Alp Özerdem draws on his own experience to tell us about:

The jewel in the crown: online Masters in Public Policy and Management

If you have ever thought about running an online postgraduate course, or you think that the teaching environment in the near future will be virtual rather than face-to-face, then this article is for you. The Masters in Public Policy and Management (PPM) programme at the Department of Social Policy and Social Work (SPSW) is an online course that provides professional development for managers working in or with public services, specifically those concerned with the development and delivery of public policy. It focuses on a number of main themes, such as how government policy is made, who influences it, why some issues get onto the policy agenda and not others, as well as the type of social, economic, political and global factors that shape policy making and implementation. The programme's modular approach is uniquely flexible, and being taught exclusively online allows participants to structure their learning around the demands of a career. In its fourth year, this flagship programme is now

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A large print, black and white version of the text in this publication is available: please contact the Forum Administrator/Editor c/o jcb503
home for 160 students, half of whom are from overseas. With an almost 90% retention rate the PPM programme is certainly a success story for the University. Without wanting to be boastful, as one of its module tutors I am delighted to be able to share its ‘online’ experience with you.

There are a number of different stages in the programme (Certificate/ Diploma and Masters), each of them lasting for twelve months. All participants are registered for the Certificate in the first instance, and then progress after successful completion to the next stage. The programme’s main strength is its flexibility, both in the mode of study and in enabling breaks between stages. This is particularly necessary as the majority of participants are full-time employees and they need to balance their study with changing work and personal circumstances. Pasquale Monteleone, one of the course participants, explains why he has chosen the PPM programme: ‘Travelling a lot because of my work, I opted for a distance-learning programme which would allow me geographical flexibility’. While there are compulsory foundation modules, a further aspect of the programme’s flexibility comes with the opportunity for choosing elective modules – an important feature for participants tailoring the course for their professional needs. Furthermore, those taking the Masters route undertake an independent study project, which again can be tailored to a particular field of interest.

The use of asynchronous discussion groups, supported and led by a tutor, is a central part of a curriculum that aims at collaborative and shared learning. A unique and innovative design ensures that it is far removed from the more traditional ‘lonely long-distance learner’ courses of old. The PPM programme also breaks down a number of other myths about online education. First of all, it is not technology-based learning, but technology facilitated. In other words, it is not about sending a few CDs to students and asking them to study the content in their own time, but rather involving the students in online discussions to make the process as interactive as possible. There is no doubt that the technological infrastructure is a must for this online programme, but it is not at its heart. One of the participants explained her experience with PPM: ‘Delivery through the internet as an interactive experience (unlike my previous distance-based courses which were very isolating) was very appealing’.

Second, the PPM programme is an excellent response to those who think that online learning cannot be as effective as that achieved through conventional teaching methods (which is perhaps why so many academics shy away from establishing online courses). On the contrary, the methodology used by the programme actually enhances the quality of learning, a view supported by module tutors like Russell Yates from the Department of Health Sciences. Russell teaches similar modules both online and face-to-face, and he thinks that online learning can be pedagogically more effective as it does not constrain participants’ learning to lectures and seminars. In other words, in online study there is much less compartmentalisation in the learning process. However, PPM students are expected to allocate approx 10–15 hours to study per week, and they need to log on at least four times a week to contribute to the ongoing discussions: if any of you thought that online learning would be an easy option, PPM proves you wrong.

Underlying the programme’s success is its dedicated team of staff. For Ellen Roberts, Programme Director, and Jane Rostron, Teaching and Learning Manager, PPM is an ongoing ‘organic’ project, and with their openness to new ideas they are always striving to improve it, and are very successful in doing so. The experience of Andrea Birch, another course participant, is a testament to the quality of teaching and support which the students on this programme receive: ‘The support of the course team and level of contact with tutors is phenomenal. Having been a full-time student at another university and a distance learner elsewhere, I can honestly say I have more contact, help and engagement with the course and fellow students than I had even as a full-time student’.

