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**Abstract**

This paper reports aspects of an international study of leadership of teaching in 19 departments with outstanding teaching records in 11 research-intensive universities. Leadership was found to take different forms in different discipline areas, in different organisational cultures, and in response to major problems affecting the department. While most of the heads conceived of leadership of teaching in similarly sophisticated ways, and there were other common themes across contexts, how these conceptions were evident in action to support and develop teaching was highly context-dependent. To illustrate this point, two departments are contrasted in terms of leadership activities found most frequently across all 19 departments. It is clear from this comparison that teaching excellence was achieved in entirely different ways involving widely contrasting leadership behaviour. The paper argues that advice and guidance for heads of department on their leadership of teaching should pay careful attention to the context rather than make assumptions about the general

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applicability of leadership theory or advice. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)