



# SDF UPDATE

Spring 2012



## A Note from The Chair: Friends and Colleagues

*Unbelievably this is my last newsletter article as Chair of the SDF. 'Hooray' I can hear you all scream from the rooftops but stop and think for a moment..... What is coming next?*

Actually a good friend and colleague and someone who has been there and provided fantastic support as deputy chair, so my chance to thank Paul Dixon personally and wish him and SDF well for the future.

Where do I start? Things are so different in all aspects of SDF and HE. We have a National Co-ordinator (Becky) who has done a wonderful job, a revised structure with leads in Keith on CPD and Andy on projects and publications and so many new products and

achievements to be proud of. Our regional representatives and support is phenomenal. So, given that this is my last chance to spread the word in writing please indulge me the opportunity of talking about your achievements.

Keith, John and Sally have laid down a suite of ILM/SDF nationally accredited awards. As if that is not enough (volunteers) they have produced a SDF Fellowship Scheme and Honorary Fellowship, quite remarkable and a wonderful legacy and benchmark for our profession.

Andy has taken us through a successful Digital Literacies bid with SEDA and JISC and is developing strategies around publications. He was recently quoted as saying 'what is retirement' so thanks Andy.

John has driven us through the pitfalls and difficulties in achieving SDF charitable status, another massive

success as it means our LFHE grant can be spread further. We know how valuable John's dedication and support has been for the SDF and another chance to say thank you John. Becky has produced our 'open programme' amongst the many valuable things she does and it will be successful as we roll out our offerings to our community. This is also new vitally important SDF work.

We have developed good partnership relations and raised awareness and co-working with JISC, UHR, AUA, VITAE, UCISA, OD (there will be others) and intend to work hard at helping to cement the best possible development services for staff and ultimately students.

Both of our conferences were fully subscribed. Thanks to all involved. They are different events but both show how Developers come together to raise standards, improve practice and to network as a profession.

The SDF Exec do a wonderful job; we are fortunate to have Denise on Board taking over from the brilliant job done by Claire over the years and what can I say about Clive? Marvellous at the



conference as one of our introducers, host of the 'chill out' zone and the man who made sense of our finances over the last years.

Finally we share excellent relations with the LFHE (would not have been possible without) and have benefited from their continued support in all sorts of ways and although Ewart, Bob, Tom, Tricia Lesly, Wendy, Louise and Suzie are the visual side of our interaction we do appreciate the huge efforts of all involved in getting the SDF to the position it finds itself today.

Keep it going, it has potential to change things, is doing great work and fun!

**Matt Levi**  
Chair Staff Development Forum

# Digital Literacies

The SDF has been successful in winning £10,000 funding from JISC for a two-year project on Digital Literacies (DL). They define digital literacy as...

"...those capabilities which fit an individual for living, learning and working in a digital society."

Our fundamental purpose is to raise the awareness of digital literacy across Staff Development and enable the appropriate use of technologies to support SDF practice.

Matt Levi listed these objectives...

- To make the operations of the SDF itself more digitally literate
- To enhance the digital literacies of our colleagues in the staff development community
- To encourage closer links between staff developers and IT and information staff so that the different groups can learn from each other

An early activity will be for the team members to interview SD staff on their experiences and ideas with regard to Digital Literacies.

Anyone interested in having such a conversation should please contact a member of the DL team (see below).

In the spring we'll be launching a programme of webinars and discussing ideas such as online coaching and mentoring.

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# What's on my mind

Severe gales are ripping across Scotland today, and a stiff Somerset breeze is whistling around this, the UK's highest University campus. We're hearing a lot about the stormy waters ahead (or choppy, or white, or foaming...), so it's apt that change is on my mind. Me, I'm outside the storm cellar feeling like a surfer: wow the waves are going to be exciting, imagine catching one of those just right. It could be like that Guinness advert with the surfers (YouTube it if you don't recall). So what's really on my mind are change, optimism, balance and stories.

One of my big ticket items this year is getting the University better at doing change. The other big strand is doing something about academic leadership, succession and so forth. (These things bubble around for years, head banging on wall, then suddenly appear as an action on a Council annual plan. Is that the perfect wave on the horizon?) About the problems, the same stories are told everywhere. Fixing them will need real systemic change of a sort this University, and indeed many, don't feel comfortable with. And yet I'm an optimist; who could practice this craft otherwise? My colleagues tell me I'm an innocent who doesn't see the dark underbelly of organisational life, and frankly that's fine with me, but I'm still the one whistled up to fix things that aren't working as well as they might.