So the question is: will online learning be the future of teaching? Jane uses the analogy of microwave ovens to explain that there will always be a need for both conventional and online teaching methodologies. When microwave ovens arrived in our kitchens, Jane says, everybody thought it was the end of the classic oven, but now we have both (well to be honest, I do not have a microwave in my kitchen, so I may be an exception in this trend). Online learning provides a great level of flexibility with time and place, so for those busy professionals who cannot take time off from work, to study in online programmes is ideal; but Ellen and Jane reassure me that our conventional programmes are not in danger of extinction – at least, not just yet. However, it is important that we benefit from the experiences of the PPM programme and start thinking about how its methodology can be applied to online courses in different departments. When Ellen and Jane started their quest they were true pioneers in this field and they have managed to develop a highly successful programme against many organisational and administrative odds. After a four-year experience with PPM which was established as an externally funded initiative, the University is now much better prepared to assist those who would like to develop their own online courses; and importantly, both Ellen and Jane have kindly offered their assistance as advisers to those future bravehearts. So, would you like to create the next jewel in the crown?

For further information, please contact:
Ellen Roberts – ext 1250; email er12
Jane Rostron – ext 1269; email jr30
'It's like asking me why I'm enthusiastic about chocolate.'

Seven holders of Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Awards (Paula Clarke, David Efird, Jonathan Brockbank, Gonçalo Monteiro, Dave Smith, Terry Crawford and Tom Baldwin) met to talk with Forum about what they do. The discussion jumped from timetabling to modularisation to University expansion and then, via the culture of research, finished at chocolate.

I shall start with the upbeat conclusion to the meeting, the chocolate analogy. How, I asked, did they maintain their enthusiasm in the face of institutional constraints, increasing workloads and decreasing budgets? The response of these teachers, all recognised for their excellence, was immediate and united. It seems that grant applications can be turned down and publications not accepted, but such disappointments endemic to the academic life are forgotten in the classroom. 'It is a privilege to have a job where you can spend time with the cream of the future generation', said one. 'It's fun,' said another. 'Being able to inspire others, who in time will be better than you', said a third. 'The excitement of learning more about your discipline in the company of the students.' 'Seeing your students learn and progress.' And finally from David Efird, also one of our Forum Associates: 'It's like asking me why I'm enthusiastic about chocolate. I just am. It's what I do.' Trust a philosopher, and suspiciously like Descartes – 'I teach therefore I am' – but very exciting and inspiring to be around; or at least I found it so.

This unanimous enthusiasm, however, was about the only thing the group had in common. The award holders range greatly in age, vary in experience, opt for different preferred teaching styles, and come from all walks of disciplinary life. Some are self-confessed Luddites for whom Powerpoint is anathema, others admit to feeling a frisson for technological teaching aids. That the individuals who met together came in all pedagogical shapes and sizes, brought home that great teaching derives from great teachers. It is not standardised, it cannot be quantified or necessarily replicated: it's just what good teachers do. Interestingly, Gonçalo Monteiro also pointed out the responsibility that students have to do 'good learning', if I can put it that way. 'It's also up to the students to get what they can out of a course.' Obviously a student who works harder, and is more interested and committed, will enjoy it more than another who is less motivated.

The question of timetabling again saw the group divided. Generally the scientists preferred to do their teaching in blocks, chunks of concentrated time that allow students to master content or perhaps run experiments. To those from more discursive subjects this mattered less. In fact, one described the 'malleability' of his discipline, where student response was as important as the subject matter and time between classes could facilitate a more reflective engagement with the texts under study. By and large, though, it did seem that timetabling worked better for all in those departments that have a greater level of autonomy in the matter. Our centralised timetabling reflects the York practice – laudable in many ways – of prioritising student choice and then building a timetable around the results. Elsewhere the process tends to work the other way round: the timetable is constructed and students make choices from the available options. Given the University's increasing size and the increasing pressure on teaching resources, the group wondered whether, in this instance, the 'York way' could continue to be viable. Shifting the balance rather, which would somewhat limit student choice, might also ease the frustrations that the current system seems to engender.

It was when talking about the different settings of their teaching – lectures, seminar groups, individual tutorials, practical lab work – that a real warning note was sounded. York's 'brand' has until now been excellence in teaching, with a particular focus on teaching in small groups. Students choose to come here because that is what they want. In turn, staff value the opportunity to know their students well, to challenge them to improve, and to support their individual progress. There is no substitute for personalised tutorials or small group contact. However, with the current pressing drive to be more efficient in teaching (and everything else), these Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Award holders feel that this is at risk. Budget constraints are threatening the staff–student ratio, threatening the level of support provided by Postgraduates Who Teach, threatening, in short, the learning experience. 'The University has to face some difficult issues,' said one senior academic. 'To cut resources for teaching any more will have adverse effects on quality.' So, it seems, it's back to the analogy we started with. In teaching, like chocolate, you get what you pay for.
Nigel Lowe visited the Careers Service to find out about:

The e-factor

Robert Partridge is worried, not to the point of sleepless nights, but worried nonetheless. In short, there is public domain information clearly showing that York students do not do as well at securing graduate-level jobs immediately after they leave us as those from our direct competitors, such as Durham or Bristol. ‘To put it bluntly,’ he says, ‘we’re a top ten university with second-rate employment statistics.’ And for the Acting Director of the University’s Careers Service, that’s an issue!

