

Learning and Teaching Conference 2012

Abstract 4D

Collaborative Masters Dissertations: working in partnership for demand-driven postgraduate research and enhanced employability skills

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This paper presents an evaluation of the Glasgow Refugee Asylum and Migration Network (GRAMNet) collaborative Masters' dissertation initiative piloted through Central and East European Studies in 2010-11. The model matched PGT students with knowledge exchange (KE) partners in order to undertake demand-driven research, with dual outputs: an academically assessed dissertation and a one month internship scheme. The internship provides an opportunity to convert this academic output into forms and materials suited to the needs of KE partners, providing students with "real world" research experience and KE partners with quality research. KE partners included NGOs, charities and public sector organisations. The model gave students an opportunity to gain valuable work experience in a competitive job market. The model also sought to make use of the University's technology to support learning and assist with on-going feedback and assessment by engaging with online diaries using the Mahara portfolio. This paper will seek to highlight the relevance that this model has for various subject areas across the University.

Co-author Paul Jordan was engaged on the initiative as a PDRA using participatory research methods to explore and evaluate the experiences of students, KE partners and academic supervisors to make recommendations for the extension and development of the model. This presentation will focus on these findings as well as draw attention to the experiences of Alan White, a PGT Masters student in the pilot model. This presentation will seek to draw out the relevance of the initiative in relation to the development of graduate attributes for PGT Masters students in terms of employability. It will also focus on the enhancement of the curriculum which flows from direct engagements with KE partners and the integration of training in "research impact" within the Masters dissertation experience.

Outcomes

- Understand the added-value of the collaborative Masters initiative.
- Reflect on possibilities for the development of similar or related models of partnership with public/third sector/other potential employers in enhancing the curriculum for Masters students and supporting development of graduate attributes towards future employability.
- Share insights and make suggestions for the future refinement of the model.