Who couldn't be optimistic? Bath is flying high, indeed only last night I enjoyed a mince pie, wine and a speech from the VC celebrating the many awards, medals and league table places we've gained places this year. A lot of it's around the student experience, especially the amazing partnership working that goes on, with students involved as adults round the table at all levels of the University. Perhaps if we balance that in the



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staff experience, the much maligned change management and communication might improve.

The balanced scorecard of my life (my take on work-life balance) is also pretty satisfactory, so it's possible to be an optimist in the face of both big waves and stagnant waters. And stories? I've laced this piece with dodgy imagery because painting the vision is key to change. We all know this, but what we are we doing about it?

Another committee paper has turned up with my name (or at least job title, we like to do things properly here) in the actions column. "Facilitate a culture change for all staff..." Hmm. Surf's up. Will Tuesday do?

Simon Who ?

SDF are delighted to announce the outcomes of the first Fellowship Recognition Panel on the 16th of February. The following colleagues submitted their evidence portfolios and have now been officially recognised as Fellows of the Staff Development Forum by a panel of peers.

## Meriel Box,

Head of Staff Development,  
Liverpool John Moores University, FSDF

## Dr Andy Wilson,

Professional Development Advisor to the British University in Egypt, FSDF

## Martin Cussons,

Deputy Director of Professional Development,  
University of Nottingham, FSDF



Please join me in a virtual round of applause and many congratulations to our colleagues who will be presented with their Fellowship Certificates at the forthcoming SDF Spring Conference. Becky will be communicating with the community shortly to announce the next round of the Fellowship application process.

Paul Dixon, Deputy Chair and Fellowship Panel Member

# Professional Development Update

The SDF has been busy behind the scenes further developing and enhancing the CPD provision we offer to the community and we are pleased to update you on a number of key developments:

## SDF Accredited Programmes now recognised and accredited by ILM

The three SDF Accredited Programmes now offer delegates an ILM qualification. This recent enhancement provides a fantastic opportunity for members of the community to complete a qualification relevant to their profession that not only will support them in their role within HE but will enhance their CV with a nationally recognisable qualification. We hope that this will address some of the issues raised in our recent review about 'why bother with SDF qualifications when they don't have wider currency?' ILM accredited management awards are offered to others by many staff development units within our community and the chance to have a relevant and recognised award for ourselves is in keeping with the general move within the sector.

The three programmes are:

**ILM Level 3 Award:** *Working in Staff and Organisation Development*

**ILM Level 5 Award:** *Staff and Organisational Development Practice*

**ILM Level 7 Award:** *Leading Staff and Organisational Development*

Rather than arrange specific presentations of the programme we are asking interested colleagues to get in touch to register their interest, and once we have viable numbers we will arrange a programme to try and meet those needs. If you are interested in finding out more about any of the awards please check out the SDF website or E mail our national coordinator **Becky** at:

**becky.robson@staffdevelopment.ac.uk**

## SDF Fellowship

The establishment of the SDF Fellowship Scheme completes the a route way of progression in our qualifications structure i.e. theoretically a colleague can work through all the qualifications levels from Level 3 to Fellowship as their career in HE staff development progresses. The first cohort of applicants applying for SDF Fellowship are currently developing their portfolios with support of a Mentor. The portfolios will be considered by the Fellowship Panel in early 2012 and the successful applicants will be officially recognised at the SDF Spring Conference. In the new year we will be making available details, and inviting colleagues to nominate

individuals for an Honorary Fellowship of SDF. We expect that the designation Honorary Fellow will be rare and reserved for those colleagues who have in the eyes of colleagues made a major visible, evident substantial contribution to the advancement of staff development practice in our sector.

Keep an eye on the website and the jiscmail list for invitations to take part in a second round of fellowships and details of the honorary fellowship process.