‘To put it bluntly, we’re a top ten university with second-rate employment statistics.’

Robert focuses on this matter primarily because it suggests that we might be missing a trick when it comes to the ‘e-factor’ – employability. Some may dismiss the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) first destination data as a blunt instrument but there are areas where the underperformance of York graduates is genuinely conspicuous, and that means conspicuous to prospective applicants too. This is not a new problem, but it is increasingly difficult to ignore. Examining it more carefully may not a new problem, but it is increasingly difficult to ignore.

Examining it more carefully may not a new problem, but it is increasingly difficult to ignore. For some, this visit might be their first encounter with the Service, although recent data suggest that over forty per cent of the student population will use the Careers Service during their time here. Students visiting the Careers Service will find a considerable resource on the shelves and additional services such as one-to-one careers advice, aptitude/attitude testing, trial psychometric testing, Unijobs, internships, CV advice and mock interviewing. Both Janice and Robert mention separately that this is a collection of material and support to match the best of any similar-sized universities.

A number of departments involve Careers Service staff in activities that are centred specifically on their students. These might take the form of CV writing workshops, careers days, and career planning sessions. In Biology, for example, Careers staff run two sessions on obtaining and preparing for industrial placements. For timetabling reasons it is typically the science departments who work most closely with Careers. The arts and humanities prize their more limited contact time making this more of a challenge, but the Careers Service offers a central events and workshop programme, which helps to address this.

The Careers Service organises a programme of events that includes the usual round of graduate recruiters – normally the big financial institutions and blue chip companies – with balance provided by talks about career areas without such obvious corporate backing, not least postgraduate study. Careers services are often viewed as predominantly undergraduate focused and employers themselves often unconsciously reinforce this view in the events that they hold on campus. Over the past year, the Careers Service has been working to redress the balance. In addition to new postgraduate student web pages, the Service is now offering a drop-in information and advice clinic once a month in Wentworth College and playing an increasing role in the programme of central graduate training courses managed by the Graduate Training Unit.

Graduate students are not currently catered for by the York Award, although a graduate version has been mooted by the GTU in the past. Nonetheless, the York Award remains a celebrated part of York’s institutional make-up, offering undergraduates a voluntary programme of skills development that encourages holistic reflection on personal and academic development at university. Part of its role is to
News

Small events
The Forum has begun to organise a series of occasional lunchtime events. So far this year we have had a Dyslexia Awareness session, run by the Dyslexia Support Tutor, June Rawden; and a seminar given by Dr Prue Holmes (University of Waikato, NZ) on ‘Being Competent: Communication Challenges for Students in Multicultural Classrooms’. We are keen to make use of both home expertise and visiting talent. Do get in contact to suggest future events and do please let us know the experience – whether home-grown or passing through – in your department.

Forum Fellowships
This year Forum Fellowships have been awarded to: Stewart Tavener (Chemistry), Kevin Caraher (Social Policy and Social Work) and Heather Richardson (York Award). Fellowships were offered for teaching and learning projects related to Internationalisation, and the three Fellowship holders have received up to £5000 each.

2007 Teaching Awards
Publicity has got under way for the 2007 round of Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Awards. These recognise excellence in promoting and enhancing student learning. An open meeting is being held on 13 December, which all are welcome to attend. This is a chance to find out more about the application process, and to meet current award holders. For more information look at the FELT website: <http://www.york.ac.uk/felt/fellowships/vca wards_how_to_apply.htm>.

2006 National Teaching Fellowship Scheme
Our two NTFS winners from this year, Drs Mary Luckhurst (English) and Peter Thompson (Psychology) received their award in September at a gala dinner in London. The award winners were chosen from 242 nominations from HE institutions across England and Northern Ireland. Mary and Peter both receive £10 000 to support their personal, professional and pedagogic development.

New look website
The FELT website has been redesigned. We hope that it now looks better, and is easier to use. While this is an ongoing project, do check out developments so far. Feedback is most welcome, and can be sent to the Forum Administrator/Editor.

broaden student horizons and explore ways in which they can transfer skills and knowledge into the workplace.

