

SDF Member of the Year - Zoe Connell

Please tell us your name

Amanda Maclean

Please tell us your job title

Head of People, Culture & Inclusion

Please tell us your institution

Canterbury Christ Church University

Who is the person you would like to nominate?

Zoe Connell

What is their job title?

Business and Digital Manager

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

Canterbury Christ Church University

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

Innovative. Collaborative. Supportive

SDF Member of the Year - Zoe Connell

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.

Zoe is our Business and Digital Learning Manager, and the SDF values run through her bones!

In her digital learning role, Zoe is always researching better ways of supporting learning in the digital space, collaborating with colleagues across the university to make full use of our available technologies. She suggests ideas and challenge, providing evaluation data to inform thinking and continually innovates to make it easier for people to engage with learning, (she even established a more equitable and collaborative approach to managing performance, using an online process). For Zoe, it all starts with 'how can I make this better for people and help them be their best self at work?'. She champions development externally too, supporting colleagues at other HEIs and getting involved in wider networks.

Recently Zoe led a project to implement a new Learning Management System, leading with a vision for a coherent, easy to use, accessible product that creates a single place for colleagues to find learning in all the forms that they need – from booking workshops to accessing e-learning, to tracking their mandatory training. Zoe involved stakeholders from the outset, seeking feedback from both a trainer and a user perspective. She involved them at every stage from spec design and the procurement process, right through to the detailed design, implementation, training and launch stages. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive about the impact of the new platform, of colleagues' ability to engage with their development, and of achieving mandatory training compliance. Next step is an impact evaluation to gather formal responses about what's working well, what needs to change and possible future innovations.

Zoe's rigid standards about digital accessibility means she spots when videos are posted without subtitles, or images without alt-text. Rather than simply point out where materials aren't meeting the standard, Zoe takes the opportunity to meet and support colleagues with problem solving, development and changes. It is a testament to her collaborative and supportive style that colleagues seek her out for her advice on inclusive practices.

She is hugely motivated by making an impact on the experience of colleagues while at work through the lenses of learning, inclusion and wellbeing. She role models this in our weekly team meeting by sharing her personal updates on: "what have I learnt", "how I have furthered the inclusion agenda", "how have I prioritised my wellbeing". By living it and demonstrating it in practice, she has encouraged other colleagues to do the same. We have since incorporated elements of these into our development resources for our Positive Performance Conversations (our 1-1 and development review toolkit). Within the team she also regularly updates us on the latest digital development or interesting ideas (she set up a "Knowledge Sharing" channel).

Highly organised and productive, she has written many blogs to share her learning and tips so that colleagues cross the university can benefit. She doesn't realise the fantastic positive impact she has across the entire university and it would be brilliant to recognise this through the award.