Academic Development Through and Beyond the Pandemic: A staged approach

Tom Cunningham, University of Stirling

Catriona Cunningham, University of Stirling

Vic Boyd, Glasgow Caledonian University

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the impact on, as well as challenges and opportunities for, academic developers brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. We are often there – on the sidelines – working with others to shape a community of practice in supporting learning and teaching. But what was, is and could be our narrative in all of this? As academic developers who shaped and developed institutional approaches, we will draw on a 'dialogic play script form' approach to explore, first, our own perspectives on the sudden and transformative enhancement process we have experienced since March 2020. Our initial feelings of uncertainty, and even guilt, are discussed, alongside possible glimmerings of hope related to the work completed. Second, we discuss the recommendations of an external report, completed in December 2020, commissioned to reflect on the progress made at one institution and to identify priorities for future learning spaces and practices. These recommendations, we believe, will resonate more broadly with the sector. Finally, third, we consider future opportunities for academic development, with potential value in and for the changing role of the academic developer – specifically in relation to technology and leadership.

Keywords: academic development, online learning and teaching, appreciative inquiry, collaboration, communities of practice

Introduction

This paper explores the impact on, as well as challenges and opportunities for, academic developers brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. We do this through the lens of the Stirling experience of which we were part. Catriona and Tom played a central role in helping shape the institutional response to the crisis. They were part of an expert core of staff within Academic Development and Learning Technology who designed, created and delivered a coherent programme of staff development activities and resources (Supporting Online Learning and Teaching at Stirling - SOLT) during the spring and summer of 2020 to support colleagues in developing or re-developing learning and teaching materials for Autumn 2020. This core also cultivated new communities of practice. The first was the Faculty Champions group created in May 2020; two members of academic staff from each of Stirling's five faculties who shared best practice, provided a conduit between the University centre and teaching staff, as well as providing practical help to fellow staff in terms of online teaching. The second was the Students as Partners in Learning group created in August 2020; current students recruited from across the University, trained to provide meaningful feedback to staff on online modules prior to the Autumn 2020 semester starting. Vic was subsequently commissioned to produce a report (completed in December 2020) on the impact of this programme and to provide recommendations for the future of learning and teaching at Stirling.

This paper adopts a 'dialogic play script form' approach. Wyatt and Gale (2018, p.120) characterise this as "exchanges between […] us, often written as we travel, the movement an inducement, a prompt; and exchanges between ourselves and those with, to and from whose work we speak." The aim is for a conversation that allows for the writing to take us somewhere – a free-flowing dialogue on a journey to a destination unknown. This is, of course, only partly true in this case (we have *something* in mind about where we want to get to, if not maybe quite how), but in what follows we have attempted to 'write to it' and see what happens. One obvious tension is that we are writing at a time when we are *not* travelling, in a physical sense at least, due to lockdown - but the pace of pedagogical change is perhaps itself the inducement or prompt required. These writings took place in early 2021, with one author passing a draft to another, with Microsoft Teams meetings to discuss next steps, or possible approaches. They reflect, however, an ongoing conversation between Catriona and Tom throughout the pandemic, using Teams chat as a safe space for conversation, and subsequent discussions with Vic during the production of her report. Another influence is the BBC series *Staged* (Sheen, Tennant, Kuschevatzky, Teperman & Iles, 2020 – 2021) with its take on the ubiquitous nature of video-conferencing technology in our lockdown-lives, the type of narrative it creates, with some of the humour and frustration that ensues. Like *Staged*, although we are not actors with entertainment in mind, we will leave it to the audience to decide the extent to which the real or fictionalised versions of Catriona [CC], Tom [TC] and Vic [VB] are appearing here.

The paper is in three parts. Part 1 provides the context through a reflective discussion of the experience of being an academic developer during the pandemic, and the rationale behind Vic's report. In Part 2 the report findings and recommendations are introduced and discussed. Part 3 looks to the future for academic development and, indeed, of academic developers themselves. Our particular focus is how, and in what ways, the pandemic has changed our relationship with technology, and our role as leaders in Higher Education. We believe and hope that our discussions will resonate with colleagues who have had similar experiences during the pandemic and stimulate further such conversations here and indeed across the sector.