## CPD Events

Following feedback from the SDF review and informal consultations with a couple of regions we are taking a little time out to consider the topic content, and frequency of events win the CPD programme. Feedback suggest we develop fewer but more cutting edge activities involving where appropriate people from outside our sector. The SDF Advisory Council will finalise plans over the Spring. Details of events will be made available through our normal Web and jiscmail communications channels. Suggestions for event topics and activities are though welcome from all – so if you have any great ideas please pass them to Becky.

# SDF Spring Conference 2012

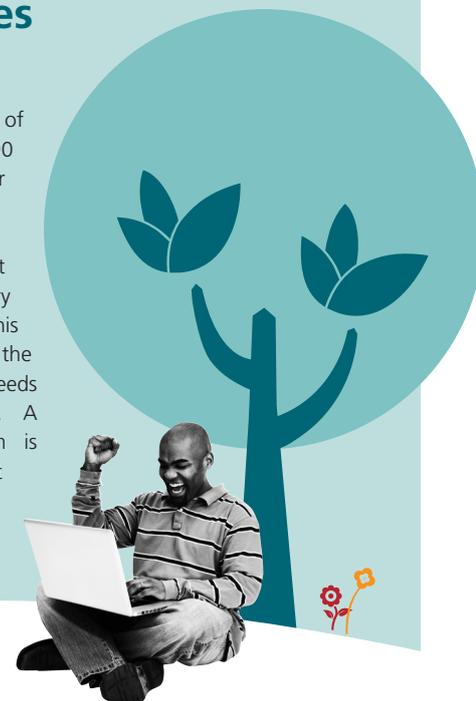
## 'Spring Into Manchester': Inspiring Learning - Enhancing Performance Literacies

The recent SDF review indicated that the Spring Conference was one aspect of SDF support that had been warmly welcomed by colleagues. The North West region are delighted to be hosting the 5th SDF Spring Conference which will take place in Manchester on 19th and 20th April next year at the Mercure Hotel, Manchester Piccadilly. The hotel is convenient for Piccadilly railway station and Manchester city centre. Again the programme has been designed to appeal to staff development practitioners and aims to provide delegates with more practical ideas and techniques that they can implement in their own institutions. The key focus will be on enabling

networking, sharing and assimilating new ideas and approaches: to this end we have deliberately avoided the dreaded 'didactic plenary' in favour of more interactive hands on sessions. These will include: a revisiting of the use of Transactional Analysis in development scenarios; use of story telling in development; use of business simulations as a development tool (don't worry we have learnt from the disaster of 2009!); and an update on the online Performance Management system being piloted by Bristol and other HEIs. Whilst we can not guarantee to match last year's delightful SDF comes dancing evening entertainment, our malt teaser evening quiz should enable colleagues to chill out and end the day on a high

note. We have pegged the cost of attendance at last year's rate: £290 for LF Members and £360 for others.

Colleagues in staff development administration roles are very welcome to attend and to this end we have ensured that the programme reflects the needs of colleagues in these roles. A programme and booking form is available from **Wendy Mason** at **Wendy\_mason@btconnect.com** and on the SDF web site.



# Joint North West/North East Regional Coaching Development Day

As we all know one to one coaching has become a central part of many HEI's development plans and strategies over the last few years. Connected with that is the vexing notion of coaching 'supervision' and development, and how coaches can continue to reflect on and develop their professional practice. With this in mind the first joint NW/NE Coaching Development Day took place on the 13th of October at Leeds Met graciously hosted by Kathy, Sarah and Leeds Met Colleagues, and supported by a modest refreshment grant from the SDF. Nearly 30 colleagues from a wide range of institutions as far flung as Cumbria and York attended the day. A range of discussion groups took place around themes such as: best practice in facilitating client learning within the coaching process; tried and tested development techniques and tools used as aids to coaching; a review of the various models out there for structuring a one to one coaching engagement. Feedback from the event was very encouraging.

