it's made me determined to get outside of my own institution and link in with others. I also really want to get my team involved in the ALDinHE community and hopefully help to support its continued development.

#### *If you had to recommend a "resource-a-day" to get to grips with over a coffee what would they be?*

For limited time and maximum impact I'd go with...

- **Monday—Dropbox**—you'll never need a USB stick again.
- **Tuesday—Diigo**—bookmark web pages for access anywhere and share things too!
- **Wednesday—Jing**—for screen casts
- **Thursday—Google Reader**—pull info from

all over the web into one easy to read place.

- **Friday—Evernote**—Jump off that “sushi train” and get organised before the weekend.

### *What do you see as key about working in the Digital Age?*

For me it's all about giving people the ability to learn new things and new skills that they couldn't have done before through a traditional route. It's about the flexibility and choice of how and when they can learn.

### *Any closing thoughts?*

Closing thoughts, well I suppose it would be to remember that the learning must come first and that technology should only be used where it is going to be of real benefit. Also, if I'm allowed, I'd love to come back and join you all in Plymouth next year to catch up with everyone maybe deliver a workshop and enjoy some random dancing!

You can see Paul's keynote on the Post Conference Resource and read more about his work and top tips by visiting his [E-Learning website](#) or following him on twitter [@Pauls\\_elearning](#)

### **Talking the talk**

As an association that is ever growing, we are keen to find the right blend of communication channels to suit our membership. With the website, the LDHEN jiscmail list, twitter, the increasing use of blogs, and other emerging tools, this is an increasing challenge but we are ready and willing to rise to it.

What we need to know is how **you**, our members, want to receive information and updates about association activities, opportunities etc. Share your thoughts via your chosen channel.

### **Research & Development**

We are pleased to confirm that the newly reformed Research and Development Working

Group is now operational and on the look out for contributors, ideas and opportunities. If you would like to get involved or suggest research to be considered please contact us.

### **Student Perspective**

#### **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 [Kerry Bellamy](#) for inclusion.

### **Member Hot Topics**

There has been lots of discussion on the LDHEN list recently around the question of '**learning development and theoretical practice**', '**Positive online identity resources**', '**LD & Sustainability**'. It has been great to see so many people sharing opinions, experiences and resources.

If you missed these or any of the discussions catch up by visiting [LDHENSigUp](#) and join the list.

### **Top Tips from you...**

*"Take time to see what other people are up to, it might end up saving you loads of time in the long run!"*

*"I have set myself the goal of trying one new thing a month, that way by the end of the year I'll have twelve new skills or experiences to share but I won't feel like I had to work too hard to achieve it"*

If you have a **hot topic** or **top tip** to share let us know. Perhaps you have 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. Get involved, share your thoughts. (*approx 100 word limit*)

## What's YOUR story?

Real stories from real ALDinHE members sharing what inspires, motivates and drives them in Learning Development and beyond.

### Moving to Cairo

*David Mathew Centre for Learning Excellence/  
Co-Editor of the Journal of Pedagogic  
Development. University of Bedfordshire*



My first teaching job was in Cairo in 1994. Disillusioned by the newspaper industry, I had retrained to teach English and before I'd had a chance to catch my breath (or so it seems in hindsight), I was boarding a plane with four

other teachers – two men and two women – also from England.

'Culture shock' does not really do it justice. I can still remember the heat and the noise that struck us as we landed around midnight and were taken to the Raja Hotel in Dokki, which was near the school. In fact, I can still remember the anxiety dream that I had during the early hours of the first morning I spent in that strange and wonderful land!

Although you would be forgiven for thinking otherwise, the school was financially secure – a fee-paying private school for the children of wealthy Egyptians – and it was basic at best. We sent out for our photocopies. There was a manual typewriter if you were prepared to queue up to use it. Sometimes the fans in the classrooms worked; more often they balked and we sweltered.

I taught Language and Literature to unstreamed classes of thirty thirteen year-olds. There was an ashtray on the teacher's desk (for a while I was regarded with some suspicion, I think, by the fact that I did not smoke) and it would not be unreasonable to suggest that many of the class cared little for imperatives or for *David Copperfield*. But we did what we could.

Although at the end of the academic year I was happy to move on to a position in northern Poland, I look back on Egypt with genuine fondness. It was a sink-or-swim placement, and it set out my lifelong passion for education, both as a practitioner and as someone who likes to learn something new on a daily basis.

Inspired? Then **share your story**, it's easy, just email 50-100 words and a small pic (photo/doodle whatever you like) to [What's Your Story](#)

It can be on anything you like ...How you got into learning development... Your first 1-2-1 session or teaching experience ... Why you do the job you do ... What you would love to do if funding / time wasn't a barrier ... What drives you ... Your first encounter with technology... **ANYTHING !!**

You can make it funny, heartfelt, reflective, whatever you fancy. It's an opportunity to share experience, learn a bit about others in our wonderful community and maybe see that what we go through is not that different to other people.

### Celebrating the Unsung Hero

**"... a source of encouragement for Learning Developers across the UK"**



Congratulations to our very own **John Hilsdon** who received public recognition for his hard work and dedication to Learning Development as part of the *Times Higher Education* **#LoveHE Unsung Hero** twitter competition.

### Why Not Get Involved?

Have you got ideas or skills? Do you like to learn by getting involved in hands on projects and work with a diverse range of 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 group** who are looking for event planners with excellent organisational skills  
**Journal group** as a reviewer or member of the editorial team

**LearnHigher group** to help us extend the range of resources that have made LearnHigher one of the most popular websites for learning development practitioners

**Marketing and Communications group** who are always looking for creative individuals with an eye for a story

**Professional Development group** welcome contributions to events and resources or acting as mentors for the growing professional expertise of our community.

**Research and Development group** help us to set up this new initiative - we are really keen to hear from people who have experience of bid writing and applying for grants, but we also want to hear from you if you are just starting out and want to learn more!

If you are interested in joining a working group and would like to find out more, please contact Chris Keenan, Chair of the Association or any other member of the Steering Group (all contact details can be found in the Get In Touch section at end of this newsletter)

### A little birdie told me...



Have you thought of using Twitter and catch up with things in short sharp bursts of information that you can dip in and out of? 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...

**'I don't love studying. I hate studying. I like learning. Learning is beautiful'**  
*(Natalie Portman—Actress)*

### Dates for your Diary

November 2012	Evaluating the impact of your learning development service <i>(London Metropolitan University )</i>
25-27 March 2013	Annual Conference <i>(Plymouth)</i>



### 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  
**Julia Braham** – University of Leeds  
**Steve Rooney** – University of Leicester  
**Sandra Sinfield** – London Metropolitan University  
**Louise Frith**— University of Kent  
**Francesca Keirle** —University of Wales, Newport  
**Janette Myers** - St George's University London  
**Amanda Pocklington**— University of Exeter



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