Part 1: The Context

Pandemic and Pivot

[TC] So perhaps the best place to start is the so-called 'pivot' (Nordmann, Horlin, Hutchison, Murray & Robson, 2020) to online learning caused by the Covid-19 pandemic back in March 2020. It feels to me, writing a year on, both so recent and yet so long ago.

[CC] For me, this word 'pivot' fails to capture the terrifying and often brutal move this represented. For many, it was more akin to tripping up and falling over the side of a hill only to land on very bumpy and unfamiliar land.

[TC] I think I was less worried about this word – at least in the sense that I took it to mean something temporary, or at least time-bounded. The imagery of a pivot *to* something carries with it, for me, a thought of pivoting *someplace else*. This is exciting in a sense? Pivoting back to where we were, in relation to learning and teaching, is not something desirable. Wherever we have landed we can't or shouldn't go back?

[CC] Good point. There are of course many articles and blogposts (see for example, Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust & Bond, 2020; Nordmann et al., 2020; Salmon, 2020) that capture the frenzy of this move as well as exploring the rapid and enormous change of learning and teaching approaches for academic colleagues teaching in the disciplines. However, for academic developers and learning technologists, the impact on their work is only beginning to be explored (Kolomitro, Kenny & Le-May Sheffield, 2020). Here, we want to focus specifically on academic developers, who were often required to act as 'paramedics', offering emergency help to teaching staff and indeed the entire institution, but without necessarily the right training and equipment in place. Now, a year on, they are often hailed as the institutional heroes, helping staff keep the life support of learning and teaching going for their students.

[TC] That's an interesting way of characterising our role, I've never seen us as heroes! We were certainly used to just working with the new and the keen; new teaching staff who are compelled to work with us as part of their probation plan, or staff seeing recognition for their teaching practices as the next stage of their ongoing development. Outside of that, our engagement with staff was more limited – perhaps working with identified 'trailblazers' or brought into sessions by senior staff to 'fix' certain learning and teaching issues. But the last year has seen our role change considerably.

[CC] Such modesty! Well okay 'heroes' might be a step too far but we were certainly portrayed as the people who would help fix problems and provide learning and teaching solutions. Maybe it helped that we were surrounded by the language of battle in the sector but also in wider society. When I look back at this period, these are the flashes that come back to me but much of it is blurred. I note that these nouns are positive ones, and this surprises me and also makes me feel a little bit guilty; I have found pleasure in work in the middle of a pandemic when so many colleagues faced sickness and even death, increasing work pressure and the possibility of a very uncertain future.

The part of me that has been a frustrated academic developer for years trying to force change (Green & Little, 2013) and having conversations about learning, teaching and assessment that would enhance the experience for everyone – staff and students alike - is enjoying those conversations now. Learning and teaching words used only by a minority are now common parlance: words like engagement, inclusion, formative assessments, partners. I try to hide this joy with a lot of my colleagues because now the time for emergency help is over, listening is what we need to do.

[TC] Yeah part of me felt that guilty pleasure too, and the satisfaction of being useful and able to make a difference. But, looking back, it's the overwhelming feeling of pressure that I remember most. I felt huge pressure to be good enough: good enough for the staff who engaged with us, good enough for the University, and, indeed, good enough for my colleagues in the academic development department. It's interesting what you said about the right training and equipment – I felt the pressure to know how to use Canvas (our VLE) and other technology right from the start, for if I didn't how could I possibly help the staff to use it? I think I took things too personally, and I know we all overworked during this time.

