

TRAINING AND QUALIFYING DISTANCE LEARNING TUTORS

David Baume ¹

Roger Beck ²

Graham Cox ³

Laura Hills ⁴

Résumé

The UK Open University (www.open.ac.uk) is a large distance teaching university with some 200,000 students. The courses offered by the University are planned and written for the most part by the one thousand or so full-time academic staff of the University, working in course teams. Students are supported by face-to-face and on-line tutorial sessions and by feedback on their work. This tutoring and feedback are undertaken by part-time tutors, called Associate Lecturers (ALs), of whom there are currently some 7500.

The Open University (OU) has, throughout some 35 years of operation, placed great emphasis on the importance of these ALs. The University has always provided staff development and training to help them in their work. However, until recently, the University has not in any systematic or large-scale way enabled these tutors to gain a qualification in teaching in higher education.

Over the last fifteen years there has been a growing movement in the UK for those who teach in higher education to gain a suitable teaching qualification. In 2006 it will become a requirement for those new to teaching in higher education to gain an appropriate higher education teaching qualification. This teaching qualification will sit alongside their doctorate or other qualification in the discipline that they teach. (Some parts of this trend are also seen in countries other than UK, although this paper will not provide an international review of this topic.)

In these institutional and national contexts, this paper describes and analyses the development, operation and evaluation of the OU's Associate Lecturer Development and Accreditation Pathway (ALDAP) initiative. ALDAP was developed through wide consultation

1 Higher Education Consultant, previously of The Open University [adbaume@aol.com].

2 Open University, [r.b.beck@open.ac.uk].

3 Open University, [g.cox@open.ac.uk].

4 Formerly of the Student Support Research Group, The Open University.

across the University. It is delivered through a mixture of on-line and face-to-face education and support similar to that used by ALs in their teaching. The paper uses research data on the effectiveness of the initiative to date. It also draws broader conclusions about appropriate forms of training and accreditation for those who teach in higher education, by distance learning and also face to face.

INTRODUCTION

The UK Open University (www.open.ac.uk) is a large distance teaching university with some 200,000 students. The courses offered by the University are planned and written for the most part by the one thousand or so full-time academic staff of the University, working in course teams. Students are supported by face-to-face and on-line tutorial sessions and by feedback on their work. This tutoring and feedback are undertaken by part-time tutors, called Associate Lecturers (ALs), of whom there are currently some 7500.

The Open University (OU) has, throughout some 35 years of operation, placed great emphasis on the importance of these ALs. The University has always provided staff development and training to help them in their work. However, until recently, the University has not in any systematic or large-scale way enabled these tutors to gain a qualification in teaching in higher education.

Over the last fifteen years there has been a growing movement in the UK for those who teach in higher education to gain a suitable teaching qualification. In 2006 it will become a requirement for those new to teaching in higher education to gain an appropriate higher education teaching qualification. This teaching qualification will sit alongside their doctorate or other qualification in the discipline that they teach. (Some parts of this trend are also seen in countries other than UK, although this paper will not provide an international review of this topic.)

In these institutional and national contexts, this paper describes and analyses the development, operation and evaluation of the OU's Associate Lecturer Development and Accreditation Pathway (ALDAP) initiative. ALDAP was developed through wide consultation across the University. It is delivered through a mixture of on-line and face-to-face education and support similar to that used by ALs in their teaching. The paper uses research data on the effectiveness of the initiative to date. It also draws broader conclusions about appropriate forms of training and accreditation for those who teach in higher education, by distance learning and also face to face.

National and International Context

Before around 1990 there was some training of new teachers in some UK Universities, but provision was very patchy and small in scale. Participation by lecturers was usually optional.

In 1990 the UK Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA – www.seda.ac.uk), a professional society for staff and educational developers in higher education, began to develop a Teacher Accreditation Scheme (TAS) for those who teach in higher education.