Over the past few years, the Careers Service has built up an extensive suite of schemes to help students acquire all-important work experience. These opportunities supplement term-time jobs, vacation placements and the super-competitive internships that add invaluable experience to a student’s CV. The schemes include a volunteering bureau, the Shell-backed STEP (Shell Technology Enterprise Programme) and BUSY (Businesses Using Students in York). STEP is a national scheme based on eight-week projects run with local SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) with York supplying national finalists in two of the last four years. BUSY projects work similarly, connecting local firms with student expertise for one-off output-based contracts, such as developing a website for firms without in-house resources.

Andrew Ferguson provides advice to students who wish to set up in business for themselves as well as managing a pump-priming fund for students with enterprising ideas of a more public-spirited nature. He points to the powerful combination of Careers Service, White Rose CETLE and the University’s Enterprise and Innovation Office (of which he is a member), when it comes to developing schemes that allow students to hone their skills whilst also making valuable contributions to the wider community.

Andrew notes that the National Student Survey data suggest that York students are generally more satisfied with being at York than are they with their individual programmes of study. So, whilst Robert is quick to identify good teaching and learning as the principal means of enhancing student employability, Andrew feels that the University needs to continue to pay attention to the ‘whole package’ and the way in which it equips students to contribute to society. Whatever precise shape and form the Careers Service assumes in future, this seems certain to remain a key philosophy and one that ought to improve those employability statistics too!

For further information, please contact: Andrew Ferguson, Business, Community and Enterprise – ext 3329; email arf4
Robert Partridge, Acting Director, Careers Service – ext 2492; email rjp10
Janice Simpson, Careers Advisor – ext 2681; email js39
Significant gains have been made in the HE sector by establishing proper mechanisms to improve the structure and content of academic programmes and assure their quality (QA). However, this has come at a price, and there is debate about whether the level of scrutiny and regulation has been necessary or cost-effective. It has been recognised that regulation of universities (not only in the areas of teaching and learning) has been too intrusive and a lighter touch is being encouraged – a move away from a culture of compliance to one of accountability.

At York we are shifting the focus away from QA, with its perceived emphasis on reporting and inspection, to support a more exciting and academically resonant culture of quality enhancement, with a focus on developing and sharing good practice.

Agreeing to a clear framework will free us all

In order to do this however, we need a more streamlined, centrally supported and consistent approach to the development, structure and assessment of programmes. It may sound odd in an article proclaiming the virtues of a 'hands off' approach to stress the need for regulation, but it seems obvious that one actually follows the other. With a clear set of regulations that people agree to follow, we don't need to look so closely at what everyone is doing; we can reduce and centralise some of the administrative work that takes up so much time in academic departments; and we can support staff in concentrating on teaching and learning activities.

When implemented, the recommendations from the modularisation review consultation, the more recent proposals for a University-wide system of degree classification, and the simplified rules around programme modifications, will help to provide a clear and consistent framework that, however, has enough flexibility to ensure disciplinary needs are not overly constrained.

Reducing the amount of reporting and inspection

One example is the simplification of the Annual Programme Review report. The APR process is now expected to be more reflective. Instead of departments spending hours assembling detailed documentation on programmes, all we want is a two-page report on key successful outcomes, major changes and challenges – a simple working document that can also be used within the department. A second change is the withdrawal of the regular departmental visits by UTC. These have become increasingly viewed as inspections and so we propose to remove them and instead respond to requests for visits.

Moving to quality enhancement

We want to encourage people to think about and enhance the student learning experience. We have not gone down the route of establishing a centralised learning and teaching centre, preferring instead to support activities in departments. Most of the
criteria further to ensure that
teaching excellence is given parity
of esteem and that staff realise
this.

strengthening the role and
influence of the Forum for the
Enhancement of Learning and
Teaching

promoting the sharing of good
practice and innovation within
the university by encouraging
departments (for example, those
rated very highly in the NSS) and

creative work goes on there and we
want to use our limited resources to
assist this. This will include:

• helping departments to draw upon
good practice in other institutions
and relevant research. Ann Firth
(see Box), for example, is
developing learning and teaching
resources for staff and can assist
departments in finding solutions
to specific learning and teaching
issues

• investment in the next set of
departmental VLE pilots

• recognising and rewarding
excellent teaching through the
Vice-Chancellor’s Teaching
Awards, support for national
awards (including the National
Teaching Fellowship Scheme),
and revising the promotions

individuals (for example, those
who have won awards for
teaching) to share their expertise

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I hope by these and other means that
we will be able to maintain and grow
further the University of York’s
reputation for excellence in teaching
and learning.

