

This is an extract from
**A Connected Curriculum for Higher
Education** by Dilly Fung

Published by:

UCLPRESS

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Connecting academic learning with workplace learning

1 Academic learning and work

The fourth dimension of the Connected Curriculum framework, ‘Students connect academic learning with workplace learning’, shines a light upon a longstanding challenge for universities. The dimension promotes the idea that all programmes of study should give students the chance to connect academic learning explicitly with the areas of knowledge, skills and approaches needed both for professional work and for their future lives in society. They should enable students to become life-long learners. One focus here is on developing capabilities and personal attributes for life and work in a changing world. Political, economic and technological innovations are constantly shaping and changing work-related structures and processes. Another focus is on raising students’ levels of awareness that they *are* developing a rich range of understandings, skills, values and attributes to take with them into their professional lives, and on enabling them to practise articulating these to others. The third area of focus is on enabling students to engage in critical and constructive dialogue with others about the ethical application of evidence-based knowledge to society; this may include thinking critically about the nature and processes of work itself.

For many, it is self-evident that higher education ‘involves preparing students in ways that will equip them to engage successfully with the world beyond university’ (Spencer, Riddle and Knewstubb 2012, 217). However, a recent study published by the Higher Education Academy (2016), analysing results of the UK Engagement Survey (Neves 2016), suggests that students are not yet convinced that their academic studies are preparing them well for work. This large-scale

survey of undergraduates, developed under licence from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in the United States, sets out to measure students' engagement with their studies in relation to a number of themes. Findings show that although most students (88 per cent) say they find their programme challenging and that they engage in critical thinking by applying facts, theories and methods (83 per cent), many fewer report that they have interacted with staff to discuss academic performance (36 per cent) and talk about their career plans (20 per cent) (Neves 2016, 12). And while many students report engaging in critical thinking (77 per cent of students in universities established before 1992 and 79 per cent in Post-92 universities), only 55 per cent of students in Pre-92 institutions and 66 per cent in Post-92 institutions report having engaged in research and enquiry. These data suggest that many students do *not* see themselves as regularly participating in research and enquiry, developing 'civic skills' or making preparations for their careers. Neves concludes from the data overall that 'there are clear opportunities for students to engage more regularly with staff, and their peers, in order to ensure development of a full range of career and civic skills', and that 'Career skills in particular are potentially an area for greater investigation and action across the sector, building on the low levels of development reported here' (Neves 2016, 34).

Interestingly, Neves' analysis suggests that students who collaborate most with their peers and with staff are also the most likely to report positively on their career skill development, and that there is work for institutions to do in these areas; these are areas addressed across the Connected Curriculum framework, particularly as we turn the spotlight on the fourth dimension.

2 The challenge of 'employability'

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2010) has argued that universities should pay more attention to developing both curricula and teaching staff in order to improve students' work-related attributes:

The prize for securing real improvements in the delivery of employability skills is that we develop more individuals with the skills necessary to get a job that is fulfilling and offers a real platform for progression in work.

In the UK, the term ‘employability’ is often used but it has slippery definitions as Blackmore et al. (2016) demonstrate. Typically, it refers to:

the development of a ‘combination’ or ‘set of achievements’ of skills, knowledge, understanding, and personal attributes that together make a graduate more likely to gain and remain in employment. (Blackmore et al. 2016, 10)

However, the term is also used more broadly, to include the development of skills and dispositions for living:

Within this wider definition, employability is also considered in terms of its societal contribution and benefit to a range of stakeholders beyond the student, such as the workforce, community, and economy. (Blackmore et al. 2016, 10)

Emphasis in the literature is thus not only on students’ readiness for work – that is, on their being prepared for particular, existing roles – but on developing a range of skills, capabilities and attributes, in tandem with discipline-specific knowledge and skills, which will enable students to ‘manage their own careers and ... continue learning throughout their working lives’ (Mason, Williams and Cranmer 2009, 2).