*"The programme was well structured and provided an excellent opportunity to catch up with colleagues across the NW/NE and find out what they're doing around coaching initiatives...very energising and prompted a personal action plan (that I'm working on) - look forward to the next meeting".*

*"As a recently qualified coach I found the day extremely useful and motivating. It felt like a mix of CPD and co - supervision which is precisely what I need at the moment. I would look forward to attending more of these events as a way of continuing with my own reflective practise as a coach, learning new approaches/tools etc and as a way of reminding myself of good practise."*

*"It was of great interest to hear what other HEIs are doing in terms of coaching interventions.... I didn't appreciate the amount of work Staff Developers and HR staff are putting into the development and implementation of coaching strategies, this raised awareness has only energised me to raise the profile our coaching provision, in particular to up-skill line managers in coaching skills"*



The group agreed that it would aim to organise two similar days a year from here on in to take the idea forward. If you require any more details about planned future sessions, or if you are interested in attending future events (irrespective of your location) please contact **Sandra Booth** at The University of Manchester. [Sandra.Booth@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Sandra.Booth@manchester.ac.uk).

As part of SDFs ongoing efforts to support coaching within the sector further activities will be planned for 2012 – watch this space.





## Review of North West Annual Retreat

Storrs Hall in the Lake District turned into a hive of creative activity on 12th and 13th January when members of the North West Staff Development Network embarked on their annual CPD event. The theme this year was to look at novel approaches to supporting the work of those who develop others in higher education. Before the event attendees were asked to do some profound thinking about the greatest challenges they faced in the current economic climate and changing landscape of the higher education sector. There was no shortage of challenges proffered for analysis.

The event itself commenced with a medley of thinking techniques to open the mind to the possibilities of thinking differently – laterally and creatively. Each attendee was then given the opportunity to self select one of the pre-defined challenges that they believed would provide the stimulation and sense of purpose needed to engage with others at the event for a period of critical analysis, formation and exploitation of group ideas to propose a radical or incremental innovation.

The outcome was notable – four teams with very different pitches but with strong agreement from all attendees that all contributions would be of value in supporting their role. The offerings, that will be taken forward and developed further included: the Conundrum Change Cube (a set of six cubes to aid discussions around change); the First Friday Forum (an online learning environment run by the Staff Developers for the Staff Developers); Influencing Key Decision Makers Toolkit (resources to help influence key decision makers); and Using Technology for Development Activities (research into how Tablet PCs can be used in staff development).

The prominent message from the event evaluation was that the synergy created when like minded people come together to work in a structured way on analysing and proposing solutions to shared issues is a valuable and worthwhile experience. The most important comments eluded to the fact that because there was time built in for creativity and radical thinking it did not feel like hard work but the outcomes were novel and to coin a cliché – out of the box!

For further information on the approach taken, contact  
**Denise Fieldhouse, Denise.C.Fieldhouse@manchester.ac.uk** or  
**Tracy Ellis, T.Ellis@bolton.ac.uk**

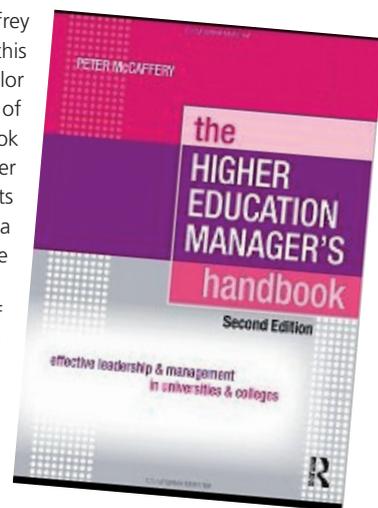
## Book Review

### The Higher Education Manager's handbook.

by Peter McCaffery

You may be familiar with Peter McCaffery who is credited on the reverse of this softback book as being "Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive at the University of Cumbria, England". Soon after the book appeared on Amazon the Times Higher (19/5/10) reported "Cumbria's v-c exits post". Peter's departure was during a period of "financial turbulence" as the Times Higher puts it.

This shouldn't affect your opinion of his book which, for me, is a practical and insightful aid to managing and leading in a University environment. The 400 pages are broken down into 11 chapters each dealing with a different aspect of management and leadership ranging from "Knowing your environment" to "Developing yourself". In fact, if you were stuck you could probably use the chapter headings as a basic competency framework!



Peter's book is very easy to read: he has a light and wry approach to topics that often make me sigh when I see a section heading like "Establishing a vision: developing a strategy for your department". Instead he begins such a section "We live in an age when even a humble sandwich bar cannot open without the fanfare and accompanying statement of mission or vision."