York developments supported by HEFCE Teaching Quality
Enhancement Funds (TQEF)

Learning and Teaching Development Officer

In keeping with the focus on enhancement, in 2006 the
University created the post of Learning and Teaching
Development Officer, currently held by Dr Ann Firth.
The aim of the post is to provide departments with an
additional teaching and learning resource and a gateway
to examples of good practice at York and other
universities. A key part of this is the creation of an
information resource on student learning. The resource
will provide material about teaching and learning in areas
of current concern at York, such as internationalisation,
academic skills, assessment and feedback. The
information will be accessible from the FELT website.
Departments looking for examples of good practice or
literature about particular areas of teaching and learning
are invited to contact Ann.

Ann is also available to discuss teaching projects with
departmental staff, identify possible sources of funding
and assist with dissemination of the results of funded
projects. Assistance can be provided with applications for
TIDC funding, Forum Fellowships and small grants from
HEA Subject Centres. Support is also available in the
form of reviews of the relevant student learning research
and literature and teaching rationales for larger grant
applications, such as National Teaching Fellowship
projects. Similar support is available for staff wishing to
apply for Vice Chancellor’s Teaching Awards and the
National Teaching Fellowship Scheme run by the Higher
Education Academy.

Ann can be contacted by e-mail at af516@york.ac.uk or
by phone on extension 4871.

Rapid Response fund

The Rapid Response fund will be used to support small-
scale departmental projects with a direct and immediate
impact on the quality of learning and teaching. Requests
to the fund will require minimal paperwork and the
turnaround time will be short.

Academic Skills Project: supporting the integration of
academic skills teaching into the curriculum.

The project will work with departments to develop
strategies and materials to teach academic skills within
the context of particular disciplines.

Assessment and Feedback Project: developing our
assessment strategies and improving feedback to students.

The project will work with staff and students to develop
more effective assessment strategies, improve feedback to
students, and improve students’ understanding and use of
feedback.

Both projects will also contribute to developing a more
consistent approach to preventing academic misconduct.
Turning a new page: finding the hidden histories . . .

Forum went to the Borthwick to find out more about the Equality in the Archives Web Project.

Follow a series of links from the Borthwick’s home page, and you’ll arrive at some unexpected places: for example, a sixteenth-century church court in which Edward Hewitson was accused of the ‘sodometrical sin’; or the North Yorkshire Lunatic Asylum of 1893 reading Charlotte Anderson’s case notes – ‘Cries and moans, does not occupy herself’. These destinations are among those accessed by the Equality in the Archives project, a web-based resource designed both to help us find new material, and to ask new questions. ‘We were aware,’ says Philippa Hoskin (Borthwick archivist and the project’s researcher), ‘that there were problems in getting people to use certain sorts of collections. People can also experience difficulty in asking for particular types of information.’ It was in response to this that the project was born.

The web pages provide guidance about the type and range of information that can be found in the Borthwick, and examples of how the collections can be used to trace the history of individuals, organisations and ideas in the areas of Women’s History, Race History, Disability History and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History. Generally the chosen examples tell stories, such as those of Edward Hewitson and Charlotte Anderson above; or that of Charles Williamson, a mulatto born in nineteenth-century Bengal who eventually became the curate of Bishop Burton. Without careful searching – and a bit of good luck – all too often it is stories like theirs that remain hidden.

The Borthwick staff want the site to be useful for students at all levels, and also for their teachers. This applies equally to staff and students at York and those from elsewhere, including in schools. But, Philippa is quick to point out, the pages are an introduction only, a guide to the sorts of things that can be found, and the sorts of stories they can tell. ‘We want people to come down to see the real documents, and to find out more.’

For although the electronic medium has many advantages – transcriptions and translations, thumbnail images that can open into full-size reproductions, links to other sources – there is no substitute for handling the real thing. Records have size and weight, their appearance relative to other documents can tell us things, as can the handwriting, the state of preservation and the chronology of the entry. So if you are planning to use the Borthwick’s records in teaching, don’t forget that their new location through the RBL Humanities wing offers two classroom spaces that can be booked, so the students can see, handle and assess the texts for themselves.