[CC] I do remember noticing at the time how good you were at building materials online and how quickly you had adapted to the technology. Having never enjoyed teaching online much previously and knowing how much I enjoy the energy and spontaneity of face-to-face teaching, I didn't see this aspect as being so much part of what I do. Instead, I felt this huge pressure to be a source of support for colleagues, where they could share their own fears and stresses of teaching in this environment with the pandemic pressures piling on. The academic development space as a 'safe space' or even 'brave space' (Arao & Clemens, 2013) is central to my practice and something I try to create each time. However, at this time, I could feel myself increasingly irritable, tired and

unable to maintain my academic development mask of neutrality, oscillating between enormous empathy for colleagues to frustration. As tensions between colleagues spilled over, it was in our newly formed communities of practice that I found comfort.

[TC] Yeah there was certainly a need for some 'emotional labour' (Kelly, 2015) – to look like we were calm and confident, even if this wasn't the case inside. I must say you did a good job at this: I don't remember seeing you irritable with staff, quite the opposite. I've had those feelings pre-pandemic too, sympathy and frustration in equal measure when teaching the PGCert comes to mind, but perhaps being online heightened these feelings.

[CC] Ha! Back to the professional mask, mandatory for the role...For me, an important part of being a good academic developer is listening. For the last year I have heard many stories and seen (through a screen) the wellbeing of colleagues profoundly affected as the job they knew changes virtually before them. Again, this is no elegant 'pivot' but is a strong push towards a new way of being a teacher in a changing landscape where they must support students who are equally at sea. We need to offer empathy and hope (McGowan & Felten, 2021).

Glimmerings and Hope

[CC] Roni Bamber in her SEDA report (Bamber, 2020) talks of 'glimmerings of hope' for the future. For me, these glimmerings are about the ways in which academic developers can work strategically as translators to use the data and the metrics but shaping the conversation in a way that is meaningful, rather than the current, often crude manipulation of data as a punitive and point scoring exercise. The effect of the pandemic on our institutional learning and teaching practices is a 'glimmering' in this sense. It has created a space where necessary conversation about learning, teaching and assessment have taken place across Faculties and Professional Services and arguably offered a growing sense of confidence that change is possible and also useful when we go beyond the metrication. Our ongoing conversations with staff who teach underline this sense of hope, of possibility.

[TC] I agree, there have been some glints of light through this process. Two which strike me are the communities of practice we helped cultivate: (1) Faculty Champions and (2) Students as Partners in Learning.

The Champions are members of academic staff with an interest in, or experience of, online learning. The group includes two members from each of Stirling's five faculties. The group was created in May 2020, tasked with the challenge of supporting staff in their preparations for Autumn. This was achieved through sharing best practice, staff development sessions and with Champions acting as conduits of information between the university 'centre' and academic staff.

The Students as Partners in Learning are volunteers; current Stirling students who responded to our call in August 2020. Following training from us, students were asked to 'roadtest' modules and policies. We deliberately paired students with modules not in their subject discipline – the focus was whether the module structure was clear, videos accessible and links working. Every 'roadtested' module placed a digital badge on its homepage to recognise the student contribution.

[CC] Oh yes, glimmerings definitely! I wouldn't say that we helped cultivate them, though. I would say that they were strategically created as part of this 'principled, opportunistic pragmatism' (Baume as quoted by Bamber, 2020 from a conversation) approach to academic development that we have, fulfilling as they did our different agendas. What I found energising about our Faculty Champions was our ability to test ideas and suggestions to this group who always gave us meaningful and helpful responses, but also how they took ownership of these ideas and translated them into Faculty contexts thus empowering and enabling colleagues in the disciplines in ways that our rootless unit could never hope to do.

[TC] The speed and the dynamism of the Faculty Champions group struck me. They each brought passion for and experience of online learning to the discussions and, as you say, took ownership and leadership of development activities. It certainly helped us generate more meaningful connections across the university than we could have achieved on our own. It also enabled staff to quickly pass information in the other direction.

[CC] Of course, these glimmerings are the focus of our published discussion here, but there are stresses and tensions within this approach that it is important to acknowledge. As a recent special edition of papers demonstrates, failure can be a powerful learning tool (Laksov & McGrath, 2020). Our story had a happy ending for our Faculty Champions in the ways they had shaped our approach for Autumn 2020 and had supported colleagues across the institution. However, this came at personal cost to their own workload and pressures. I felt gratitude about our Students as Partners, whose enthusiasm and conscientiousness was brilliant, as was their feedback – insightful, useful and meaningful.