TAS described eight capabilities of a higher education teacher – briefly, the abilities to plan a teaching programme; teach; support students; assess; monitor and evaluate their teaching; undertake the necessary administration; cope with the requirements of the job; and finally reflect on their teaching and plan and undertake further development as a teacher. The scheme also described six principles and values which should underpin teaching – applying knowledge of how students learn; respecting and valuing individual difference; focussing on development; being scholarly; working collaboratively; working towards equality of opportunity; and finally reflection on practice.

TAS did not directly accredit individual teachers. Rather, it recognised programmes within Universities. This recognition was a formal and demanding, but also a supportive, process, conducted by peers, leaders of other SEDA-recognised courses. A course was recognised when it required teachers to show that they had achieved the capabilities described above, underpinned by the principles and values described above, in order to pass the course. Teachers who passed a SEDA-recognised course were accredited by SEDA. When the TAS stopped accepting new applicants in 2002 (in deference to the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE – www.ilthe.ac.uk – see below), SEDA had recognised 65 programmes. Some 3100 teachers were accredited by SEDA, mainly in UK but also in Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

The UK's National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE 1997) recommended that all new lecturers in higher education should be trained on accredited courses through a new body, the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

The ILTHE, a membership organisation with some government funding, developed a new accreditation framework and process. This had similarities to SEDA's. ILTHE described five 'areas of work' for higher education teachers – teaching and the support of learning; contribution to the design and planning of learning activities and/or programmes of study; assessment and giving feedback to learners; developing effective learning environments and learner support systems; and reflective practice and personal development.

ILTHE specified the professional values that must underpin teaching – a commitment to scholarship in teaching, both generally and within their own discipline; respect for individual learners and for their development and empowerment; a commitment to the development of learning communities, including students, teachers and all those engaged in learning support; a commitment to encouraging participation in higher education and to equality of educational opportunity; and a commitment to continued reflection and evaluation and consequent improvement of their own practice.

ILTHE also specified required areas of knowledge – the subject material being taught; appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme; models of how students learn, both generically and in their subject; the use of learning technologies appropriate to the context in which they teach; methods for monitoring and evaluating their own teaching; and the implications of quality assurance for practice.

There were two routes to entry to ILTHE membership. New teachers completed an ILTHE-accredited programme. Experienced teachers achieved direct entry through the submission and assessment of a 3000-word commentary on the applicant's work. Some 76% of members used the direct entry route. Accreditation thus involves recognising the capabilities of experienced staff as well as training and assessing new staff. Where experienced staff have gained these capabilities through formal study, the process is often called the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL). Where these capabilities have been gained through experience and reflection over a number of years, without taking a course, the process is often called the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).

By summer 2004, ILTHE had accredited some 16,700 higher education teachers. The ILTHE has recently been folded into a new body, The Higher Education Academy (www.heacademy.ac.uk). The Academy has a national role in enhancing the quality of higher education teaching. Following a decision by the UK Government (DfES 2003), The Academy is developing a new national standard for higher education teaching.

Meanwhile SEDA has developed a new 'Professional Development Framework' – SEDA-PDF – to support and recognise a wide range of higher education staff – www.seda.ac.uk/pdf/index.htm.

These developments are described in more detail variously in Baume and Baume (1996), Baume (2003) and UUK (2004, Appendix C). It would be fair to describe the UK as a lively scene for the development and accreditation of those who teach in higher education.

In Norway, Sweden and some German states, there is a requirement to allocate time to the pedagogic development of new academics, but practice on the assessment of this

development varies. This topic has been discussed at national level in The Netherlands. All 14 universities in Sri Lanka, working with the University of Colombo, use the SEDA framework for new and some experienced staff. Early steps towards a national programme are being taken in Croatia through the national staff development association 'Universitas'. In Canada some very early attempts are under way to pilot forms of accreditation through the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. The Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia operates a Fellowship Professional Recognition and Development Scheme to support the development, demonstration and maintenance of excellence in teaching. This does not claim to be a complete account.