However, the documents from the marginalised and hidden past can make for difficult reading. For example, the cases of domestic violence that came before the church courts, even though several hundred years old, still resonate with pain and distress. Similarly unsettling can be the psychiatric records of The Retreat, the papers relating to slavery, and the many, many textual traces of poverty and ill health. Ironically, this dark side may lead to the Archive’s wider use. It is easy to see the significance of such material for History and History of Art, but Philippa would like to see its relevance spread wider. Researchers, teachers and students in many of the social sciences, for example, may benefit from the diachronic view that such documents allow, adding to their understanding of contemporary practices. Domestic violence, physical and mental illness, social inequity, and sexual politics have a long history.

To their delight, the Borthwick staff have had very positive feedback on the project. Academics from within, and outside, the University have been in contact to say how useful they have found the resource in their teaching. It has found its way into school classrooms; and Philippa reports that having been shown the Archive’s potential, more of our own students are going into the Borthwick and asking for similar material. Importantly, the project has also enabled the Archive to make national connections, as different collections and organisations link through to the pages.

The Borthwick has plans to add to the site, particularly expanding the Race History area in time for the 2007 anniversary of the abolition of slavery. Staff are also keen, however, to add new stories and cases to the existing pages, and hope that Archive users will share any exciting finds they unearth – something they would particularly like to see students doing. So if you haven’t already, click on <http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/bhhr/guidelines/races/index.htm>, and see where you end up. After all, as Philippa says, ‘A record’s not really worth anything if it’s never going to be looked at.’

Further information

For more information on anything in this article contact Dr Philippa Hoskin – ext 1162; email ph19. The Borthwick’s two teaching rooms can be booked through the Office Manager Sara Slimn – ext 1160; email sls6. Useful links include:

- The Women’s Library
  <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/rhwomenslibrary/>
- LGBT History Month (Lesbian, Gay Bisexual Trans)
  <http://www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk/>
- The National Archives (formerly The Public Record Office)
  <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>
- Archives Hub - a national gateway to descriptions of archives and manuscripts in UK Universities and Colleges
  <http://www.archiveshub.ac.uk>

The Equality in the Archives Web Project was funded by the University of York’s Equality and Diversity in the Curriculum Project.
David Efird finds that it's not just age that makes for maturity.

When I grow up I want to be a Club-of-PEP kind of person. In many ways I still feel like a student myself – my life revolves around the academic calendar, I live in Vanbrugh College (being the Dean), and many of my friends are students. So a lot of the time I don’t feel like I’ve grown up and entered the big world outside of university. But when I do, if I ever do, I want to be as motivated, as enterprising and as well prepared as the Club of PEP students.

The Club of PEP is a part of the School of Politics, Economics and Philosophy. It is not a student society that comes under the umbrella of the Students Union. Instead it sits squarely within the School and provides a vital meeting point for its students.

Because the School runs across three academic departments, it is important that there is an organisation that brings the students together and gives them the same kind of collegial experience that students of a single academic department have. The Club of PEP fulfils just this function. Founded in 2004 by Christian Westerling Wigstrom – a then first-year student – the Club represents PEP students and provides a place where they can meet one another and develop their academic and social interests.

The Club is a very active and visible presence in the PEP School. It publishes a periodical, Vox, which contains articles by academics and guest writers on subjects in the three disciplines, and is distributed to a number of British universities with the aim of becoming a national publication. It also holds regular social events, ranging from functions to welcome new students to major balls attended by more than 300 students and academics. In addition, the Club invites guest speakers from the three fields, politics, economics and philosophy, to speak on topics relevant to the School. Speakers are also invited to give PEP students a picture of what life after graduation might be like, including a glimpse of the kind of jobs that PEP students typically take. In this way, the Club not only enhances the experience of PEP students as they make their way through their degree but also prepares them for life afterwards.

The Club is developing a variety of links with outside bodies that benefit the School in the first instance, and also the University more generally. For example, the Club is affiliated with Lund University in Sweden and they regularly have opportunities to network with each other through international exchanges, balls and other, more informal gatherings. The Club has also recently raised £1000 for the Stop AIDS campaign (with assistance from Students Stop AIDS York) and supported a discussion on AIDS in society.

Finally, the Club has been working hard to raise the profile of the University with the business community, developing internship opportunities and facilitating the introduction of students to future employers. In particular, the Club puts on two careers fairs. The first, a Finance Fair, is a joint venture with the Careers Service. The second, Yorkworks, is organised entirely by the Club, and targets organisations such as NGOs, law firms and Teach First. Both events are held in the third week of the autumn term and bring around thirty major graduate employers on to campus. The Club is also involved in developing alumni connections which current students can take advantage of when thinking about future employment.