[TC] I honestly didn't know what to expect from the Student Partners group. I'd worked with students before in relation to my own discipline teaching, but not in this staff-supporting way. It was a joy to read their first responses to the modules! The feedback on 'roadtested' modules was overwhelmingly positive – staff appreciated the comments and made significant adjustments to modules in light of them. The Students as Partners initiative has grown since with students providing feedback on new institutional policies and now co-creating academic development sessions and resources with us. We even secured funding to employ two current students, for one day a week, as Student Engagement Officers.

But we would say our work was good, wouldn't we, given our role from within the process? That was at least one of the reasons for asking for an external perspective. Which brings us neatly to Vic's report, commissioned in October 2020.

The Outside Insider

[VB] Having navigated my own bumpy transition to online teaching in the initial stages of the pandemic, the opportunity to consider the approach taken by an institution other than my own was a thoroughly enriching chance to lift my head from the fire and fury of the preceding months and re-connect with my wider community. Like so many academic colleagues, my adapted teaching practice had been shaped by urgency and best fit, and was reliant on the guidance of colleagues with contextualised knowledge of appropriate pedagogies and tools. To be invited to review the ethos that influenced the design and delivery of an institution's holistic developmental approach and to discuss how the impact felt might feed into the University's future, then, was a position of privilege as a Stirling outsider.

I say 'outsider' but have an enduring affiliation with and affection for the university being an (albeit ageing) alumna. This attachment returned quickly on embarking upon the project, this time certainly influenced by colleagues' immediate warmth, graciousness and generosity of time and input. I was thus not surprised when this sense of rootedness, community and belonging flowed throughout research discussions and, indeed, became central to the project outputs.

I was struck, particularly, by the coherence and robustness of the support materials that had been developed in *SOLT*, given how small in number the core academic development and distributed learning technology staff were. I noted, too, how resources (and staff) purposefully engendered notions and values of wellbeing, tolerance and patience, and that these messages of care informed suggested pedagogies and teaching positions. There was also a palpable sense of a threshold crossed (Catriona and Tom's pivot?), the return from which would mean loss of effort, frustration and a rail against progress. Foregrounding this upward trajectory provided a way to focus on development; to move on from things just being tiring and hard, to emerging, blinking into the light of possibility.

Part 2: The Appreciative Inquiry

Sustainable Learning and Teaching @ Stirling

[VB] The *Sustainable Learning and Teaching @ Stirling* project drew on key data from two staff confidence surveys in order to highlight trends in practice development that might act as areas of focal interest in considering achievement and progress in the context of the pivot online. This data acted as a baseline of accomplishment against which discussion on the implications of such achievements took place. Staff and student discursive projections gathered during structured conversations (with the Student Union VP Education, Faculty Champions and the University Learning and Teaching Committee) were explored to highlight emergent areas of strength that should be factored into ongoing consideration of the University's pedagogical future.

In keeping with the aspirational intent for the project, a forward-looking approach influenced by Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was used as a method of evaluation based on success, enhancement and progress. AI provides an opportunity to look at the positives; to recognise and reflect on achievement and success in adopting a strength-based, aspirational perspective that considers possibility and embraces co-created futures (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider, Sorenson Jr., Whitney & Yager, 2000; Jones & Masika, 2021). Given the intensity of staff and student dedication to rise and creatively respond to the challenges presented by the pandemic, an approach based on recognition of accomplishment and collegiality allows for a constructive, reflective space in which to articulate experiential accounts.

Recommendations

[VB] In developing three interdependent dimensions of future learning spaces and practices at Stirling, my report (University of Stirling, 2020) recommended that the University considers:

Space/ place

(1) Building a compelling and cogent narrative of *Stirlingness* (based on identity, belonging and community) that pervades across all its learning, teaching and engagement activities.

(2) Exploring possibilities for an experiential virtualisation of the campus. Using Virtual Reality, 3D modelling or another immersive digital approach, extend the potential for an embodied experience of visiting the campus even where this may never physically occur.