There have been a number of studies looking at ways of characterising graduate attributes, which overlap of course with discipline-specific learning outcomes, and these can be framed in various ways. Knight and Yorke (2006a) cite, for example, a characterisation of four influential components:

- understanding
- skills (or skilful practices)
- students’ efficacy beliefs and self-theories
- metacognition; that is, students’ self-awareness in relation to learning and ‘the capacity to reflect on, in and for action’.

(Knight and Yorke 2006a, 5)

Rees, Forbes and Kubler (2007) devise, building on the UK Quality Assurance Agency’s subject benchmark statements for honours degree subjects (QAA 2016a), a set of profiles for different disciplines, which draw collectively on a broad list of capabilities. These include a wide range of attributes varying from achievement orientation, commercial awareness and image, to analysis, creativity and listening (2007, 141–142).

A number of institutions in the UK have developed their own sets of 'graduate attributes', including the University of Glasgow (2016), University of Edinburgh (2016) and University of Sheffield (2016). The University of Edinburgh, for example, distils its attributes into what its graduates are expected to have, and what they are expected to be.

Graduates have:

- curiosity for learning that makes a positive difference;
- courage to expand and fulfil their potential;
- passion to engage locally and globally.

Graduates are:

- creative problem solvers and researchers;
- critical and reflective thinkers;
- effective and influential contributors;
- skilled communicators.

These broad-brush characterisations of dispositions and skills can stimulate thinking about curriculum development and also about the importance of exploring with students the kinds of attributes they are already developing as they study their chosen discipline(s).

However, it is at programme and module level that these attributes are developed. What options are available to programme leaders and teams? We look next at how programme design can be maximised to empower students to prepare for their future working lives.

3 Practical approaches for curriculum design

If we are to take up the challenge of maximising students' opportunities to take ownership of their futures, we need to consider the ways in which programmes can be designed to do this. A number of publications offer useful advice for institutions on how to review curricula to embed skills for employment (see, for example, Cole and Tibby 2013; Knight and Yorke 2006a and 2006b; Smith 2012). The UK Higher Education Academy (2016) has also produced a set of studies highlighting principles for embedding employability into curricula.

However, a number of the design features and pedagogies inherent in the Connected Curriculum framework already lend themselves

to enhancing students' opportunities for developing work-related attributes. We revisit those briefly here, and look at additional ways in which learning opportunities can be built into the curriculum that will enable students to graduate with confidence.

Our emphasis so far has been upon research-based and enquiry-based pedagogies and also on addressing the structure of taught programmes to create (or enhance) a connected throughline of activity that allows students to develop over time. We have begun to look, too, at the role played by student assessments in shaping their learning experiences and in enabling them to express their new learning to others (see further, Chapter 7). These features all engage students actively in the development of a wide range of transferable skills as an intrinsic part of their learning and assessment activities.

Tynjälä, Välimaa and Sarja (2003) find that institutions are already narrowing the gap between the kinds of learning students experience in their studies and that experienced in the workplace. Learning in the workplace is typically less formal, more collaborative and more specifically situated in a given 'real world' context, whereas academic learning has traditionally focused on broad principles. However, 'pedagogical models such as problem-based learning, project learning and collaborative learning have characteristics that simulate authentic situations in working life or may be even based on them' (2003, 152).

What different ways are there of enabling students to make explicit and productive connections between their academic learning and workplace learning during their programmes of study? They are many and varied, and institutions and departments are best equipped to make their own choices about what will be effective within the context of particular programmes.

Blackmore et al. (2016, 20) distinguish between 'bolt-on studies', defined as 'activities that sit outside of specific academic modules, but still relate to the curriculum', and activities embedded into the curriculum itself. Bolt-on studies include 'extra-curricular opportunities, workshops, or optional courses [which are] not a part of the essential credit-bearing modules in a degree programme'. Optional opportunities beyond the curriculum have the benefit of giving a wider range of choices and freedoms than a planned curriculum can typically manage. They may have challenges, though, with respect to equality of opportunity: students whose 'spare' time is taken up with duties such as caring or paid work are less likely to be able to benefit from them.