His text is peppered with handy quotes ("Management is a punishment from God" or "The student experience is one of those things which can sound better than it is...like 'low-cost mortgages', 'gastro-pub' and sun-dried tomatoes...") and referenced with a large number of modern texts and URLs. Best of all, for those of us with too little time or patience to read textbooks cover-to-cover, there are numerous grey boxes that highlight key information, provide bullet-points, checklists and exercises on each of the major topic areas.

The themes of the book tread a path that will be of value to both professional services staff and academic managers and Peter is careful to avoid any "them" and "us" aphorisms and anecdotes, instead aiming his words at making life easier for everyone in an institution. As a staff developer I have found the "big picture" insights the book provides (for instance the section on "Understanding the culture of your HEI") along with some of the exercises ("eg "Make an inventory of your political resources") valuable tools when delivering workshops for University managers.

I suppose the only drawback is that Peter's book missed out on the Browne review and the subsequent White Paper and all its ramifications, although Peter extrapolates the Leitch review of 2006 to come to very similar conclusions in his first chapter. Worth the money? Definitely yes!

Who reviewed it ?

#### Ordering details:

*Transformative Coaching:*

*A learning theory for practice*

June 2011 • 978-0-85473-907-3 • 149pp

• £22.99

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And all good bookshops and online retailers such as [www.Amazon.co.uk](http://www.Amazon.co.uk)

# "Performance for All"

## An on-line Appraisal and Performance Enhancement Project



Performance Management (PM) is a topic that has been at the top of most University HR strategies recently. Not surprising when you combine the increasing uncertainty surrounding university funding and recent research that suggests up to 34% of time is spent on tasks not contributing to organisational effectiveness<sup>1</sup>. However, what exactly is performance management? Who is responsible for it? And perhaps, most importantly, how can we support it?

The University of Bristol spends £228M, 59% of all income on staff costs each year. It's a big figure, fairly typical of a large UK University, and one that will be under increasing scrutiny over the next few years. If it were possible to improve the productivity of staff by just 10% (based on the average % of time spent on non-aligned tasks) this would represent an efficiency saving of £7.7 million a year, every year. Just 10%.

Performance For All ([www.performanceforall.org](http://www.performanceforall.org)) is a project run by universities, for universities which is experimenting with easy to use online performance management tools designed to help improve staff productivity. Initial results are showing positive results, with staff taking part feeling they have a better understanding of their university and departmental goals and the role they play in supporting these, and in turn feel more motivated and more able to prioritise and manage their day to day work. Managers are feeding back that the process is much improved over a paper process; they have a greater understanding of the skills and motivations of their staff, and are in a better

position to establish goals and support on-going development.

### But what exactly is Performance Management?

Armstrong and Baron (1998) defined it nicely as a *"strategic and integrated approach to increasing the effectiveness of organisations by improving the performance of the people who work in them and by developing the capabilities of teams and individual contributors."* Other research (Zaffron 2009) suggests that if a link can be found between individual, team and organisational goals productivity and quality will increase - *"it may be possible to get all employees to reconcile personal goals with organizational goals and increase productivity and profitability of an organization using this process?"* So PM processes work and make a difference not only to outcomes but also staff engagement and by implication wellbeing. PM tools can apply equally to individuals, teams, departments or the organisation as a whole. Organisational output or 'products' do not appear to have a bearing on the impact of PM; education, care, health, social service or profit outputs can all benefit from an increased performance management culture.

An interesting factor here for OD specialists working in Universities is that we do not, and perhaps should not, strive for perfection straight away. The benefits of moving towards this way of working can be realised irrespective of how efficient current processes actually are. Increased productivity of 10% is worth achieving no matter where your starting point is.

Theory is all very well but how can we practically achieve it in reality? Well PM can be seen as a simple cycle:

1. *Performance planning* where goals and objectives are established
2. *Performance coaching* where a manager intervenes to give feedback and adjust performance
3. *Performance review* where individual performance is formally documented and feedback delivered

Most Universities undertake a form of this cycle now. However the first few months of the 'performance for all' project demonstrates significant improvements can be made, often fairly easily, that can have a dramatic impact. Most institutions drive this process through some kind of appraisal scheme, but with limited success. Many current schemes in HE have a number of inherent problems that seem to work against the basic principles of a modern performance enhancement culture. Often still paper based and annual, they offer limited linkage to goals with poor review and disassociated links to training and development.

