Research-Teaching Linkages and Graduate Attributes in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
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Opening discussion:

..bodies of knowledge and pedagogic practices are inextricably linked. Subjects are produced in the arguments and dialogues of the corridor and classroom, in the encounters between initiates and experts, as much as in the monograph or learned journal. In turn, professional debates, themselves forms of rhetoric, embed and promote styles of pedagogy even when they least appear to do so.'

Ben Knights (2005, 33-34)
Director of English Subject Network of Higher Education Academy

"In responding to the question: ‘What is research?’, English students were as likely to comment from a personal perspective (ie to describe their own engagement in research) as to describe research as an activity in which others engaged. They were also aware of research as a shared activity: ‘I feel, even though I am a first semester student…that I am working alongside people…there is a collegial aspect you didn’t expect to find. As though we are all discovering something and that they [lecturers] are just doing it at a different level.”

English Literature students at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand (Robertson & Blackler, 2006, 225)

“There is no doubt at all that during that initial three or four year period [in teaching] …when I wasn’t doing research, I didn’t get the experience of how doing research in the area can lift your ability to teach in that area…when I did the research on Mark Twain, the reading…and the research I did into language and narrative structure gave me a … deeper grasp on the topic that meant that when I was in seminars with the students I could draw them out in discussions because I had more to draw on, in order to build on what they were saying – so they could build on that.”

Lecturer in American Literature at a post-1992 university in England (Henkel, 2004, 22)

Discussion question:
Are these perspectives on research processes enough to engender a range of attributes or do we need more formal implementation of opportunities?
1. Project overview:

This project specifically examined the experience of academic staff within subject areas designated as either Arts and Humanities or Social Sciences. Perceptions of staff within these disciplinary areas were explored through the development of practice case studies. These case studies were constructed following semi-structured interviews with 15 academics at institutions across Scotland by a Research Assistant and, also, on one occasion through the voluntary submission of a solicited example of practice in which the staff member filled in a template. (Disciplines covered Sociology, History, Literature, Theology, Psychology, Public Policy, Classics, Education)

1.1 The project’s evidence base:

- Might not be considered a representative sample but our interviews focused on practitioners at all departmental levels.
- Those we interviewed accepted that the idea of engaging with graduate attributes through understandings of research-teaching linkages was not just possible but desirable.
- We added to our sample by utilizing abstracted quotes from published material directly associated with academics in the fields in question. These quotes tended to reinforce what we heard in interviews and allowed us to emphasize the possible importance of the more intangible notion of ‘disciplinary cultures’.
- We used our evidence for the exploratory purpose of developing additional hypotheses rather than holding to any sense that we could rigorously confirm or challenge positions already proposed in the existing literature.
- We had difficulties recruiting students to discuss the topic, which has resulted in this project reproducing perceptions and projections of academic staff without the necessary complementarity of those of the students. The project team aims to source funds to rectify this imbalance.

1.2 Key Findings 1: Staff Perceptions:

- Staff were not afraid of implementing research-type activities within their courses;
- Staff believed in the reciprocal nature of the relationship between staff and students – staff research informed and engaged students but students also informed research;
- Staff differed on their views about when to introduce ‘research-teaching linkages’ opportunities. There was a division between:
  - those who suggested that the process of progression meant that core skills were a better ‘fit’ than research-teaching linkages in levels 1 & 2, with Honours as the focus and,
  - those who saw it potentially running throughout the programme from level 1.
- Staff were not ideologically opposed to the notions of generic skills or graduate attributes but tended to struggle in the face of quality assurance language or phrases perceived as ‘jargonistic’;
2. Discussion

Suggest three graduate attributes that academics can facilitate the development of within the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences:

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How many of these attributes would you associate with research-teaching linkages and why?

3. Example case study: Psychology

Elaine Duncan, Psychology, level 1 (Glasgow Caledonian University)

This interview focused on Elaine’s teaching of the Introductory Skills for Psychologists module at Glasgow Caledonian University. This lecturer has taken the unusual step of abolishing lectures altogether and replacing them with research based 3 hour workshops, which start by guiding students through the initial steps of research in terms of literature searches and library skills. Students worked in groups and were given tasks with a series of mini deadlines. There was a strong emphasis on helping students to interact with the most recent research and they were also encouraged towards the end of the module to start posing their own research questions. Students are also given advice on the research process by 3rd and 4th year students during the workshops.