Embedding work-related learning activities in the curriculum, and enabling students to analyse and articulate these, can take a wide range of forms. Some are illustrated in Table 6.1. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but the range is indicative of the many and varied ways

Table 6.1 Activities connecting students with workplace learning

	Learning activity	Opportunities and Challenges
1	Learning the knowledge content and skills inherent in the home discipline(s)	Students' development of discipline-specific knowledge and skills is the central focus of any programme. Depth in subject-specific knowledge and understanding can be enhanced by illustrating these with reference to work-related challenges but this is dependent upon forging authentic links. For subjects not directly linked with particular professions, inviting alumni to discuss with students how the subject content and skills have helped them in diverse work-related contexts can be helpful.
2	Learning through signature tasks and assessments in the home discipline(s)	Each discipline has its typical assessment methods, both informal and formal, and many departments now include 'authentic' assessments (Knight 2002), which mirror the types of tasks needed in the workplace. A well designed spectrum of tasks enables students to develop skills such as teamwork, digital literacies and project management. These 'soft' skills can be assessed alongside subject-specific knowledge and skills, using appropriate assessment criteria with agreed weightings. For example, a group oral presentation can include criteria for content (e.g. critical analysis) and also for form (e.g. the structure and delivery of the presentation; the use of digital media). Randomly challenging students with different types of task, without the opportunity to build up skills and confidence, is unhelpful. However, well planned variations in tasks and assessments which build on one another will stretch and engage students.
3	Learning through engaging in active enquiry	Learning through active enquiry includes research, problem-solving, collaborative projects and object-based learning. These complex assignments, both collaborative and independent, can mirror closely workplace activities. Students need regular guidance, with dialogue, so that they can get the most from these more open-ended tasks. The guidance can include prompts to help students appreciate the range of skills they are developing.

(Continued)

Table 6.1 (Continued)

	Learning activity	Opportunities and Challenges
4	Learning through engaging in enterprise and/or entrepreneurship	Broadly defined, enterprise education ‘provides individuals with the skills, tools and insights to enable them to create ideas and make them happen’ (Blackmore et al. 2016, 28). Entrepreneurship is defined as ‘the application of enterprise skills specifically to creating and growing organisations in order to identify and build on opportunities’ (QAA 2012). Students can be stretched, within or beyond the taught curriculum, by engaging in broadly based, creative, typically collaborative tasks in which they have to show initiative and resourcefulness. Entrepreneurial activities are usually but not always undertaken alongside the taught curriculum. Students can be explicitly prompted to see the connections between these experiences and those needed for the workplace.
5	Learning through making, creating and/or performing	Making new objects (in any subject), producing works of art and putting on performances all develop a broad range of skills and dispositions, such as time management and leadership, along with creativity. Such activities give students something unique to show future employers. Students may need to be prompted, however, to be able to articulate clearly the skills and personal qualities their productions have demonstrated, and their relevance to challenges in other contexts.
6	Learning by engaging with broad societal themes	Students explore a crosscutting theme, for example sustainability (QAA 2014), either within a programme, across programmes (for example, via a cross-disciplinary module), or via extra-curricular opportunities. Following a societal theme throughout their studies can give students confidence in looking at that field from a range of perspectives, as well as considering the values that they can take into the workplace.
7	Learning about the workplace and future employment opportunities	Students set out to find out about workplace opportunities. Careers centres and alumni can help here, as faculty members may not be best placed to advise students in the rapidly changing world of work. In some programmes, it might be appropriate for students to investigate an aspect of working life and/or a specific profession, and/or engage in work shadowing, as part of the formal curriculum.
8	Learning through study and/or work abroad	Students benefit greatly from studying and/or working abroad (European Union 2014). Studying abroad and learning additional languages are among the most effective ways of developing skills and experiences that can be demonstrated to future employers. Skills developed, including interpersonal skills, resilience and openness to new experiences, are highly valued.