Much more is happening within individual universities in many countries than this rather thin account of national activities might suggest. More and more university staff development units are being established. Training new teachers is often part of their remit. Some universities have sophisticated policies that require excellence in both research and teaching for promotion to full professor (see for example Keesen *et al.*, 1996: 11).

The Open University Context and the development of ALDAP

The Open University has 13 regional centres across the UK as well as a headquarters in Milton Keynes. Work on accrediting ALs had been undertaken in the Scottish Region over a number of years, led by John Cowan and Judith George. A process was developed which supported 30 experienced Associate Lecturers to gain full accreditation by SEDA, and thence in due course full membership of the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

Following the publication of the NCIHE report considered earlier, and after widespread consultation and discussion within The Open University, the University's Academic Board in July 1998 agreed that ALs should be encouraged, but not required, to undertake accreditation. Funding was obtained from the University's Human Resources Strategic Change Fund for a three-year project to support accreditation of Associate Lecturers. Also in 1998 the University produced a course called 'Teaching in Higher Education'. It was produced in two versions – a taught version (course code H851) and an APEL version (HH851). HH851 was not particularly designed for Open University ALs, but many took it.

An early trial of an APEL route to accreditation using HH851 was not very successful. Both completion and participant satisfaction were low. A clear lesson from this was that APEL

can be a lonely business. Those undertaking APEL need support. The various forms of support now used are described in the next section.

A much more successful pilot of a supported APEL route to HH851, and hence to accreditation, was carried out in the South Region of the University. However, this was felt by some participants to be too large and time-consuming for an AL to undertake. Also, it was felt that it did not sufficiently address what was particular about teaching at The Open University. During the three years to 2001, over 600 ALs took HH851 (and a few the taught version, H851). Over 100 ALs have been accredited through this route. The experience has, for most participants, led to increased confidence in their teaching ability, to more reflection on practice and to benefits for students following from better teaching.

Much valuable experience has been built up through these projects. This experience strongly informed the development of the scheme which is the main subject of this paper, the Associate Lecturer Development and Accreditation Pathway (ALDAP). ALDAP was developed under the auspices of the OU's National Associate Lecturer Staff Development Team (NALSDT). It has gained external recognition from the Staff and Education Development Association (SEDA) as leading to a new SEDA award, 'Supporting Learning' (http://www.seda.ac.uk/pdf/supporting_learning.htm) under the SEDA Professional Development Framework mentioned earlier. At the time of writing, ALDAP is entering its third year of operation. The framework and process was developed after extensive consultation, including visits by the ALDAP Project Team to all 13 Regions. Many formal and informal committee and group meetings were also held. ALDAP documentation benefited from detailed comments on successive drafts from a wide range of committed colleagues working in the area of staff development.

The Structure and Operation of ALDAP

A key idea of ALDAP is that the AL, as a professional, takes responsibility for their own professional development. They are supported in this development by the University. In a little more detail:

- The **AL** takes responsibility for:
 - Identifying their development needs;
 - Undertaking the appropriate development activities (including but not limited to regional AL staff development events);

- o Evaluating and selectively applying what they learn from this development to their practice as an AL;
- o Maintaining a file showing their learning and development;
- o If they so choose, taking part in a professional dialogue about their work;
- o Developing an action plan for their further development;
- o Making an application for membership of the ILTHE (Now The Academy).

This sequence is shown in more detail in Table 1 below.

- The **University** supports this process of development by means including:
 - o The continuing provision of a wide range of professional development event and materials;
 - o Specific workshops and materials to support the ALDAP process;
 - o On-line conferences for ALDAP participants;
 - o An ALDAP facilitator in each region who will arrange ALDAP workshops, facilitate the formation and operation of self-help groups/action learning sets, facilitate peer observation of teaching, and arrange for feedback on personal development files and draft ILTHE applications. (These ALDAP facilitators are experienced and qualified ALs.)

