

Reflective Practice – awareness and use within UHI

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Summary Report 1 July 2021

This LTA scholarship funded-project investigated teaching staff awareness and use of Reflective Practice (RP).

All teaching staff were invited to complete a questionnaire; respondents were then able to take part in semi-structured interviews, which were submitted to qualitative thematic analysis using NVivo software.

Twenty-two staff completed the questionnaire, from 9 of the University's 14 constituent elements, covering a wide range of subjects and teaching levels. Only six respondents (27%) were 'quite' or 'very' aware of the University's policy on Reflective Practice. 55% of respondents reported they 'often used' RP on their own practice and 77% used it 'often' or 'occasionally' to assess students.

Analysis of the fourteen interviews revealed three main themes:

1 'How we reflect': process, contexts and methods.

RP was done both formally (e.g. in team meetings, through documentation) and informally; individually and with others (e.g. mentors, informal collegial groups). Diverse methods were used but traditional handwritten journaling was most common.

2 'Why we reflect': motivations.

Organisational drivers included subject and discipline requirements (from awarding and professional bodies)

Personal drivers included: to improve practice; challenge complacency; as a part of one's identity; for one's psychological well-being and growth.

3 'Why don't we reflect': barriers.

Insufficient opportunities to share ideas and resources, insufficient time, an uneven institutional culture towards Reflective Practice, inadequate training.

Several ideas were put forward to address these barriers, including:

- Enhanced peer-support;
- Formal mechanisms for sharing ideas, good practice, resources (e.g. a 'Teaching and Learning Hub');
- Enhanced induction;
- A coordinated institution-wide policy that recognises and values Reflective Practice.

Conclusions

There is a significant depth of knowledge, passion and expertise with regards to Reflective Practice at UHI that could be enhanced if specific issues are addressed at an institutional level.