- 9 **Learning through volunteering and other extra-curricular activities** Students participate in activities ranging from following personal interests (e.g. in music or sport) to engaging in wider opportunities provided by the institution (e.g. working as a student intern; becoming a student representative; participating in university-wide events and talks; participating in Student Union activities). The range of opportunities is so wide, and students' engagement with them so variable, that it is not easy to capture the benefits they are making to students in helping to prepare them for work. Reflective analyses of these wider experiences can, however, be explored in a personal or professional log or blog, and even in an assessed programme-wide portfolio (Chapter 7).
- 10 **Learning through becoming a leader and 'agent for change' in their institution** Institutions invite students to run 'change projects', with the aim of benefiting current and future student cohorts (Healey 2016; UCL 2016h). Run at institutional and/or departmental level, such schemes can be mutually beneficial for students and the institution. Students can be invited to conceptualise, design, lead on (or participate in) and be rewarded for change projects. This entails managing a funded project, managing resources and time, and presenting project outcomes to an audience. Experience of this kind is excellent for students' future employment prospects, as well as connecting students with departmental and institutional communities.
- 11 **Service-learning** Students participate in a community-based project or activity, typically in collaboration with other students, for example by contributing to the work of a local charity. Direct engagement with the community for mutual benefit, as part of the overall aims and ethos of a programme of study, can provide excellent learning experiences as well as activities which are meaningful in their own right. Reflective analysis of the project and the student's role in it can form part of their summative assessment. Room needs to be given in the assessment criteria for learning from mistakes and difficulties, as well as from obvious successes.
- 12 **Work-based learning** Students undertake a programme which is orientated towards a specific profession and/or workplace setting, and which has been designed from the outset to embed work-based learning throughout the programme, for example with mandatory work placements (Boud and Solomon 2001). These experiences are typically assessed through students' analyses of their own work via a professional log and/or credit-bearing assignment. The extent to which students are prepared for this experience, and are helped to bring their academic learning into their workplace challenges, varies; they can benefit from discussing some of these connections before the placement starts.
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in which students are already developing their work-related knowledge and skills, and of where they might have additional opportunities extended to them.

The ways in which departments and programme leaders select from – and add to – these options will depend on many contextual factors. Useful practices for most programmes, however, include:

- 1. Designing some student learning activities that mirror the ‘messy’ ways in which learning takes place in the workplace.** Asking students to address challenges as they arise during their studies by using their own initiative to investigate solutions, by tracking down and tapping into relevant expertise (whether in-house or external) and by collaborating effectively with their peers are examples of activities that will prepare them for the typically unstructured learning demands of the workplace.
- 2. Requiring students explicitly to analyse and articulate their learning,** both in core disciplinary areas and more widely, and its relevance to the workplace at intervals through their study. Attention needs to be paid to how and when students will be asked explicitly to analyse and articulate their developing skills, values and attributes. Developing these attributes unknowingly does not help students to articulate connections they have made between academic and work-related learning (Knight and Yorke 2006b), and this is an important aspect of this dimension of the Connected Curriculum framework.
- 3. Building in a core portfolio and/or summative task,** for example through a series of Connections modules and/or a capstone module (see Chapter 3), in which students describe clearly the skills and attributes they have developed, in ways which are meaningful to the student personally and authentically linked to subject knowledge.
- 4. Ensuring that some assessments are addressed to diverse audiences** and so develop a wide range of digital and communication skills. This theme will be addressed further in the next chapter.

4 Critiquing the connection between academic learning and workplace learning

While many scholars have been supportive of closer connections between academic and work-related learning, others have raised doubts about the growing attention given to ‘employability’. They critique some of the underpinning assumptions associated with this emphasis, questioning the employment focus both in terms of its

alleged benefits to students as individuals and the potential impact on society more widely.

One critique relates to the idea that academia should be a creative space in which scholars, both faculty members and students, can explore knowledge and understandings that may have no obvious relationship with the workplace. Sometimes encapsulated in the phrase ‘knowledge for knowledge’s sake’, this position sees knowledge as intrinsically improving our quality of life. It alludes to the personal fulfilment associated with following one’s own interests and building up one’s ability to learn, without any immediate instrumental purpose. This notion was dismissed as elitist ‘piffle’ by Ferdinand von Prondzynsk, Principal of Robert Gordon University, in a recent *THE* article (*THE* 2013). However, there are echoes here of the cherished ‘Haldane principle’ in research, which holds that governments should not, via any funding arrangement, be able to ‘exert undue influence’ on the research undertaken (Boden and Nedeve 2010, 39). Does academic freedom, including the freedom to explore non-commercial, non-applied areas of knowledge, become threatened by calls to ensure that students are learning work-related knowledge and skills?