There are three main elements to ALDAP:

1. A **framework** (described next), which describes the main activities which are required of ALs, together with the necessary underpinning values and knowledge;
2. A **development process**, which each AL documents in their development file;
3. Support for **applying** to join the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education;

The ALDAP **framework** is based in turn on seven main areas or aspects of an AL's work:

1. Planning, for example, of a whole course presentation, individual tutorials, other teaching sessions, and how resource materials will be used;
2. Teaching, including as appropriate through correspondence tuition, face-to-face, by telephone and on-line;
3. Assessing student work, awarding marks or grades and giving feedback on performance;

4. Creating learning environments and supporting learners;
5. Reviewing teaching (including via feedback from students, peers and line manager) and the course(s) on which an AL teaches by contributing to their review;
6. Developing professional capabilities, and where appropriate contributing to the development of University courses(s) and processes;
7. Integrating, as appropriate, scholarship, research and/or professional activities into teaching and supporting learning;

This framework was designed both to reflect the work of an AL – it is based on the AL’s job description – and to relate closely to the SEDA and ILTHE accreditation frameworks. It would have felt wrong to develop an accreditation framework for university staff that did not also meet national requirements; in other words, to offer them a ‘dead end’.

ALDAP also specifies underpinning professional values:

- Respect for each individual learner and their development
- The development of learning communities through working with colleagues and students
- Scholarship in teaching, which includes academic achievement both in what is taught and how it is taught
- Encouraging participation and equality of opportunity
- Continued reflection, evaluation and improvement of practice and underpinning knowledge:
- The subject(s) taught
- Appropriate teaching and learning methods for the subject, course and level
- Models of student learning
- The implications of quality assurance for their practice
- Methods for monitoring and evaluating teaching
- The appropriate use of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching.

Again, and for the same reason, these values and knowledge reflect the views both of the University and of external accreditation bodies.

Several features of ALDAP deserve particular attention:

Framework

ALDAP is a framework. It is not a programme, although a programme is associated with it. Each AL can thus adapt and use it; regardless of their background, discipline or experience; to meet their particular needs. They can use the framework to plan and carry out their own development and their professional accreditation. They can describe and reflect on what they already know, and study what they need to now, in whatever sequence works best for them.

Rooted in practice

ALDAP is rooted in the work of the AL, in what they do with and for their students. It starts from the AL's practice and encourages them to select and use relevant theory. It does not start by teaching theory which the AL may or may not find relevant to their practice.

A process of development

The ALDAP development process is based on an explicit account of a process of development, shown below. This process describes a learning spiral, after Bruner (1960).

Table 1 – The ALDAP development spiral

Development steps		Output(s):	Support
1	U Review and analyse current capabilities and performance; identify development priorities, needs and interests.	An audit of current capabilities. An account of the areas in which development of teaching capabilities is wanted and needed.	Individual: Peers, a specific peer partner, colleagues, line manager, ALDAP regional facilitator. Materials: A range of specially written AL staff development materials. ALDAP materials, including those on-line via the comprehensive web-site for ALs called 'TutorHome'.
2	U Plan own development.	Professional development plan, which may be discussed with a line manager and ALDAP regional facilitator.	Group: Workshops including current briefings, staff development workshops and 3 ALDAP events – 'Getting Started', 'Mid-term Review' and 'Completion and Handing In'.
3	U Undertake this development, using appropriate means and resources.	Notes of each development activity. <i>There will be very close links indeed between stages 3 and 4</i>	On-line communities – regional, subject-based and course-based.
4	U Identify what was learned from this development, and explore and plan how this might be used in their future work.	Accounts of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ideas and insights (and indeed questions) gained from development; • ideas about the planned or possible application of this learning to the work of an associate lecturer; • teaching and other work plans, referring to ideas and practices identified during professional development. 	Further development: the AL takes responsibility for planning their own development. Some development will be provided by the course team and the AL staff development team in each region. Beyond this, individuals and groups can be called on, and use made of the materials listed above to help plan development. A wide range of development methods may then be appropriate, including but not limited to AL staff development events.
5	U Selectively and critically apply learning to practice, and evaluate results.	Accounts of new methods used and insights gained and applied. Evaluations of these new plans, methods and insights, with inputs from peers and students.	The AL will identify what has been learned from the various pieces of development undertaken, and plan how to apply this learning to their practice. This might lead to new or changed teaching methods, and probably to new insights into teaching and learning.
6	U Review and analyse extended capabilities and performance, and identify further development wishes, needs and priorities.	A revised audit of capabilities. A revised account of the areas in which further development of teaching capabilities is wanted and needed.	Individual, group and materials support can be used as new methods, approaches or insights are tried and evaluated. Stages 4 and 5 are supported by a professional dialogue with another Associated Lecturer.
7	U Make application for direct entry to the ILTHE, after receiving feedback on draft.	An application in the format required by ILTHE which will incorporate the reflective commentaries developed during the ALDAP process.	The ALDAP regional facilitator and peers will give support, and feedback on a draft. Specific printed guidance will be provided.

