

## Mercian Staff Development Group (MSDG)

### Minutes of the meeting 13 July 2020

**Present:** Jo Aitkins, Mary Betts-Gray, Cheryl Coveney, Matt Cunningham, Heather Green, Kay Jeffries, Gaz Johnson, Emma Hollinshead, Teresa Jordan, Kirsty Kift, Annmarie Lee, Liz Mallett, Kate Marshall, Jane Mortimer (Minutes), Stephen Parton, Sarah Pittaway (Chair), Chris Porter, Susan Rodda, Jenny Townend (for Heather McBryde-Wilding).

**Apologies:** Paul Cavanagh, Jon Granger, Heather McBryde-Wilding, Alison Pope. Kirsty Kift for early departure.

#### 1. Welcome and apologies

Sarah welcomed all to the meeting, her first as Chair, and tabled the apologies.

#### 2. Minutes of meeting on 3 September 2019 and matters arising

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record.

All actions had been completed with the exception of:

- Tips for those organising Mercian staff development events to be produced and housed on the Mercian website. **Action: SP**
- Revision of the buddy sign-up form to be considered by the in-coming Admin Officer following feedback from scheme participant regarding a 'prompts form for pre-first contact'. **Action: TJ**

In respect of event funding, it was confirmed there was a budget at the time the library carpentry session was under consideration. This is likely to continue to be the case but Gaz advised checking if and when an event requires funding. The event on decolonising the curriculum was delivered online and no request for funding has been made.

#### 3. Mercian Officer update

In an email circulated prior to the meeting Gaz advised that:

- Conference 2020 cancelled ([read full statement](#)), planning committee to meet next month to consider next steps.
- MSDG Events survey [report available online](#).
- Third virtual networking event coming up ([end of July](#)) . MSDG reps to promote to colleagues **Action: All**
- MMG hosting a 'Shelf Ready & EDI' eForum ([mid August](#))
- Online meeting/events guides for [organisers and delegates created](#).
- New governance documentation now live ([Strategic Plan, Annual Report, Tangible Benefits](#))
- Steering Group meeting mid-August with SIG reps (Sarah P representing MSDG). Directors Board scheduled for October (Mon 5th)
- Subscriptions for 2021 to be reduced due to financial challenges to sector, and reduced Collaboration spend in 2021.
- Meetings recently attended with MDF, Conference Group, MSDG Officers, Steering Group, Directors Board
- Officer meeting with other regional collaborations bimonthly (Apr, July, Sept) to share experience and workarounds
- See also [report to March Board](#) and [minutes of May Board](#) for more details.

#### **4. Chair update**

Sarah highlighted the need to consider the future operation of the Mercian Staff Development Group (MSDG), particularly in light of the difficulties in filling the officer roles. The Steering Group wishes the group to continue but has stipulated the need for a full officer complement.

Teresa volunteered to fill the remaining vacant role, that of Admin Officer. The outgoing incumbent will provide a handover. **Action: JM/TJ**

Discussion confirmed mostly positive experiences of director support for MSDG reps and prioritisation of staff development activity within institutions. Staff have increased their confidence of online working during the coronavirus pandemic which bodes well for future online delivery of training events. Challenges are related to staff unwillingness to engage and travel, the size and geography of the region, anticipated budgetary constraints.

It was agreed that two of the three group meetings will be conducted online in the future, but that the June, planning meeting would remain face-to-face. The group stated its preference for all institutional representatives continuing to attend these meetings.

In addition, the group's officers will schedule brief, catch-up meetings. The first officer meeting will action the following:

- A review of the group terms of reference
- Document the expectations of institutional reps
- Review existing officer job descriptions and create a job description for the Vice Chair role
- Revisit the document detailing the cycle of business for the group's meetings

**Action: SP/MSDG Officers**

#### **5. Review of the programme 2019-2020**

Sarah advised she had not completed the usual end of year event survey given the survey of the MSDG programme and virtual events carried out by Gaz on behalf of the Collaboration (see 3. above).

Six events have been delivered during the year, of which two were All the Same but Different visits and four learning exchanges, including one online. Overall and unsurprisingly given the cancellation of some events there were fewer attendances this year than in previous years. However, the online event at Leicester attracted the largest sign-up in the last three years. Participants continue to rate events highly.

#### **6. Programme planning 2020-21**

It was agreed to provide a purely online programme for the coming year. All to go back to institutions to confirm which platforms (MS Teams, Zoom, other) are supported. **Action: All.**

In respect of online delivery the importance of practice runs, technical support and assistance in monitoring chat were highlighted. Also, for re-creating the sharing and networking opportunities offered by face-to-face events. Break-out rooms were suggested as the preferred mechanism for encouraging interaction.

The below were identified as potential events early on in the 2020/21 programme. It was noted that for September – December we should be prepared to develop sessions "on the fly". It was agreed we should develop a set of principles to guide our approach.

- A coffee morning style session for library assistants on current plans and developments around our COVID-19 response and re-opening of libraries, this in lieu of the previously cancelled event on the changing role of the library assistant. The

event is needed soon (early August if possible), should be kept simple and allow for interaction amongst a group of staff likely to be excluded from planning conversations. Loughborough and Birmingham offered to lead. **Action: MC/TJ.** Group members to consider who might attend from respective institutions in order to maximise engagement. **Action: All**

- OU offered to reprise a webinar on online delivery. This may help address the need for guidance and support for those delivering events as part of the MSDG programme
- A retrospective on student induction 2020 and what has been learnt, with the suggestion to run the event in December

With regard the rest of programme, reps agreed to go back to their institutions and ask for preferences and further suggestions, using the spreadsheet previously circulated by Sarah (email 6 July) as a starting point. **Action: All – timescale 2/3 weeks** Additional event ideas suggested in the meeting were: staff wellbeing (September 2020?) ; electronic resources and subscriptions (February 2021?); input for those who had submitted proposals for the (now cancelled) conference.

There was discussion on how we deliver the All the Same but Different events effectively online. No conclusion was reached, but it was agreed to re-badge as All Different but still the Same.

It was noted that online delivery offers the potential for pulling in external speakers at a reduced cost.

#### **7. Updates from members**

Member updates to be sent to Jane for collation and circulation. **Action: All/JM**

#### **8. AOB**

N/A

#### **9. Forthcoming meetings**

Dates for forthcoming meetings in September 2020, March 2021 and June 2021 will be set in due course.