Further tensions in academia have arisen, in the UK at least, with respect to the relationship between funding and ‘employability metrics’. The latter are built into the government’s Teaching Excellence Framework (QAA 2016b), in which levels of graduate employment are included in the criteria for institutional assessment. Imperatives relating to employment and contributing to a successful economy are thus caught up in academic critiques of forms of ‘new managerialism’ (Deem, Hillyard and Reed 2007), which find their expression in quality management regimes and audit cultures (Apple 2005; Morley 2003).

There is even a sense for some scholars that:

employability discourses may be adversely affecting pedagogies and curricula, to the disbenefit of students, institutions, employers, social justice and civil society. (Boden and Nedeve 2010, 37)

Boden and Nedeve argue that, where in the past universities have regarded graduate employment as an aspect of institutions’ relationships with the labour market in which they have ‘enjoyed a significant degree of discretion’, employability is now ‘a performative function of universities, shaped and directed by the state, which is seeking to supplant labour markets’. Their analysis reminds us that what is at stake

as we address academic learning-workplace connections is the role of universities today:

the issue of the relationship between higher education and working life is ... the question structuring the relationship between higher education and society. (Tynjälä, Välimaa and Sarja 2003, 149)

Revisiting the principles of the Connected Curriculum initiative may, for some, help to resolve tensions between academic freedoms and preparing students for the world of work. While it may be possible to hold and promote a conception of education as developing both individuals and societies through active, critical enquiry, whereby knowledge is extended and refined through peer dialogue for the global common good, it is not obvious that there are any *necessary* tensions between academia and developing students' opportunities for employment. Need there be a conflict between developing oneself in the round as a critical, curious, creative, engaged individual and developing one's ability to work successfully in society and contribute to the good of society more broadly? Where 'employability' becomes reified, for example in any imposition of fixed lists of attributes for assessment or in narrowly conceived pedagogic imperatives, or where it becomes tied up with political imperatives, clearly there are potential issues for disciplines and their practices, and scholars will rightly engage critically with these issues. However, developing self-aware students through enabling them to engage regularly in active, critical research and enquiry has the potential to *empower* them not only to develop their own capabilities and values but also to critique society, including the role played by work in local and global communities.

In many institutions, academics continue to exercise significant amounts of freedom to interpret challenges to 'connect with the workplace' in ways which complement their disciplinary cultures and departmental values. Institutional initiatives may prompt programme teams to review their curriculum design in the light of workplace-related themes, but few dictate specific requirements in this area. The latter approach could be very counter-productive; requiring academics, who have developed high-level critical thinking skills, to work with an imposed set of fixed requirements would be a risky strategy.

The Connected Curriculum framework assumes that there *need* be no contradiction between developing students intellectually as critical citizens and preparing them for the workplace. In the spirit of forwarding shared understandings through the meetings of different knowledge horizons, collaborating with employers' groups and other relevant

stakeholders can be very productive. Connected Curriculum principles also assume that research-based curriculum design can develop intellectual enquiry and practical, applied knowledge simultaneously, particularly if the programme, even if modular in construction, is designed as a coherent whole (Chapter 4).

5 Vignettes of practice

The first illustrative vignette in this chapter comprises two accounts, written by students on the interdisciplinary UCL Bachelor of Arts and Sciences (BASc) programme, of their experiences of taking up summer internships. The second describes a non-assessed compulsory course for all taught masters students at the European Institute, LSE, and the third outlines ways in which internationally recruited students at the UCL Institute of Education are empowered to become effective and reflective teacher-researchers. The fourth describes how Masters students at the University of Sheffield benefited from volunteering to support excluded and isolated people, and the final vignette describes work-shadowing and observations at the UCL Institute of Neurology. Activities such as these, which are currently set up as being extra-curricular could also, in principle, form part of the assessed curriculum.

