*Update - link added to Pedagogic Research item*

In this issue:

- Getting Started in Pedagogic Research
- Closing the Loop
- Teaching and Learning Conference 2014
- Exploring themes to improve quality for students
- HESA figures encouraging, but work to be done, says International Unit
- Strengthening the quality assurance of UK transnational education

At the University

Getting Started in Pedagogic Research

In 2011, the National HE STEM Programme, established through a major activity grant by the Higher Education Funding Councils for England and Wales to the University of Birmingham, commenced a series of events aimed at supporting those wishing to begin pedagogic research within the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics disciplines. These events built upon an underpinning philosophy of the Programme which was to enable those working on its activities to provide an evidence informed assessment of their impact through evaluation so that knowledge and learning from educational enhancement and innovation could be captured and shared.

Through the University of Birmingham’s STEM Education Centre, and supported by a grant from the Higher Education Academy, a further series of national workshops on beginning pedagogic research were held throughout 2012/13, including three at the University of Birmingham. A national community of practice has developed, and most recently a guide, providing an accessible introduction to beginning pedagogic research, has been developed by the STEM Education Centre. It is edited by Michael Grove (Birmingham) and Tina Overton (University of Hull and President of the Royal Society of Chemistry Education Division), and contains contributions from those with experience and expertise in undertaking pedagogic research within higher education.

Although the guide, which can be downloaded here, is entitled 'Getting Started in Pedagogic Research within the STEM Disciplines', it is suitable for anyone from any discipline within higher education looking to begin pedagogic research. It addresses key topics including writing a research question, using qualitative and quantitative methodologies, quality control, ethical considerations, securing funding, dissemination and writing for publication.
For anyone within the University wishing to know more about beginning pedagogic research or undertaking educational evaluations, please contact Michael Grove.

Closing the Loop: Bridging the Gap Between Provision and Implementation of Feedback

There is a stark gap between students’ estimations of the level of detail and promptness of the feedback they receive compared to their ability to implement the feedback: in the NSS there are large, persistent gaps between responses to ‘I have received detailed comments on my work’ and ‘Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand’. This indicates that, while students recognise that they are receiving feedback, they may not understand it well enough to use it as a tool for learning or how to implement it to improve future results. As part of the ‘Assessment Review’ two workshops with student reps from Schools/Depts across the University are currently being arranged to address these issues and the findings will be communicated to staff.

In addition, a project funded by a Higher Education Academy collaborative Teaching Development Grant entitled ‘Closing the loop: bridging the gap between provision and implementation of feedback’ is running from June 2013 through December 2014. It brings together four researchers in the Politics Departments at the University of Nottingham and the University of Birmingham - Dr Helen Williams, Dr Bettina Renz, Dr Nicola Smith and Dr Hardeep Basra.

The project explores the persistent communication gap between what university teachers write on summative assessments and what students understand and implement from the feedback. Its objectives are to:

- Engage undergraduate students in the research process
- Collaborate with students to build a better mutual understanding of the current shortcomings and miscommunications surrounding feedback
- Improve the quality and clarity of feedback without adding to staff load
- Create a series of open educational resources that provide tried and tested effective feedback
- Disseminate the findings and best practice throughout and beyond our institutions

For further information about the workshops please contact Prof Jon Green and for the HEA project please contact Dr Hardeep Basra or Dr Nicki Smith

Teaching and Learning Conference

This year marks the 11th annual Teaching and Learning Conference run by the University - an opportunity for teaching and learning at the University to take centre stage, allowing staff from all disciplines to share and discuss innovative teaching methods and ideas.

The date for the conference is Friday 4th July 2014. Further details and a call for Proposals will be out soon, but in the meantime, please put the date in your diary.

External news

Exploring themes to improve quality for students

The QAA has published a report analysing the thematic element of institutional review in 2011-13, and outlining how providers support first year students in their transition to higher education. The report identifies many examples of how first year students are well supported, such as excellent induction programmes, mentoring schemes and student support systems, as well as the use of continual assessment to prepare students for exam-based assessment.

See this item on the QAA website for source and more information.

HESA figures encouraging, but work to be done, says
International Unit

Eighteen percent of enrolments at UK HEIs were international in 2012/13 compared with 17% in 2011/12, according to the latest HESA figures. Higher education exports overall are valued at £8.8 billion, of which approximately £7.6 billion is associated with international students coming to study in the UK, demonstrating the huge strategic importance of international higher education. However, whilst more Chinese students came to study in 2012/13, (a 16.9% increase), we have seen a continuous drop in numbers from India (down 49% over two years) and Pakistan (down 13.4%), as well as the first ever drop in international students coming to study at graduate level.

Nicola Dandridge, Chief Executive of Universities UK, said: "Despite growing demand globally, international recruitment figures in the UK over the last few years have not done justice, either to the global success of the UK's universities, or the sector's ability to tap into this substantial growth market. At the same time, competitor countries have seen rises in international student numbers.

For source and more information see this item on the International Unit website.

Consultations

Strengthening the quality assurance of UK transnational education

Strengthening the quality assurance of UK transnational education is a jointly managed consultation between QAA and the Higher Education International Unit. Transnational education is the provision of higher education for students based in a country other than the one in which the awarding institution is located. We hope the consultation document and the questions it contains will provoke discussion and generate a wide response. Following analysis of the consultation responses, QAA will publish an overview of the planned process for the quality assurance of UK transnational education, followed by a prospective review programme from 2014-15. The consultation is open until 10 March 2014.

See this item on the QAA website for source and more information.