Support for participants

Progress along the pathway is largely self-directed. A growing range of support materials is available, in print and increasingly on line. Support is available from Regional Facilitators. They respond to queries from potential particulates, provide individual support, arrange peer support groups and, crucially, plan and often run the three ALDAP workshops. The Regional Facilitators have been a vital and valued part of the ALDAP process.

The Personal Development File

Each participant is given a Personal Development File. This contains a range of resource material, about ALDAP and about teaching at The Open University. ALs also use this file to collect and analyse material that they produce during the normal course of their teaching – lesson plans, feedback to students, notes of telephone conversations with students. They are given guidance on how to do this, as in the extract below:

Table 2 – Part of the guidance provided to ALs on what to put into an ALDAP Personal Development File.

Main area of work	This main area of work is likely to include... (<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> means that this area of work would normally be expected to be included in the personal development file)	Possible examples of materials for this particular area of work
Planning...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ...The induction of new students to a tutor group.	Introductory letter or e-mail to new students Plan or other materials produced for induction Notes on how the University induction materials and processes for students will be used, or how students will be guided in the use of these
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A teaching programme for the course as a whole	A plan for teaching on a course, which may include comments on the teaching programme provided by the course
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tutorials and additional academic sessions	Plans prepared for tutorials and additional sessions that were run
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teaching materials	Teaching materials prepared or modified from those provided by the course
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Student learning activities	Plans for particular activities you will students to undertake during the course
	Any other planning of learning activities and/or programmes of study that an associate lecturer chooses to include	Any appropriate material

Workshops

Three three-hour workshops are provided, again using a range of media. Together, the workshops are intended to introduce the ALDAP framework; to encourage the building of a Personal Development File; to promote reflective practice and the production of reflective commentaries; to encourage research and exploration of changes in current practice; to facilitate peer support, and to support those working towards ILTHE membership. The workshops are very interactive. They are very strongly focussed onto helping participants to develop and record their capabilities.

Workshops can be taken face to face, by telephone and/or on-line. 'On-line' is not restricted to email. It can in turn include simultaneous visual workspace tools, voice and text chat over the internet using the Lyceum software (<http://kmi.open.ac.uk/projects/lyceum/>).

There is also great emphasis on participants undertaking specific reading, changes to their teaching, conversations with peers and written reflection between the workshops. The workshops are thus a part of the ALDAP development process, but are not the whole process. Again ALDAP reflects the OU's principal teaching method, supported open learning. Those who cannot attend a workshop use a workbook which provides some of the workshop experience.

'Professional dialogue'

A major innovation used by ALDAP for assessment is the 'professional dialogue'. This is not an oral examination, but rather is an opportunity for ALs to analyse and celebrate their development. They are able to discuss with an ALDAP facilitator, who is also an AL, areas of their teaching practice they have reflected on, and measures they have already taken and should take in the future to improve their practice. A short record of the dialogue is available to the participants and the external examiner. The professional dialogue was successfully piloted in the Scottish Regional Centre.