Attributes through a process of exposure to:
- research scaffolding
- group work
- emphasis on up-to-date knowledge
- posing own research questions
### 4. Attributes our interviewees focused on:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provisionality of knowledge (and associated ability to manage having beliefs challenged / coping with unexpected results / failure to find an answer)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formulating research-type questions</td>
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<td>Development of ideas in a <em>dialogue</em></td>
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<td>Integrating rather than compartmentalizing knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informed by current debates in the discipline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyzing and interpreting raw data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enabling students to reflect on actual practice by applying theories / ideological understandings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to orally present information / arguments / cases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being able to begin from a position of not knowing answers but being able to engage in process of discovering answers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working collaboratively in teams</td>
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### 5. Discussion

**What are the associations / correlations between these attributes and those identified by QAA?**

**What are the associations / correlations between these attributes and those identified within the employability policies of your institutions?**
Session: After Lunch

5. Discussion

Having identified attributes, suggest three ways that Departments, Schools and Faculties can enhance programmes to create formal / explicit opportunities to engage the students in research activities (processes and products) most likely to engender such attributes?

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6. Case Study: Discipline in the National Context: History

The discipline of history in a national context has a vibrant and robust research culture. This is matched both within and outwith the University environment. Public history, academic history and the professional bodies of history such as the Institute of Historical Research, the Royal Society of Historians and the Historical Association are all currently engaging with the question of graduate attributes (in one form or another). In February this year the second annual event at the Institute of Historical Research saw academics historians from across the UK come together to debate the future of the history curriculum. One strand of this day specifically explored the role of research in the future of the curriculum. It was clear from the debate that undergraduate programmes are not uniformly focused on traditional ‘lectures and seminars’ methods of programme design, but rather have been enhanced to recognize research processes and practices as useful informers of pedagogical approaches. Thus exemplars included:

- Embedded exposure to research processes from level 1 onwards. A Scottish example of this is the level 1 Scottish History option:
Karin Bowie, Level 1 University of Glasgow
Karin’s teaching of a level 1 Scottish History course involves engaging the students in a research-type process. This process comprises of an overarching stress on the existence of multiple arguments within history (rather than dependence on a text book); an assignment in which students are required to do initial identification of possible essay questions within a theme themselves (without a focused reading list to direct them), attend a tutorial where they refine the question in dialogue with the tutor (who also helps identify appropriate references and sources) and then go onto answer the question independently.

Of note: Student evaluations expressed discomfort at this process and Karin emphasized the importance of the opportunity to attend a dialogue-based tutorial. Enhancements designed around a research process model might not be popular as they require more engagement by the students.

Attribute development here through exposure to:
- Confidence to act: uncertainty around format of question and resources to both construct and answer the question, followed by relief, less self-doubt in the face of unfamiliar tasks in the future?
- Construction of knowledge and answers via dialogue;
- Independent critical analysis in writing (appropriate to level 1);

- Add on ‘doing’ History courses;
- Individual essays supported by tutorials;
- Introduction of ideas of research article-construction through group work activities in which students would produce a ‘group article’ as an outcome;
- Engagement with public history through placements that then feed back into students’ study. A Scottish example of this can be found at University of Glasgow:

Stephen Marritt, Pilot project leader, Level 3, University of Glasgow
As well as teaching the staples of medieval history (ie honours courses drawn from his own research area and a special subject that focuses on primary source analysis) Stephen has also implemented a project that provides opportunities to undertake a piece of local history research as their dissertation’. What is unusual in this project, however, is not the focus on local history (rather than broader national / international historical themes) but that Stephen has established links with a local history publisher who also acts as a mentor for those students undertaking the projects, with the understanding that the best outcomes will be published as local histories.

This project is of particular interest as it links the research-teaching nexus to knowledge transfer, PDP, and work-related learning (through the SFC funded project: Aiming University Learning @ Work).
The subject centre also has uploaded case studies of research-teaching linkages across the UK and abroad relating to history.

It is clear from this that for some disciplines the professional bodies and subject networks can, if so enabled, influence academic staff approaches. *A longer term question is, how can links be made more effectively between disciplinary professional bodies and academic departments?*

### 7. Case Studies: Discipline within the Local context

#### Sociology: 
**Angus Bancroft, Sociology, (University of Edinburgh)**

This interview looked at Angus’s level 1 and Honours level teaching. He noted that in level 1 that students were exposed to raw data (such as interview transcripts) and encouraged to analyse the evidence rather than being given the final products as a *fait accompli*. He also commented on the fact that in his honours class discussions and tasks undertaken by the class have explicitly contributed to research that he has published. Angus noted that his redesign of his teaching methods came from a realization of a pedagogical problem rather than an explicit desire to raise awareness of research-teaching linkages. He also recognized that, though not deliberate, the redesign was more aligned with the graduate attributes emphasized within employability approaches.

