



Professional development and recognition opportunities for Learning Development practitioners: international perspectives

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Presentation abstract

Learning Development (LD) practitioners have access to an expanding range of professional recognition and development opportunities (see Briggs, 2023). However, reports from members of the LD community highlight variations in the extent to which CPD engagement is facilitated and supported. Associated research that has sought to objectively establish trends pertaining to the factors that inhibit or support engagement is limited. This 2024-25 ALDinHE funded international research study addressed this gap in knowledge through establishing the factors that impact on LD practitioner access to and engagement with professional development and recognition. To facilitate meaningful comparisons of LD practitioners a taxonomy of LD roles was also developed (as proposed by Briggs, 2025).

In autumn 2024, an online questionnaire (comprising open and closed questions) was sent to Academic Language and Learning Development practitioners. This was administered with support of the International Consortium of Academic Language and Learning Developers (ICALLD) membership and included UK (ALDinHE), Australia (AALL), New Zealand (ATLAANZ), Canada (LSAC), and South Africa. Responses were analysed through a mix of established qualitative and quantitative methods.

In this session we shared our proposed thematic taxonomy of LD roles. We then presented results detailing the personal, institutional, national, or international factors found to support or inhibit the professional development, recognition, and promotion routes

available to Academic Language and LD Practitioners. We invited attendees to discuss and share reflections on our findings.

Keywords: job role taxonomy; professional development; professional recognition; promotion pathway.

Community response

This highly engaging session offers a substantial and much-needed contribution to our collective understanding of the professional identity and recognition of Learning Development (LD) practitioners. By exploring the development, recognition, and promotion routes available across international contexts, Steve Briggs and Ralitsa Kancheva have proposed an Academic Language and Learning Development taxonomy.

As highlighted during the session, inconsistency in how LD roles are defined has long hindered recognition and career progression within the field. The proposed taxonomy presents a structured yet adaptable framework that helps articulate the multifaceted nature of LD practice across different institutional contexts – including higher, further, and tertiary education. As one attendee reflected, ‘It was particularly useful to hear you narrate your own journeys using it, to see it in action. I liked the way it has built in flexibility’. This narrative element provided an engaging, practical lens through which the theoretical model came to life.

Another notable strength of this work is its international scope. By drawing responses from different types of institutions (for example, colleges, polytechnics, and universities) and through collaboration with ICALLD partners across several global regions, the study gains valuable comparative depth. While the presentation focused primarily on quantitative findings, the inclusion of more qualitative insights could have further illuminated how LD roles are experienced, supported – or in some cases, under-recognised – within varying institutional cultures.

Importantly, the presenters used this session to gather feedback on the developing taxonomy. They also highlighted several persistent challenges faced by LD professionals,

including uneven access to CPD, limited promotion pathways, and – in some settings – an absence of recognition frameworks. Offering more recommendations based on good practice observed across institutions would have enriched the session's practical value. As one attendee insightfully asked, 'What suggestions would you give to LDs who don't feel recognised in their organisations?' – a question that underscores the urgency and emotional labour these issues entail. This work not only maps the landscape; it signals a call to action.

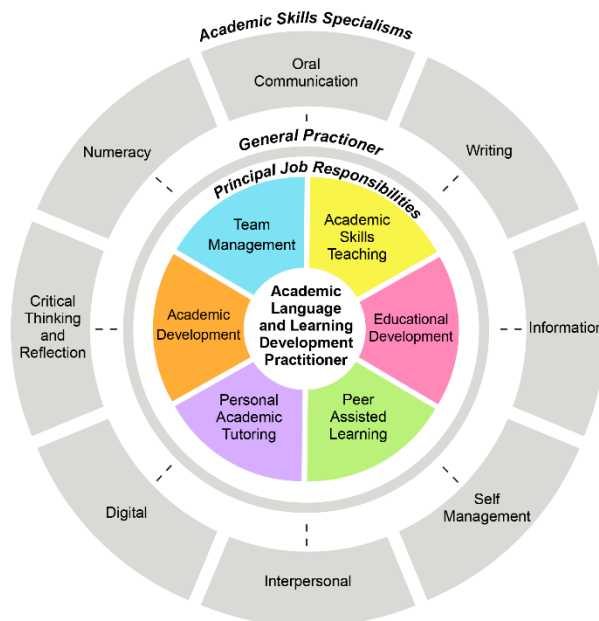
As the corresponding journal article moves toward publication, this project is likely to become a cornerstone reference in the pursuit of recognition, professional growth, and institutional understanding of Learning Development.

Authors' reflection

It was fantastic to receive such a positive response from attendees and the suggestion that our work could become a cornerstone reference in the field of Learning Development is truly humbling.

This session provided an excellent opportunity to gain additional feedback to inform the development of the taxonomy. In line with our previous presentation at the ICALLD Symposium-over-time (Briggs and Kantcheva, 2025) the feedback from attendees reinforced the need to expand the taxonomy to include 'numeracy' as a dedicated academic skills specialism despite this being underreported by participants. The latest version of the taxonomy is shown below (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Academic Language and Learning Development taxonomy.



There was an enjoyable debate around how the taxonomy might be operationalised and used across the Academic Language and Learning Development sector. There was a clear consensus that ICALLD will need to actively promote the ongoing use of the taxonomy. It is anticipated that for the taxonomy to gain real traction there will be a need to consider how this can be incorporated into existing ICALLD member association activities (such as the Association for Learning Development in Higher Education’s recognition scheme).

We look forward to sharing our research findings in a forthcoming article(s) in the *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education*. We will also be producing a booklet for practitioners to support professional reflection using the taxonomy.

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