Though the School of PEP is very supportive, the Club could always use more help. Because it is not affiliated with the Students Union it can be difficult to raise funds, and for a student organisation that is working to improve both the experience of PEP students and the profile of the University, it seems a shame that it not be given whatever resources it needs to do this.

One of the most important national trends in HE is the focus on the development of students’ transferable skills. By looking at what the founders and organizers of the Club of PEP have done and are doing, we can see this in action. These students have developed an effective organization that benefits both students and the wider university. By linking nationally, and internationally, with employers and academics, the Club enhances the students’ experience and widens their vision for what comes after graduation. Such an accomplishment should be recognized and celebrated. Not only are the PEP Club students going to leave university with a solid academic education, they are going to have the kinds of skills that an employer would find attractive.

I have never met a more motivated, enterprising and committed group of students before – I wish I had been amongst their number when I was at university. If I had, I might be more grown up by now . . .

For further information, please contact:
Club of PEP President
Rachel Pigott / Rosanne Whalley – email president@clubofpep.org
Philip Warwick reviews:


In 2004/05 there were 318,395 international students in Higher Education (HE) in the UK. This represented around 14 per cent of the total student population (UKCOSA). It is widely accepted that universities and university staff in the UK, if they have not already done so, will have to adapt their approach to teaching and learning to take account of the changes in the background and prior learning experience of students attending their classes. Published last year, Carroll and Ryan’s book offers all staff working in HE a ‘how to do it textbook’, containing ideas, suggestions and examples of how to make these adaptations.

The first section of the book concentrates on cross-cultural issues, examining the cultural beliefs of lecturers, home students and international students, and identifying ways that this ‘cultural capital’ is transforming HE in the UK. Part 2 looks at practical ways in which lecturers can adapt what they do to reflect the increasingly diverse student population, including sections on academic writing skills, group work and postgraduate supervision. The final section looks at programme and institution level actions.

Jude Carroll may be familiar to some for her work at Oxford Brooks on plagiarism, which has featured in the academic press and newspapers, and on TV and radio. As befitting a book on an international theme, other contributors are drawn from Asia, North America and Australia. The co-editor Janet Ryan, and seven other contributors work at Australian universities. Australia has been recruiting large numbers of South East Asian students since the early 1980s. Currently, 24 per cent of students in Australian HE come from abroad and many staff are recruited from overseas.

Websites, accommodation arrangements and even administrative systems are geared up for international students and staff in a way that is the exception rather than the rule in the UK. So it is highly appropriate that UK academics should look down under for ideas about teaching in an international context.

Several themes run through the book. First, the editors hold the view that improving the learning experience for international students is to the benefit of all students. ‘By adopting approaches that are culturally inclusive to international students we will be more generally inclusive’ (p. 6). For example, they suggest that lecturers should be much more explicit about what they expect – in lectures, in assessments and in seminars. Many home-based students quickly adapt to the culture of their university and department through implicit messages and signals, verbal cues in class, some limited feedback in assessment, and handed-down received wisdom. However, if your first language is not English and your prior learning experiences have been in an entirely different culture this is much more difficult.

The second theme is a rejection of the deficit view of international students. Many UK academics mainly think of them as a ‘problem’. Carroll and Ryan reject this point of view and argue that to improve the teaching and learning experience for all students, including those from overseas, cultural stereotypes and assumptions about students’ prior experiences need to be disregarded. ‘The “deficit” view of international students is not effective pedagogically because it assumes not only that some cultures are in “deficit”, but that cultural baggage is carried only by students and not teachers’ (p. 23).

The third theme links to the inclusive view of culture, arguing that lecturers should use the experience and knowledge that international students have to create new learning contexts and opportunities that add value for all groups. Home students, they argue, will benefit from their international peers, as much as the other way round.

Contained in the book are a range of ideas and interventions that have worked for colleagues in a variety of settings. For example Glaucio De Vita addresses the difficult issue of multi-cultural group work (Chapter 8). Previously De Vita has explored this in relation to the assessment marks of home students (De Vita 2002), and has given organisational guidance for those working in Business, Management and Accountancy (De Vita 2001). His chapter in Carroll and Ryan’s book is more generic in approach and provides a practical guide to setting up group work and seminar tasks that may be useful in a variety of disciplines. By being clear about the task and the rationale, by carefully selecting group membership (and explaining the reasons for this), by setting out ground rules for group working and by choosing appropriate tasks, De Vita argues that group work is ideally suited to creating opportunities for multi-cultural learning.