Continuing professional development (CPD)

One of the distinguishing qualities of any professional is that they continue to develop and extend their practice and their capabilities. The contract for an AL includes two days each year (or equivalent) for their continuing professional development (CPD). This is a very small amount of time per AL (although a substantial investment by the University – up to

some 15,000 person days per year). This reflects the fact that being an AL is in turn only a small part of an AL's professional life, the rest of which may be taken up with teaching for other institutions or with professional practice in their discipline. The University provides ALs with many development opportunities and resources – regional staff development workshops, Teaching Toolkits and other materials, and a growing range of on-line resources.

But CPD may, in practice, be led by what is available rather than by what the AL wants and needs. It was therefore important to help ALs take charge of their CPD. Their CPD should reflect their particular and current development needs, as shown for example by feedback from their students and from their line manager who monitors their teaching and their feedback to students. ALs should then:

- Plan their development to meet these needs;
- Review their development, identifying what they have learned from workshops, reading, conversations (face-to-face or on-line), from any other developmental activities they have undertaken;
- Plan how to apply this learning to their work as an AL; and
- Apply this learning and reviewing its effectiveness for their practice.

This account of CPD, of course, also describes the ALDAP development cycle. The ALDAP development cycle was also made the basis for ALDAP-CPD, so that the process would be familiar. ALDAP-CPD was planned to provide a clear, light-touch framework and process to support their continuing development as an AL. It is available to all ALs who have completed their initial ALDAP process and gained the qualification. It involves, first registration, then forming or joining a support group of some six ALs. These support groups mostly meet and work on-line, with short (30 to 60-minute) ALDAP-CPD sessions alongside regional staff development events. CPD materials are provided, in print and increasingly on-line. ALDAP-CPD is normally taken in cycles of planning, developing and reviewing lasting two years.

ALs are encouraged to use the ALDAP Framework to plan and conduct their CPD. They typically choose to focus on just one, two or maybe three particular areas of work, values or knowledge, or in each cycle. ALDAP-CPD is optional and is not assessed.

An evaluation of ALDAP

ALDAP was externally evaluated in 2003. All 193 currently participating ALs (52 responded), all 13 ALDAP facilitators (7 responded) and all 13 regional staff development facilitators in the Regions (12 responded) were surveyed. Only the responses from ALs are considered here.

Participants' goals

AL motivation for taking ALDAP	Number
ILTHE or non-specified accreditation	30
Improve teaching and practice/improving practice	19
Professional development	14
Sharing experience with other ALs	11

The principal goals identified by ALs for participation in ALDAP, with the number of mentions, were:

74% of ALs responding felt that their goals for ALDAP had been very well or fairly well met, the remainder not very well or not at all.

Respondents distinguished between on the one hand what ALDAP provided and on the other hand what use they made of ALDAP to achieve their goals. Comments from ALs included:

- *It's up to me. ALDAP has given me the tools.*
- *Opportunities and materials provided by ALDAP have been positive and of high quality. I haven't had time to put them into effect yet.*

Reflection and improving teaching

78% of ALs responding felt that ALDAP had been very or fairly successful in helping them to become more reflective. Fifteen ALs described ALDAP as being a 'catalyst' for becoming a reflective, or more reflective, practitioner. Sample comments:

- *I had not really given the idea of reflection on my teaching/student support much thought before ALDAP, so it has been something of a revelation.*
- *I was probably fairly reflective anyway, but ALDAP has given me new ideas and formalised the procedure.*

76% felt that feedback from their students had helped them to become (more) reflective.

The biggest single benefit report by ALs from taking part in ALDAP was becoming a more reflective teacher:

- *Being a reflective practitioner will ensure that I am a continuously developing tutor for a long time. To understand why I do what I do.*

Others referred to being better able to identify and meet student needs:

- *The need to adapt to the group of students – each group is different and needs approaching in different ways. The need to see the group as individuals as well as a group.*
- *[The] main change is an attempt to relate more to students as individuals and to teach in a way that students think useful.*
- *It has given more confidence to continue in my approach, to experiment, and to work on the areas for improvement. I now reflect and act on those reflections in a more structured manner.*

Peer support

83% found that giving peer support was very or fairly useful to them, 88% that receiving peer support was useful. Sample comments:

- *It is very difficult to hold a mirror up to oneself, but when another acts as a mirror, it is illuminating.*
- *It was a revelation to me to see how a tutor could use tutorial time in a totally different way to mine – but with great success.*
- *I no longer feel as isolated. It made me realise that others had similar experiences/concerns.*

(The second AL quoted here above had observed another's tutorial.)

