



Case Study D: Professional Development with Industry Professionals

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Pilot Group: **Industry Professionals**

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Professional Identity Group & Context

The National Forum invited Griffith College to become one of the pilot groups. At the same time, they also seconded the mentor for this group to the National Forum Professional Development Expert Group (NFPDEG) for a total of thirty days over the period of the pilot study. This was to facilitate working with the pilot group and with the NFPDEG. The group pertaining to this case are lecturers who are industry active part-time educators teaching across disciplines and faculties in Griffith College.

In December 2016, an invitation was extended to part time lecturers in Griffith College asking them to join the pilot group. Fifteen agreed to be part of the group but unfortunately two left the group very early in the process due to excessive external work commitments. This is stark evidence of the challenges part time lecturers have in terms of juggling their external work demands and teaching commitments.

Approach taken by professional identity group to support the implementation of the PDF

The group first met collectively in January 2016 at a kick-starter workshop hosted by Dr Roisín Donnelly, Project Manager with the National Forum for this study. They were provided with an information sheet and consent form at this meeting. From the get-go, this group were incredibly enthusiastic, motivated and open to being involved in the pilot project. Their enthusiasm and passion fuelled the project for the group.

Within four weeks of the kick-starter workshop, the mentor met each of the thirteen participants individually to discuss where and how each might start engaging in their PDF and developing a supporting professional portfolio. These one-to-one meetings provided an opportunity to negotiate best-fit individual plans. The open discussion for all was influenced by the mentor, and focused on the ‘self’ aspect of the PDF. Many participants had engaged in professional development in higher education through completing a postgraduate accredited programme on education, and thus were familiar with teaching philosophy statements. This was used as a starting point for discussion. Discussions regarding other domain(s) they might engage with and decisions about the type of portfolio they might develop ensued with each, but there were no firm conclusions reached. In the three subsequent group workshops/meetings ideas about how to proceed were explored in greater detail because at this stage all had begun to engage with the Professional Development Framework (PDF).

At the first group meeting a lot of time was spent chatting about professional identities. This was a very interesting discussion with this group particularly because they had a strong identity as industry/discipline experts, but also, they identified intensely with their teaching role. Learnings from these sessions informed separate information videos on two domains – professional identity, values,



and development; and professional knowledge and skills. The subsequent two group meetings took the form of a facilitated work space. A room conducive to creative reflection and writing was chosen specifically and available to participants for the full day. Light refreshments were available throughout the day, and perhaps of most value a supportive and collaborative environment was created. Participants supported each other, in addition to seeking advice or guidance from the mentor. These sessions were very productive and industrious. In addition to the sessions discussed here, the mentor invited participants to avail of further one-to-one sessions if they wished. About half the group availed of this opportunity.

Key enablers, challenges and suggestions for the future

The project was successful in that it did facilitate the pilot group engaging with the PDF in a real and collaborative way. It also had the impact of building capacity for the PDF, both within and outside of the pilot group. There were inquiries from other lecturers across the college, full and part time, on how they could get involved. If implementation of the PDF were to be rolled out across the College there would have to be a planned and resourced approach negotiated and agreed in advance. Feedback from participants on the pilot group show that a key enabler was the level of support they enjoyed. This provision was both within the College, and externally within the NFPDEG. The most significant challenge for all involved (mentor and participants) was one of finding the time and space to engage in both professional development and development of professional portfolios. For this reason the two facilitated work space days were well received.

The key challenge going forward is twofold. Firstly, how to sustain the pilot group and continue to support them; and secondly how to bring other educators in the College into the fold. There are many lecturers ready and willing to jump in. But, as mentioned earlier, this needs to be done in a planned and resourced manner otherwise it will be difficult to sustain. The pilot group are willing and interested to work with other pilot groups in the College so perhaps that could be an approach we pursue. In any event, to sustain PDF engagement and advancement nationally there needs to be a recognition piece. Recognition can be multi-faceted in drive and approach. In part, it will require a national driver to moderate and oversee the national recognition framework. Additionally, policy and influencing bodies could include PDF criteria in institutional and programmatic reviews and validations. This will help drive engagement internally.