In Chapter 4, Carroll argues that teachers can help students by reflecting on their own assumptions and, as noted above, by being more explicit in their instructions, expectations and the explanations of academic conventions. Home students will often pick up on hints and suggestions much more quickly and easily than international students; this does not mean they have better knowledge or academic ability. Moreover, Carroll argues that being more explicit will not only make life easier for those whose first language is not English, it will also benefit the majority of students. In Chapter 6, McLean and Ranson offer guidance on cross-cultural communication, including: getting to the point, tone of voice, pauses and turn taking, silence and showing agreement.

It is hoped that as a result of reading Teaching International Students, lecturers will develop ideas about valuing and using cultural diversity, teaching and assessment strategies appropriate for international students and culturally diverse cohorts, and the supervision of international postgraduates. However, this book is not just aimed at those teaching in HE. Departments and universities can also be more attuned to the needs of international students. For those looking from the institutional angle, Carroll and Ryan offer chapters on internationalising the curriculum, internationalising the research agenda, international collaboration and the student experience – all of which may make interesting reading for programme heads and managers.

This book is a useful guide to those institutions that decide to follow the international path, allowing readers in the UK to learn from practice overseas. Internationalising the learning experience for students at our universities is a long-term response to
the growth in applications from abroad. It is also an acknowledgement that many of our home-based students will leave HE to work in the global economy, and will be expected to take their place in multi-cultural teams working across international boundaries. Carroll and Ryan are clear that universities do a service to neither international students nor the traditional 18 to 21 year old home recruits, if they do not address this agenda.

Further information and references

Two copies of Teaching International Students are now held by the JBM library. Those short on time but keen to read something more in this area could also try looking at earlier work by the editors. Ryan (2000) produced a 90-page guide to teaching international students, and Carroll (2002) wrote a downloadable briefing paper for the Oxford Brookes series, which may be a good starting point for those who are completely new to the subject.


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Internationalisation

This year the Forum has chosen Internationalisation as a theme.

This is, of course, extremely topical. An increasing number of HE students – and an increasing amount of HE revenue – comes from overseas enrolments. In recent years York has seen a substantial rise in EU and overseas students. In the three years from 2002/03 to 2005/06, numbers increased by over 700; in particular, enrolments of Chinese students doubled to 612.

University policy on Internationalisation can be broadly presented under three headings. First, York seeks to develop the international campus community by increasing and diversifying the numbers of international students. Second, the University aims to develop high-quality teaching and research collaboration with institutions overseas. Third, the University wants to expand the ways in which its students can have some kind of ‘international’ learning experience. This might, for example, be achieved through broadening the reach of the curriculum, or by offering greater opportunity for students on York programmes to study abroad.

At the Forum, we are keen to explore what Internationalisation might mean for teaching and learning. This will be further developed in the next issue of the Forum magazine, and more fully at the 2007 Learning and Teaching conference (16 May). In the meantime, we are pleased to start the discussion with the review opposite by Philip Warwick.
Diversity in the workplace

Do you have up-to-date knowledge of your rights and responsibilities in relation to equality? Do you have a good grasp of the implications of all six equality strands?

If you are doubtful, or you have not had recent in-depth equality training, the new online learning module ‘Diversity in the Workplace’ will help to ensure that you have a current knowledge of equal opportunities legislation.

The module will be available to all staff from January 2007. On average it takes about an hour to complete, and includes a number of short quizzes to help assess knowledge and understanding. It has been customised by the EO Office and the POD to ensure that staff training on equality is consistent across the University and reflects the institution’s approach and values. It gives practical advice and links to University policies as well as external resources and will be regularly updated with changes to legislation.

Staff will be able to use it as an online resource for equality and diversity issues as they can return to it as many times as they wish. This should be of particular value to staff as the EO Office has a new website which links with the module, and which has been designed to be an additional resource on equality issues. Look out for the publicity campaign ‘University of York. We All Make it Unique’ which the Office is running this year.

Go to <http://york.marshallacmtraining.co.uk/> to log in.

The module will complement other training opportunities on equality and diversity available through the POD – see <http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/pod/section.cfm?section_id=37> for details.