

Educational Developments

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LAUNCHING A NEW AWARD FOR SEDA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (PDF): SUPPORTING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

SEDA PDF offers a Framework of professional learning and development awards that can be accredited by SEDA and used by FHE institutions for enhancing the learning of both students and staff. One of the newest awards is in 'Supporting Health and Well-being'. This award reflects the current growing interest in healthy work and study, resilience and well-being of both staff and students. The award reflects this two-pronged focus on staff and student needs in its design and outcomes, for example: Increasingly, across FHE contexts the challenges of workload demands are having a negative impact on the health of professionals and students.

1. Recent publications from Locke et al. (2016), Baume and Popovic (2016), and Cashmore et al. (2013) highlight the complexity of career and workload structure for professionals in FHE, in particular those in academic and learning support roles. Not only are career paths less well defined within academic lives, the drive to offer quality and meet standards across the FHE sector means the challenge in managing workload for all staff; responding to initiatives and market challenges while performing at a high level to meet public, professional, accountability, and student expectations can mean colleagues struggle to gain balance between conflicting demands of career, role and health. This is acknowledged in the evidence from websites, conference themes, and the higher profile for well-being in HR strategies and policy.
2. Students too find it challenging to structure and balance their study, social and working lives, especially where faced with financial demands of fees, accommodation and rising costs of living. Recent Guardian reports predict over half a million students started their student life in 2017 and the Guardian annual student survey predicted 9 out of 10 will struggle to cope with the demands of that transition. Mental health is flagged as a hidden disability for many leading UUK to identify this as a priority concern in recent reports, e.g. the '[Student mental wellbeing in higher education: good practice guide](#)' (2015) produced by the Universities UK standing group on [Mental Wellbeing in Higher Education](#), and prompting a burgeoning of initiatives across the sector in response.

More widely, there is national concern about health due to, for example, increasing levels of obesity, alcohol, lack of exercise and stress and a *Five Ways to Wellbeing* tool, commissioned by the Government has been developed to improve the mental health and well-being of the whole population (Aked and Thompson, 2011). Results from recent HEPI surveys provide strong evidence that the undergraduate student population have lower levels of wellbeing than the rest of the population, and young people as a whole when measured against Office for National Statistics (ONS) data.

Such concerns often emerge in studies, surveys and national recommendations, but are can be neglected as a factor influencing academic work and environments. The HEA has taken this issue on board in its TeachWell initiative. Projects across the sector are focusing attention on the challenges presented by concern of physical and mental Health and Well-being in the FHE population.

Staff may need to be informed about these: to be able to show consideration for and accommodate mental and wider health issues for students. Staff can feel overburdened and disempowered by what they see as increasing demands on their time and effort, fewer resources, administrative changes and institutional priorities.

This award acknowledges the importance for both students and staff of balancing healthier lives and healthier working practices through increased resilience, building

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awareness of, and strategies for, well-being. It acknowledges the growing expectation that staff proactively plan, prioritise, determine and implement strategies, for developing their careers and managing work demands of, e.g. research, teaching and administration, and work life balance. In short, the award offers a mechanism to evidence and support institutional initiatives on these crucial issues for their staff.

The award can be variously targeted. It has been designed to offer a flexible award to encourage health and well-being awareness across institutions for staff and students, therefore it can be used by managers, by academics and professional support services, and when considering the student HE experience and learning processes.

The award encourages dialogue, reflection and action around this issue for individuals and teams as an important component of the student HE/FE experience and academic practice. An important caveat for potential adopters of the award is that it is not designed to fit within counselling or equivalent training. It is about informing and developing staff, awareness raising, and enabling staff to be more appreciative of their own well-being and that of others and hence enabling them and the institution to contribute to a more healthy environment. As pointed out by Lawrence (2017), recognising the link between learning success and educator well-being in higher education strengthens the case for future staff development built on models and messages of well-being.

AWARD SPECIALIST OUTCOMES

In addition to evidencing how they meet the values and core outcomes shared by all SEDA PDF awards those using this award to focus professional learning and development activity will need to show how participants will be able to:

- Identify and reflect on issues for health and well-being in their practice setting as a duty of care for him/herself as individual practitioner and/or for others (students and staff)
- Inform themselves on appropriate approaches and techniques for supporting health and well-being for themselves and/ or for others
- Evaluate selected approaches (for the individual) and identify appropriate responses
- Contribute to enhanced health and well being practices within their HE setting informed by appropriate ethical considerations

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