

Portfolios and Professional Development for Academic Designers/developers

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Biography:

Jenny Bird is an academic Educational Designer at the Teaching and Learning Centre, Southern Cross University, Australia. She has a long history as a staff developer, an educational designer and an educational writer. She has a particular interest in curriculum studies in higher education. She has a MEd (Flexible Learning). Her research interests lie in exploring issues related to the profession of flexible learning designers/developers.

Abstract:

The Australian Federal Government is increasing its requirements on the higher education sector to meet indicators for the quality of university teaching and student learning, and is tying institutional funding to measurable outcomes of same. The role which academic designers/developers play in the professional development of academic staff, and the design, development and delivery of quality curricula and flexible learning materials is dynamic, complex and of increasing strategic importance to the institutions for whom they work. Yet this group faces many challenges in describing and providing evidence of what they do, and the quality of their contribution to the institutions within which they work. This group also face challenges relating to professionalisation - an unclear professional identity, unclear entry requirements, professional development requirements and career pathways.

This paper presents the major findings from an ACODE (Australasian Council on Open and Distance e-learning) funded research project, conducted in 2006, about the manner in which flexible learning designers/developers employed as academics gather evidence of their work for portfolios for promotion or professional development. The aim of the research was to identify the nature of the evidence, and from whom and how it can be gathered, that flexible learning designers/developers can use for the preparation of portfolios for academic promotion and professional development. In addition, the research also produced valuable information about the manner in which designers/developers went about structuring and writing applications for promotion. The findings illuminate a number of questions that relate more broadly to professional identity and professional development for academic designers/developers currently working in Australian universities. These include: What are the major domains of practice for academic designer/developers? What skill sets do we need? How do we describe and evaluate what we do? How do we ensure that our practice is continuously improving? What challenges do designers/developers face in planning a career path and achieving promotion?

Extra notes for the pre-conference workshop

It is anticipated that the workshop will progress discussion on a number of related issues, such as:

1. What skill sets do designers/developers need?
2. Should we consider entry level qualifications?

3. What ongoing professional development should we recommend to newcomers to the field?

4. Should we consider a Professional Association like CMALT?

The workshop will also showcase an evidence-based guide, *Developing portfolios:*

A guide for academic designers/developers which has been written from the research data and which will be hosted on the ACODE website. from November 2006.