(3) Seeking opportunities and consider strategies for engendering and embedding a sense of equity within perceptions of student contribution/ engagement depending on their geographical or physical location within the context of a diversifying student population;

(4) Nurturing and providing resourcing for experimental learning and teaching spaces (physical or virtual) where trialling of new forms of delivery and engagement are actively supported.

Pedagogy

(1) Formalising and growing the distributed model of Faculty support and providing scheduled opportunities for staff to join short-life, special interest or working groups (e.g. flipping the virtual classroom, hybridised delivery, realising engaging virtualisation of large-scale synchronous teaching);

(2) Establishing a University-wide, dedicated Future Pedagogies Group to guide the relevance of choice and effective alignment of technological decision-making within academic practice principles;

(3) Building on the accomplishments of existing student partnership initiatives to embed a distributed and dialogic approach to the learning lifecycle, with rich and real world feedforward on emerging practice;

(4) Collecting, collating and showcasing use case design and implementation of effective transposition of traditional pedagogies to digital scenarios. This could be done in a public-facing way (using streaming multimedia and social media) to extend the Stirling practice community.

Technology

(1) Ensuring clear recognition of the importance of and resourcing for the development of longitudinal, embedded support for student digital literacy throughout students' programme duration, with respect to incremental, level-specific sophistication of requirement.

(2) Establishing a student community to capture programme/solution/app recommendations to enrich consideration of the potential of mobile and smart device functionality for educational use;

(3) Rewarding collective and individual staff excellence in forward-looking, technology-facilitated learning with an informal, honorary institutional title (such as *Sustainable L&T Fellow*) that can be used to highlight success in practice and demonstrate the breadth and proliferation of this part of the academic learning community.

Reflecting on Recommendations

[TC] Vic's report has been really useful in bringing together all the work that was done at Stirling, and the central role academic development played in this. Two thoughts strike me: (1) The recommendations go beyond us as academic developers, so we cannot give them full justice here, but also (2) that they should apply elsewhere, not just to the Stirling context. But I must admit to feeling quite proud reading through it and recognising the huge amount of work that had been done.

[CC] Yes, I know what you mean. I also found it really helpful to have an outsider's perspective on what had taken place. Her enthusiasm and belief in this notion of 'Stirlingness' offered hope at a time it was much needed, and her positivity helped sustain me. What was challenging about these recommendations was that in order to bring them to life, we had to convince others of their value and not everyone was with us all the way... As the sector grapples with notions of belonging across virtual and physical campuses (Gravett & Ajjawi, 2021), I know it will be difficult to create a common and shared vision of what this looks like, given the range of expectations, desire and contexts of staff and students alike. Even from my own very singular perspective, I would struggle to articulate what this means.

[TC] Well, I really like the recommendations centring on creating a distinctive, Stirling, approach. I've been a student, a lecturer and now an academic developer at Stirling – so I think I know the University pretty well. We have our unique campus, and our history for flexible learning, which I think we can harness and adapt for the future… but whether that is enough to articulate a distinctive *approach* I'm not yet sure. I do think the value of distinctiveness is going to grow in the sector – with more online and blended learning the emphasis will be on what's different or special about any given institution. Creating 'belonging' is an ongoing question – for staff and students. And us too.

[CC] Indeed! Many of the academic colleagues we work with as academic developers do not see their primary locus as the institution. Instead, they belong to their disciplinary 'tribe' (Becher & Trowler, 2001) and their identity is bound up with those disciplinary ways of being and knowing. This tension between 'belonging to' a discipline that transcends an institutional space and the increasing focus on 'belonging' to an institutional community has really come to the fore in recent months. As the sector moved online and grappled with the literature on online learning, there is much emphasis on creating a sense of community and belonging to engage and motivate our students. The challenge we have as academic developers is how can we encourage our teaching colleagues to develop these communities and sense of belonging to an institution if they don't feel it themselves.

