**Initial training of IATs**

Currently, sparqs provides a three-day training session for its own ATs and all supported IAT schemes in Scotland. The last one took place in Dundee in September 2015 and trained over 40 trainers and key institutional contacts (who manage and support their IATs).

Content included:

* The theory and practice of training.
* The chance to develop and deliver a training session.
* The sectoral context of quality, student representation and student engagement.
* Tailored sessions, where appropriate, by institutional team managers.

There are certain efficiencies in a central, national training event. And there are benefits in making participants feel a part of a bigger process at which they can meet peers from elsewhere in Scotland.

Are there advantages in a network of regional training events, with groups of neighbouring training teams? Or a combination of both?

Your thoughts

**Ongoing training of IATs**

Although sparqs currently pays for the initial training, it is the institution’s responsibility to support their ongoing development. This can include:

* Specific training on your local context – quality systems, terminology, campuses, curriculum, key support units…
* Observing an early training delivery.
* Providing mentoring or guidance in their development.
* Offering support and advice on future steps or opportunities.
* A networking day for trainers to review and reflect on their practice.

sparqs can provide a simple template for training observations.

There is perhaps more we can do to support the ongoing development of IATs – and perhaps that of their manager too! What more would you expect from sparqs?

Your thoughts

**Management systems**

IATs are part-time employees of their university, college or students’ association. Typically their line manager is someone with an academic representation or student engagement coordination role. Your institution and SA need to agree who is best placed to be the employer. sparqs can help with this discussion.

sparqs can provide template job descriptions, person specifications and background information. We can also provide advice and guidance on the recruitment process as a whole, and can offer to sit on the interview panel (which we strongly recommend, at least in the early years of your scheme).

However, you will need to have early conversations with colleagues in HR, finance or payroll about the practicalities of the scheme. This can often be complex, but sparqs can offer help with this.

Your thoughts

**Learning from IATs**

IATs train potentially hundreds of course reps a year. They’re bound, in that time, to learn a lot about reps’ experiences, hear about urgent or repeated problems, and identify common themes.

What can you do to capture this important intelligence? And how can relevant committees, working groups, management, academic staff or senior student officers benefit from this? There will be some cross-over with the tools you use in ongoing training of reps.

Your thoughts

**Complementing the IAT role**

Some institutions find that the training alone isn’t enough to make a sustainable job, or doesn’t fully harness the expertise and enthusiasm of the trainers. There are many other roles that IATs are often combined with:

* Faculty representative
* Research intern in the faculty, SA or quality office
* Surveys ambassador
* Assistant representative coordinator
* Training materials developer
* Course rep elections coordinator
* Coordinator of student involvement in reviews

Could any of these work for you? What might be the advantages or potential difficulties in doing so?

Your thoughts

**Evaluation of your IAT scheme**

It is important to annually review your IAT scheme – not just the trainers individually (though that is important), but also how well the scheme as a whole is meeting your needs.

For instance, do course reps rate the training highly? Are there any common themes in their evaluations? Are there enough sessions being offered across your institution? Is the trainer role being promoted in the right ways? Are you happy with the number and calibre of applicants? What is your retention rate of trainers – are there any obstacles to successfully doing the job?

Through mechanisms such as today’s event and other consultancy support, sparqs can help you engage in these evaluative activities. You should also keep in touch with similar or neighbouring institutions who run IAT schemes, to share your experiences and learn from theirs.

What more could sparqs do here?

Your thoughts