**What attributes would you associate with these approaches?**

#### Theology

**Eric Stoddard, Practical Theology for honours students (St. Andrew’s University)**

This interview focused on Eric’s teaching of two honours modules in Practical Theology: (i) Citizenship and (ii) Theology, Spirituality and Pastoral Care. The focus in the former was on a research model of personal reflection and exploration of student’s own experiences of being a citizen within the context of practical theology through seminar discussions. In contrast to traditional models in which the starting premise is theory with the research component following on, the format in this course followed a model where the starting premise was their personal experience and the experiences of others. The emphasis on personal reflection was particularly prevalent in the Theology, Spirituality and Pastoral Care module, with students recounting their own experiences of being carers or cared for in order to explore their own theological reflection. The method is based upon a theological cycle of reflection, with the learning outcomes mapped onto exact points in the cycle.
8. Discussion:

**Note three potential obstacles to enhancing your programmes/courses in terms of research-teaching linkages: enhancing graduate attributes.**

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9. Key Findings 2: Practical Issues:

1. *Continuity* over progressive years for most of the courses examined is problematic and results in sporadic instances of good practice.

2. *Implementation* problems included - confusion among students in some cases about course objectives or reading lists, minor technical problems and, in one case, difficulties with individual staff members being unwilling or unable to adhere to the model of practice.

3. *Evaluations* have been very general, capturing perceptions more than any rigorous measurement of impact on attributes. Feeling among staff differed from those who thought the approaches had been well received and those who were less certain.

4. *Impact of learning* In two cases there were increases in exam scores since the introduction of the interventions (Mary Welsh, SU Education 1; Jim Baxter, SU Psychology 1).

5. *Cost/benefit ratio* In terms of staff time, some modules required tutors to attend the lectures (Aileen Kennedy, SU Education 4) while others had more preparation for activities such as customised essays (Karen Bowie, GU Scottish History 1). However in some cases initiatives have reduced staff time (Mary Welsh, SU Psychology 1)

Benefits for students included social aspects in some cases when students were involved in group work (Aileen Kennedy, SU Education 4) as well as giving them confidence in being able to engage with material at a more independent level and a greater understanding of the research process (Mary Welsh, SU Education 1). In some cases, there is even the possibility of students having their name included in a published paper based on the research project (Steve Langton, Stirling Psychology).
Benefits for staff have included making them think more explicitly about their expectations of the students and about how to convey them as well as to keep them informed of current debates within their own and other staff members’ research fields (Aileen Kennedy, SU Education 4).

10. Tentative recommendations:

5.1 Institutional:
- Explicitly link and, where possible, integrate the variety of learning and teaching imperatives to help staff manage ‘imperative fatigue’;
- Persuade the VP (or equivalent) for Research that the learning and teaching Strategy is of equal importance to the research strategy 😃

Institutional and Disciplinary Bodies:
- Reward and recognize ‘champions’ at the same time as offering Heads of Department development aimed at supporting transfer of capabilities from champion to other staff members (sustainability).

Institutional level academic staff development:
- Encourage debate between academics from different disciplines; (useful for both practice transfer and ethics debate)

5.2 Departmental
- Use programme review to identify attributes and discuss enhancement of opportunities for students to engage with them at the same time as recognizing progression through the programme. Otherwise experiences can be lost across the levels of study.
- Recognize the need to redesign assessment processes in the light of changes to programme/course design.
- Utilize postgraduates with respect to their research (not just as base level teaching assistants)
- Encourage debate about the value of the research environment and activities occurring within the department between staff and students from level 1.
- Evaluation processes are a potential vehicle for engaging with students in the discussion about awareness of and engagement with research processes and practice (currently under used.)
- Map programme attributes to the variety of learning and teaching activities to which students are exposed.

Departmental and Disciplinary Bodies:
- Recognize the real and perceived benefits of research-teaching linkages (raising staff confidence in their activities as having value outside of the academic world) in an undergraduate environment that also needs to grapple with notions of employability;

5.3 Individuals
- Formally recognize student input to your research (through footnotes, acknowledgements, or where appropriate as a named author) and let them know you’ve done this!
- Subject networks through the HEA offer some useful case studies (but these don’t always represent the range of things going on in the discipline in the UK).
- Students need reassurance and fast feed back when faced with unfamiliar activities (especially ones that have a bearing on the grades a student might receive.)

Dr Vicky Gunn, Dr Steve Draper, Ms Mel McKendrick, March 2008
Other useful resources:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Our Work-in-progress Project Website:</th>
<th><a href="http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/qee/vg/pmwiki.php/Rtl/Rtl">http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/qee/vg/pmwiki.php/Rtl/Rtl</a></th>
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References of relevance to this workshop:


Examples of Relevant Case studies in articles: (These will be added to the above work-in-progress website on regular intervals.)

Keith Roberts, Professor of Sociology, Hanover College, Indiana, USA This is an empirical study in which the sociology academic, Keith Roberts, compared perceptions of student engagement with observations made by a team of observers in his classroom. I think it is an incredibly useful example of how all of the noted headings in the literature on the research-teaching nexus actually describe composite aspects of an overall approach to learning that one might consider 'scholarly':