

SDF Member of the Year - Sarah Rhodes

Please tell us your name

Arinola Adefila

Please tell us your job title

Deputy Manager Staffordshire Centre for Learning and Pedagogic Practice

Please tell us your institution

Staffordshire University

Who is the person you would like to nominate?

Sarah Rhodes

What is their job title?

Academic Developer, Staffordshire University.

What is the institution of the person you would like to nominate?

Staffordshire University

What are three words you would choose to describe the person you would like to nominate?

Innovative, inspirational, & collegial

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Please explain what made you submit this nomination, and give us examples to illustrate how your nominee has met the award criteria. Word count 300-500 words.

Empowering Early career Development for staff supporting teaching and learning.

Sarah Rhodes joined Staffordshire University (SU) in January 2023 and has quickly become a valuable asset to the Academic Development team and the University. She is clearly passionate about supporting new staff in their transition to teaching and has made a significant contribution to staff development.

Innovation: Sarah has introduced some innovative practices and resources. For example, she developed a new learning and teaching induction that is tailored to the needs of new staff involved in teaching and learning. Sarah utilised her skills and experience to conduct an initial audit and researched induction provision across the sector. This led to the Teachwell programme which enables new staff to develop both knowledge and skills as well as professional capital and a sense of belonging in academia. A significant impact of this has been recorded on staff joining HE from practice and industry settings resulting in improved retention and a supportive environment for them to learn and grow.

The feedback demonstrates how impactful Sarah's approach and support has been:
Participant quote: "I can see the application of card games for different groups of students, particularly as I facilitate new learner groups building a community".

Sharing practice: Sarah has embraced new challenges and shared her practice using a nourishing, relational, didactic approach at SU/national events. She led insightful workshops/presentations at SU's TILE conference supporting ECRs to feel like "duck to water" in HE, SU's Summer learning & Teaching festival. SU's Learning at work week and was an active participant in the LTHE chat around supporting professionals into HE 24/05/2023.

Sarah has designed and developed two asynchronous BlackBoard courses Academic Mentoring and TeachWell to complement the in person academic development sessions run at Stoke-On-Trent campus. The open and flexible resources are accessible to all staff, offered in carefully designed UX, easy navigated bite size modules promoting a culture of shared practice, trust, and continuous learning. 61% of the 1st TeachWell induction cohort have accessed the BlackBoard TeachWell course. Almost 50% of engaging staff have used the resource for over 2 hours/use. Sarah's dedicated work will ultimately lead to teaching excellence.

Collaboration: Sarah has also been proactive in building relationships and set up of the Mentoring and Coaching Exchange Network in May 2023. Strategically consolidating 21 staff from across the institution to develop Mentoring & Coaching (M&C). Through the network's monthly meetings Sarah led the establishment of terms of reference and three strategic priorities for designing M&C within the DNA of Learning and Teaching Practice and staff culture.

Sarah has been nominated for the Institutional Catalyst for Change – Outstanding Newcomer Award, demonstrating how she has strongly influenced strategic OD/HR direction in relation to both induction and mentoring and coaching. I hold Sarah in high regard and believe that her sustained and effective leadership deserves a nomination for the 2023 Developing Excellent Practice - SDF Member of the Year award. Her enthusiasm makes me confident she will continue to be an important part of the team.