

Towards a professional development framework for leaders of degree programmes

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The UK HE sector is experiencing change at unprecedented speed and our institutions are working in increasingly competitive environments. The curriculum is a key site of the student experience and the academics leading whole degree programmes or courses (both undergraduate and postgraduate) have to deal with a range of competing demands: administration, quality assurance, educational enhancement, curriculum development, evaluation and reporting to a range of different audiences, as well as the standard teaching, research and service of their colleagues

Recent listserv discussions (SEDA & HEDG) and a pilot study conducted at the University of Central Lancashire highlight what anecdotal evidence from our colleagues suggested: that there is a clear need for better support for course leaders (CL). Their roles, we would contest, are ill defined and highly dependent on local (university & / or discipline) custom and practice and there is variety in the experience of agency and 'performance' of this leadership. Typically, academics report difficulty in leading others from a non-line management position.

Our study aims to:

- Investigate how course leader (CL) roles are allocated and defined by higher education institutions (HEIs)
- Explore the professional development needs of course leaders
- Propose a professional development framework for educational development programmes aimed at supporting CLs

Our key objectives are to:

- Explore whether in fact course leader (CL) roles are defined by HEIs
- Explore how the role is described, understood and performed by CLs
- Examine the developmental needs of CLs
- Make recommendations related to the remit of these roles, allocation processes, structural positioning, and developmental support

- Develop an outline of a professional development framework for CLs (mapping to Winch's (2015) framework for professional curriculum design
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2014.1001335>)
- Test this framework against any existing CL educational development programmes that are available to the research team (via regional events &/or professional networks).

Please get in touch if you can offer any insight from your institution or if you'd like us to bring our research to your regional educational development network meeting: smoron-garcia@uclan.ac.uk