The challenge for OD specialists is to create an environment in which staff at all levels better understand and commit to the direction, strategy and goals of the team, department and University. This requires a holistic, coordinated effort to ensure that a number of key elements or building blocks are in place to promote alignment.

- An organisational structure where people understand what is expected of them and what they are accountable for
- People systems and processes that drive the right behaviours
- Capable leadership
- A positive work environment (culture)

*Performance for all's* online performance management tools work toward these basic principles of an effective PM culture. We seek to develop tools that do not deliver PM (they cannot claim to do that) but that drive and enhance an environment in which PM can flourish. Above all they must work within our very diverse education and research sector and offer something over and above current 'bolt on' HR systems and products. We do not have, nor do we seek, central funding however we are working with a HR software company willing to join us and invest time to help us develop tools.

Early indications are encouraging. A group of Universities (currently Manchester, East London, Bristol, Ulster, Lancaster, Arts University College Bournemouth and University College London) are trialling how web technology, built and used successfully in the commercial sector, can be developed in order to have real impact in Higher Education. Colleagues from Universities in Australia and Canada are also evaluating similar tools. We are looking to deliver the following web based, value for money, modular interventions that can be 'turned on' at a time that is right for an institution:



- Online Appraisal
- Managing Goals and Objectives
- Managing Learning
- Managing Essential Training
- Quality Induction
- Delivering Competencies and Behaviours
- Integrating Academic and Learning KPI's (REF/NSS)
- Talent Management
- Succession Planning
- Seamless integration with existing university HR systems

If simple integrated PM software can be developed then significant return on investment can be achieved by unlocking the latent potential in every employee through:

## Direct financial gain

- Reduced appraisal scheme operating costs through an efficient web driven process
- Improved project management
- An organisation aligned behind University strategy with decreased operating costs
- More efficient engagement in the process of change by communicating through individual and group goals

## Motivated workforce

- Goal setting that is continuous and not solely undertaken during the 'annual review'
- Improves employee engagement through an understanding of how people fit in and contribute to University goals and mission
- Improved transparency and communication in the achievement of goals
- Professional development programs better aligned to achieving University goals
- Improved career development pathways and opportunities

## Improved management tools

- Improved change readiness through flexibility in setting and reviewing goals
- Highlights relationships between people, teams and University success
- Helps audit / comply with legislative training requirements
- Simplifies communication of strategic goals to a large diverse workforce
- Provides a well documented and communicated planning process

In terms of timescales we are influenced by the Parkinson Law<sup>3</sup> that suggests that time taken to deliver a task will expand to fit the time available! This is not a project in the sense of a defined end date although we do wish to have most of our initial learning undertaken by the end of April 2012.

There is still time to get involved in the pilots. This offers some significant advantages such as being able to shape a tool that best fits your needs, together with some on-going discounts from the point at which the tool is made more commercially available. Pilot projects range from teams of just 20 up to the whole organisation, on-line forms only through to full system functionality. If you would like to take part as a pilot in some way please contact **Christian Carter**, OD Manager at the University of Bristol ([christian.carter@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:christian.carter@bristol.ac.uk)) or take a look at the project web site [www.performanceforall.org](http://www.performanceforall.org).

## References

1. [www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com) (2010)
2. Zaffron, Logan, Steve, David (1st edition, Feb, 2009). *Performance Management: The Three Laws of Performance: Rewriting the Future of Your Organization and Your Life*
3. *Parkinson's Law, or The Pursuit of Progress*, C. Northcote Parkinson, 1957



**P4A**  
Performance  
For All



## About SDF UPDATE...and a call for contributions

Update is a twice-yearly newsletter for staff developers in Higher Education. Limited numbers of paper copies are distributed to HEIs in the UK, and it is available as a PDF download from the SDF website. We'd love you to share your news or a practical tip or information about a resource, or if you have a suggestion or comment about this issue, we'd really like to hear from you, especially about ways it can be improved.

**Contact:** Becky Robson, SDF National Coordinator, [becky.robson@staffdevelopment.ac.uk](mailto:becky.robson@staffdevelopment.ac.uk).

[www.staffdevelopment.ac.uk](http://www.staffdevelopment.ac.uk)