External accreditation

Responses varied greatly on the role of ALDAP in preparing for external accreditation. Some felt ALDAP did a good job on this, some not. Some felt it appropriate for ALDAP to prepare for external accreditation, some not. Some were unclear about the relationship between ALDAP and ILTHE, or found the relationship unhelpful.

Improving ALDAP

How did they feel ALDAP could be improved? The main expressed need was for continued support for professional development:

- *I am fairly happy with what we did. To improve it for me would be to have continuing development through discussion and peer support. That is not available, but I do not think it should be a one off. It should be a continual process reflecting the learning spiral!*

This latter point has been taken up, as described earlier. ALDAP now includes a formal process of continuing professional development, using the same ALDAP framework and process, but more slowly and with a lighter touch.

Further feedback

Since this evaluation, a second cohort of ALs has undertaken ALDAP. This second cohort has not been evaluated, but participants made these comments to the ALDAP external examiner from the Staff Educational Development Association (SEDA):

- *Process and structure [as ALDAP provides] are essential, as you are off doing other things, so you need something to quickly refocus yourself.*
- *Anything that can generate more interaction between associate lecturers is very valuable. ALDAP was ‘like a residential school but chopped into manageable chunks’.*
- *Professional dialogue allows you to bring into focus what you have been doing.*
- *Interrelationships are important, everything leaks into everything else in order to make a cohesive whole.*
- *[I] went to ALDAP to learn, it acted as a refresher on teaching theories and allowed me to revisit how to apply those theories into practice. [It was an] opportunity to discuss with others from other disciplines and also opportunity to get student feedback. Professional dialogue gave me a stimulus to review the whole of my practice.*

The Future of ALDAP

ALDAP is now an established part of the University, increasingly closely integrated into staff development provision for ALs. A growing proportion of AL development – induction, probation and Continuing Professional Development staff development – happens within the ALDAP framework.

The University has established an Educational Development Group. This will link new guidelines on induction and probation to the emergent requirements of the new UK Higher Education Academy, and in particular to the new professional standards that The Academy will produce following wide national consultation. ALDAP will accommodate these changes. For example, the new professional standards will be mapped against the ALDAP framework, and necessary changes made.

It was decided not to open ALDAP registration to new ALs, who are 'on probation' during their first two years. It was felt that new ALs already had a lot to learn – the course that they were teaching, and The Open University teaching methods and administrative systems. However it was equally clear that they could have benefited from the structured development that ALDAP provides. The University is considering providing a 'taster' of ALDAP for ALs on probation.

Some implications for Staff Development, for open learning teachers and for all higher education teachers

It is essential to start from the particular situation and the particular concerns of the teachers, in this case the ALs. The ALs teach part-time with the University, for only a few hours each week. They have other professional and personal lives. Development, however strongly they may believe in it, may not get very high up their list of priorities.

How can we address this?

It must be very clear indeed to ALs what development is expected of them, what they are expected to do and how and why. On the other hand ALs must have the maximum control over their development, to select and undertake the development that best meets their current needs. How to reconcile this apparent conflict?

The approach adopted here has been to provide a simple development and accreditation framework. This framework describes what ALs do, what capabilities they need, what values and knowledge underpin their practice. Within this framework, ALs can identify their own development needs; plan, undertake and use their development; and review their learning and development. The framework must be adaptable to meet the huge variety of subjects, institutions and teaching roles in higher education. The institution can use this same framework to plan, provide and describe development opportunities. There now exists a common language for talking about development. This approach would work on other distance teaching

universities, and is a good basis for planning staff development and accreditation in many other teaching and learning settings.