[TC] Vic's pedagogy recommendations are interesting in the sense that we are already implementing some of them: The Faculty Champions and Students as Partners are great examples of this. I read these recommendations as encouraging us to take these examples even further – turn glimmerings into tangible change?

[CC] Yes! Definitely. I was also struck by the potential of the Future Pedagogies Group which would enable us to be less reactive to L&T changes and instead demonstrate more leadership in this area. Leadership that would be driven by evidence and by scholarship. Who knows – we might even begin to define scholarship in a way that helps us all?!

[TC] Now that would be quite an outcome. I think, and we will come back to this in a bit, quite what leadership looks like for us as academic developers in this new context is a crucial question. I share your enthusiasm for a Future Pedagogies Group, but, writing now, is there the energy and drive to 'go again'? Staff have spent a year enhancing practice and we know how tired, fatigued, and stressed they are. Not to mention whether we have the energy to lead this as well.

There has been much written on the use of technology and what the future might look like. JISC, for example, have shared a series of visions of possible future scenarios (JISC, 2021). I'm swithering about the pedagogical value in some of what is suggested. But, at times, I do find myself drawn towards the vision of an augmented reality future, where students can 'attend' our campus no matter where in the world they are, where staff are teaching simultaneously across different domains, where the distinction between online and on-campus itself is breaking down. I wonder if this is the inevitable direction of travel…

[CC] Now, honestly, this AI vision of the future destabilises me completely. As someone who has struggled existing as a pixelated being in a small window all year, I cannot quite imagine this future... This vision gets to the very heart of our identity, disrupting all our previously held assumptions of teacher/student/human and throws me into an existential turmoil. What shape will I take in this new world? And who is an academic developer in this space??

Part 3: The Future for Academic Development

Digital Futures

[CC] The ways in which students have embraced the flexibility of learning in this new context have arguably changed their expectations forever... How can universities rise to this challenge amidst ongoing financial uncertainty in the sector and growing numbers of students without doubling all our workload?

[TC] I spoke earlier about my need to feel competent in the technology in this new landscape. I wonder, with all this talk of hybrid learning, whether we are moving towards 'hybrid practitioners' where the distinction between an academic developer and a learning technologist is being blurred. I'm not sure what to make of this – like I said earlier I find myself swithering between embracing the new shiny tech future and recoiling away from it. I do know that I get somewhat annoyed by emails from staff asking me to fix things in their Canvas modules or asking how to embed videos into a page. I'm tempted to reply: 'I'm so much more than IT support!'

[VB] I think that's a really pertinent point, Tom. The now seemingly symbiotic relationship between pedagogy and technology, I would argue, blurs boundaries of roles and expectations of those roles. On a related point, I think use of technology, not just for learning and teaching, but for basic aspects of engaging in our roles, has been an imposition, and an invasion, for many colleagues. We haven't been given much choice but to develop some form of screen persona to attend meetings for even the most rudimentary of purposes. Unlike in *Staged*, these professional projections of self don't have the freedom to be fragile, fractious or experimental; they are framed by once implicit and now increasingly explicit expectations of our conduct and etiquette. So, I can empathise with the fact that not everyone is enthusiastic about technology from this point of view.

If staff can see a clear rationale for using a particular application or programme for a specific, contextualised purpose (and if it integrates well with other systems and actually works!), I suppose that goes some way towards underscoring value. But 'speccing' and testing those integrations and providing the materials to support their adoption would seem to me to be part of a far wider remit and conversation than purely academic development. Maybe, as the 'heroes' who have been able to step up to the rescue during the past year, to problem solve and to know who to contact to resolve queries, your role in becoming and supporting 'hybrid practitioners' is more triage than treatment?

[CC] Oh I do agree, Vic, about the explicit expectations of our behaviour online. My concern is that this is in fact both highlighting and undermining the performative aspect of learning teaching which was already in danger of becoming the singular pedagogy of a western education (Macfarlane, 2016). Hopefully (and drawing on the appreciative inquiry approach), we can use this as an opportunity to tease out the performative aspects of L&T in UK higher education and identify alternative ways of gauging participation and engagement?

