

DEVELOPING EXCELLENT PRACTICE AWARD 2026

GUIDANCE NOTES

The award is open to individuals and/or teams who have launched an initiative or project, during 2025/26, that has made a significant and positive impact to the Learning and Development / Academic Development / Organisational Development environment and shows evidence of collaboration both within and external to their own institution.

OVERVIEW

In the current climate in particular, Higher Education is facing considerable challenges and complex change. Those responsible for learning and organisational development in higher education institutions are contributing significantly to meeting those challenges and leading and facilitating change.

The SDF Developing Excellent Practice Award reflects the Festival of Learning and Development overarching theme (to be confirmed in March 2026), taking place from 9th - 11th November 2026.

Nominations and shortlisted entries will be featured during the Festival, with the winner being announced on 9th November.

HOW TO ENTER

- Use the relevant sections of the form to describe why the individual or the team should be considered for the award.
- If appropriate, the submission should address the project or initiative, its context and the development needs it sought to address.
- Describe the cross institutional collaboration, evaluation approaches and the impact of the activity.
- Provide evidence of demonstrable progress or success.
- Include feedback from those who have benefited and/or who sponsored the project within the institution(s).
- Identify potential learning points for other institutions.

Staff Development Forum

Obsidian Offices
4 Chantry Court
Chester CH1 4QN

JUDGING CRITERIA

The SDF Developing Excellent Practice Award seeks to recognise Learning and Development/ Academic Development / Organisational Development projects or initiatives in the broadest sense that have made a significant and positive difference to individuals, teams, groups or the institution as a whole. The judging panel, which will comprise of a partner representative and SDF Council, will look for projects that:

1. Demonstrates a clear relationship with identified staff, academic or organisational development needs.
2. Provides a significant contribution to developing excellent practice.
3. Shows evidence of collaboration either within or external to the institution.
4. Shows quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of impact.
5. Demonstrates a measurable return on investment/expectation (financial or otherwise).
6. Offers transferable learning for other organisations.
7. Gives evidence of innovating practice with or without the use of technological developments.

RULES OF ENTRY

To enter, the individual or team being nominated must be members of the Staff Development Forum. If you are not a member, [please read this guidance to become a member](#). At least one representative from each shortlisted entry should be registered to attend the Festival.

KEY DATES

- **Deadline:** Tuesday 1st September 2026 End of Play
- **Shortlisted entrants will be notified:** Monday 21st September 2026 End of Play
- **Shortlisted entries to submit further evidence:** Thursday 1st October 2026 End of Play
- **Award presentation:** Monday 9th November during the SDF Festival by a Partner Representative.