Within such a framework, it is essential to offer maximum support, encouragement, resources, and if possible reward, for development. Development can never be easy, but it must be made as easy and as accessible as it can.

Tutoring by distance learning can be a lonely business. Development will be more effective if the tutor is not alone. Membership of a peer group of other tutors, with whom they can share development plans and also ideas and approaches to teaching, will help. On-line, tutors can be a member of more than one group: A group of tutors who teach on the same course. A group who are geographically close and may be able to meet from time to time. Or perhaps a specialist group, with a particular interest in some teaching topic, working together for a while and then disbanding.

Teaching is also a very insecure business, in some ways as insecure as an actor or singer. Teaching is, in part, a performance. However well we plan, we know that our teaching works or fails in the moment, in the complex and shifting interpersonal setting of the particular class or tutorial, from minute to minute. Development needs to acknowledge this insecurity, and be very sensitive to it.

Staff development does not happen in a vacuum. In any university, a policy for professional development and accreditation is essential. Without such policy, staff development may be confined to a few enthusiasts, perhaps missing those who most need the development. The policy should describe development as both an obligation and as a right or benefit. A regional or national policy for development and accreditation for all who teach in higher education in turn in turn provides support for the development of University policy and practice.

Some teachers may sometimes be resistant to be 'told how to teach'. Quite right; we should respect their professional autonomy. The teachers are, after all, the ones who have to make the teaching work in their own particular setting. But staff development can help teachers to reflect critically on their practice; to use and develop explanations and models and theories about what works, and when, and how, and why, in their teaching. As one AL said in feedback on their experience of studying teaching "Once you've started to reflect [on your teaching], you can't stop." The most powerful single tool for professional development in teaching is continued reflection on practice.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to The Open University for support in developing and implementing ALDAP over several years. We are particularly grateful to the ALDAP regional facilitators who provided such strong local support for the ALs and really made the scheme work, also giving much feedback and support to the ALDAP team. We also thank other staff in the regional centres of the University for practical support. Above all we thank the many ALs on whom we have trialled versions of ALDAP and its predecessors.

The use of professional dialogue was promoted by Maggie Coates from The Open University Centre for Outcome Based Education and by the research of Jo Tait who was a member of the Institute of Educational Technology at The Open University. The professional dialogue was enthusiastically piloted in the Scottish Regional Centre by the ALDAP facilitator Anne Stevens.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- BAKER, C. (2002), *Supporting Open Learners*. Milton Keynes, The Open University.
[An excellent and thoughtful guide. Written for The Open University, but with implications for any distance teaching university].
- BAUME, D. (1995), "Staff Development for Open and Flexible Learning", *Flexible Learning Strategies in Higher and Further Education*. London: D. Thomas, Cassell.
[This provides a broader account of staff development for open learning, covering also the writing and operation of open learning courses].
- BAUME, D. & C. BAUME (1996), "A national scheme to develop and accredit university teachers", *International Journal for Academic Development* 1(2): 51-58.
- BAUME, D. (2003), *Far too successful? Case Studies in Staff and Educational Development*, H. Edwards & D. Baume. London: Kogan Page.
- BRUNER, J. (1960), *The Process of Education*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2003), *The future of higher education*, London: Department for Education and Skills.
- KEESEN, F., T. WUBBELS, *et al.* (1996), "Preparing university teachers in The Netherlands: Issues and trends", *International Journal for Academic Development* 1(2): 8-25.

NCIHE (1997), *Higher Education in the Learning Society (The Dearing Report)*, London, HMSO.

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY (2002), *Supporting Open Learners: Reader*, Milton Keynes:
The Open University.

Valuable sources on many aspects of teaching by distance learning

UK (2004), Towards a Framework of Professional Teaching Standards [http://
www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/consultations/UniversitiesUK/](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/consultations/UniversitiesUK/)> download