[TC] But I do think we have a role in owning and shaping the future use of technology in Learning and Teaching. Recent discussions have focussed on hybrid / hyflex teaching where a synchronous session is run with some students in the classroom and others online (e.g. University of South Florida, 2021; White, 2021) My view on this is: (1) it is incredibly difficult to do well (we tried this in our PGCert and found it tough), and (2) we need to be involved in the discussions about it, otherwise the technology will drive the pedagogy – once rooms are built and equipment bought it will need to be used, and seen to be used.

Leadership

[TC] Previously, I've thought of leadership in Academic Development in two ways. The first is Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010). We serve the needs of academics, built on motivation to develop and support individuals and communities in relation to Learning and Teaching. Such leadership relies on awareness of, and empathy with, the needs of academics to form genuine connections both at a programme and personal level. The second is Followership; which I understand to mean that the

effectiveness of our leadership is to be released in the behaviours, competences and skills of those who are following us (Carsten, Uhi-Bien, West, Patera & McGregor, 2010.) Illustration of success is when staff are pro-active in their approaches to learning and teaching: they take the initiative in designing sessions, they voice opinions and ideas in their discipline areas, they provide constructive challenge to the University more generally, and they gain recognition for their practices. Leadership in this sense centres on empowering and enabling others.

But, thinking now, I wonder whether that is changing. As I said earlier, we are no longer just working with the new and the keen. Staff from all across the University have worked with us over the past year, and we have been much more 'front and centre' in our leadership of Learning and Teaching. The Supporting Online Learning and Teaching module we designed and delivered in collaboration with the Learning Technologists in Summer 2020 is an example of this; over 500 members of staff (out of a total of just over 1000 at the university) were enrolled.

[VB] It's so interesting to hear that your interdisciplinary and distributed engagement seems to have superseded the predominant activities of your role formerly; it must feel like a very different job to the one it did a year ago. Catriona described your differing institutional personas (real or otherwise!) that have evolved from paramedics to heroes to empathic, listening experts. It certainly seems, from my outsider perspective, as well as my own institutionally affiliated one, that this is a shift that might be experienced across the profession/ sector. Academic Development as a discipline is now arguably far less on the periphery of academic practice than has been mentioned above, and certainly the scope to effect influence, I would argue, has never been more potent nor more sought. The new and emerging communities of practice that you have established and continue to nurture are a really exciting aspect of this.

[CC] I suppose my view of academic developers as leaders, or change agents, draws less on leadership models and more on the notion that we can and indeed should be influencing in ways that are not always visible. I continually return to the idea that we need to be plurilingual and transcultural to achieve what we need to do. In this sense, I would see the potential of our increased visibility in the institution but the dangers of that too. It is more difficult to shapeshift in the spotlight…

Conclusion

We have tried to bring our thoughts together through this concluding discussion

https://stirling.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=cd877f4e-bfe7-40aa-a609-acfb0120ad82

What we were really hoping to do in this provocation is exactly that: provoke your thinking about how our own reflections and evaluations of an institutional pandemic response has changed learning and teaching in higher education in the UK forever. A dramatic statement to leave you with but we do hope this is the beginning of a conversation rather than the end. If anything we have said above has resonated with you, or made you think differently about your practice, please contact us.

Biographies

Tom Cunningham is an Academic Development Partner at the University of Stirling. He is the Programme Director for the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning & Teaching in Higher Education (PGCLTHE), with particular interests in assessment and feedback and the use of storytelling in HE.

Catriona Cunningham is an Academic Development Partner at the University of Stirling. She is the Lead for the Stirling Framework for Evidencing Learning and Teaching Enhancement (SFELTE) and is currently researching in the area of internationalisation and interculturalism in higher education, with a particular interest on the impact on academic identities.

Vic Boyd is a member of the academic team in the Institute for University to Business Education at Glasgow Caledonian University. Her main research and practice interests lie in the role technology can play in enhancing student empowerment, autonomy and experimental selfhood as well as in inclusion and accessibility studies.

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