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JOURNAL OF Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice

Editorial: Curricular Development and Change at Leeds Beckett University

Curricular change and development has been central to our institution, Leeds Beckett University, in the last few years. A full scale review of both undergraduate and postgraduate curricula and the programme design was undertaken with the development of embedded graduate attributes, more focused summative assessment, an emphasis on student engagement, new course design principles and parallel policy development on academic integrity. This issue of JPAAP explores some of the projects, challenges and innovations undertaken as part of this journey in the last three years and how we hope to use this good practice as we move towards our new Education Strategy for 2016/17.

This special edition builds on the enthusiasm of a community of our Leeds Beckett academic staff who have helped support our understanding of 'where we are at' in developing our curricula to enhance our students' learning experience and make them really employable graduates. The writers who have contributed to this journal have, as part of their reflection on their own research and projects linked to our curriculum, tried to capture the latest innovation in theory and practice. They have taken a pragmatic approach to 'writing up' their work in a style which is not intended to be prescriptive but instead is designed to offer suggestions for practice and to clarify the practical implications of new ideas. The papers aim to open a dialogue with others who may be interested in undertaking similar work which may be done to, say, build the visibility of graduate attributes, improve employability, augment student engagement and understand course design better.

In this issue we have a number of case studies which illustrate the embedding of our three graduate attributes (enterprise, digital literacy and having a global outlook). These papers take a range of approaches to detail the work undertaken. *Cooke* explores a systematic approach to embedding information literacy into first year curricula. She explains how the project was initiated after flaws in students' information literacy skills were identified. Information literacy (part of our broader digital literacy attribute) has been defined as the ability to gather, use, manage and synthesise information (SCONUL, 2011, p. 3). *Fitzgerald's* case study also explores the systematic embedding of enterprise skills as part of an innovative Biosciences module where students have to devise a biotechnology project or set up a social enterprise. *Thomson's* original phenomenographic research on how staff 'see' an e-learning framework forms the foundation of our work on embedding digital literacy and explores how the perception of e-learning initiatives can vary in the viewpoints from different stakeholders. In another institution-wide paper, *Jameson* presents an opinion piece on the change in our approach to academic integrity and our new consistent and systematic approach.

Within the collection of articles in this special issue there are three contributions which focus on the course, and curricular design in particular. *Garbutt's* course-based case study explores whether blending academic curricula and qualifications with professional body curricula and qualifications might be a possible way to achieve cost effective curricular change and open up a more vocational route for a degree. *Simpson's* case study considers how a range of authentic learning techniques i.e. 'learning by doing' were used in the Leeds Beckett MBA programme and had a positive impact on pass rates and student satisfaction. *Green et al* explore our course design principles and, picking five of them, show how they were used in the development of the Sport Marketing programme at Leeds Beckett and how the authors used them to influence curricular changes at Assuit university in Egypt where we were asked to work collaboratively with academic staff there to advise on their course design. It is a clear exploration of the challenges of partnership and collaborative working. Both *Smith and Sellers* and *Pickford* explore different models which provide a framework for practical tools which can be used in curricular design and its implementation. In *Smith and Sellers'* paper they explore how the institutional taxonomy of assessment domains was updated and showcase the taxonomy as a useful tool for course design. It has been particularly useful in highlighting to staff the best ways of writing accurate levelled learning outcomes. *Pickford* provides a truly original multidimensional model for student engagement. The template included in the paper provides a framework for designing and delivering the curriculum taking into account the academic, emotional and transactional dimensions of engaging students. This provides a practical tool for course teams.

Consideration of the global outlook graduate attribute is considered in *Killick's* insightful reflective piece on the role of hidden curricula. He makes stimulating links between university, course design and the classroom to show how different 'hidden' issues could (and do!) contribute strongly to shaping students' experience of internationalism and their 'global self'.

It is good to see such a broad selection of innovative and subject driven contributions which explore both student and staff perspectives about curriculum design and recognise that it is fundamental to a great learning experience. It is hoped that this selection of papers might provide the opportunity for further discussion amongst the JPAAP readers and offer some suggestions for practical change in the area of curriculum design and change.

Reference

SCONUL (2011), The SCONUL Seven Pillars of information Literacy: Core model for Higher education. Page 3.
<http://www.sconul.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/coremodel.pdf>