1. Internships on a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences (BASc) degree

As an integral part of UCL's interdisciplinary BASc programme, students undertake summer internships. Two students reflect here on their experiences.

Hugo Stevens

Over the summer, I joined PwC Legal's business development team in Paris for a ten-week internship. For the application process, I produced a CV with a covering letter and had an interview with a manager and a member of the HR team. I chose this internship because I thought it would enable me to test my interests in Law and Business management. I knew the firm was implementing a transformation programme and I was interested to see how it envisioned its future workplace. I ended up contributing to the development of the firm's Knowledge Management platform and having end-to-end responsibility for the creation of a firm-wide online storage and collaboration database.

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I feel like the BASc had prepared me really well for this internship. My modules at UCL provided me with a wide-ranging understanding of how societies function and evolve. By studying managerial accounting for decision-making, I had learned how businesses are structured and managed, which was particularly relevant to my role. But the skills I learned through the BASc were truly the key to my success. First and foremost, my interdisciplinary education had taught me to approach complex problems from different perspectives. This polyvalence proved decisive, since I arrived at PwC without any prior knowledge of Customer Relationship Management and online database design. The ability to work in a team, a skill I had honed through repeated practice on my degree programme, was also crucial in a professional environment where relationships are becoming more and more horizontal. Finally, the computing skills I acquired through the Quantitative Methods core modules were put to good use, as PwC's work is technology-driven.

Irene Di Giorgio

I spent a month as an intern in a travel start-up based in Montecarlo. My positive experience there must be largely credited to the transferable skills gained during my time on the BASc programme. The three characteristics that I could identify both in the programme and my work experience are: team-working in an international professional environment, flexibility regarding ever-shifting tasks and creative problem solving.

A start-up tends to operate in a diametrically opposite fashion to a corporate environment in terms of hierarchy and problem-targeting. The blurring between job titles and the small size of the team means that any employee, even if highly specialised, will work very closely with colleagues with different kinds of expertise and varied backgrounds. Employees are also likely to participate at some stage in tasks dramatically out of their own field of knowledge.

The collaboration between different professional figures was paramount for resolving the ever-shifting and 'messy' interdisciplinary problems revolving around the product (the website). These challenges did not fall squarely into neat categories of, for instance, marketing, platform building, or creation of content. Having no set mode of working, the company acts on the creative insights of its team. This means that flexibility, adaptability and lateral thinking are indispensable skills in the workplace. My background in interdisciplinary research methods and Psychology helped me a great deal in the marketing tasks, allowing me autonomously to design customer questionnaires and interviews, while the grounding in the quantitative

methods and coding made me integrate much more quickly with my main collaborators, the web developers.

Vignette submitted by Carl Gombrich, Director of the UCL BASc programme.

2. Engaging with Europe: Professional Skills at London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), UK

‘Engaging with Europe: Professional Skills’ is a non-assessed compulsory course for all taught masters students at the European Institute, LSE. The programme embeds professional skills training workshops in the context of a high-profile professional speaker series.

Both lecture and workshop segments are purposefully grounded within European institutions, public policies and contemporary political debates. As a result, the professional skills content clearly maps onto the academic content of the degrees. Guest speakers, wherever possible programme alumni, introduce a specific professional skill (e.g., blog writing, speech writing, legislative drafting), contextualising it within a relevant ‘European’ institutional setting (for example, Parliament or Commission) or issue area (for example, monetary union or freedom of movement).

The following week, students attend a workshop on that same skill. Workshops use a variety of learning activities including individual work (such as interviewing), group work (such as speech writing and blogging) as well as simulation exercises (such as lobbying and legislative drafting). Students receive feedback on the professional outputs that they produce.

All final (revised) outputs are uploaded onto an electronic portfolio system that students can share with prospective employers. The course receives positive feedback from students who value its unique approach to subject-relevant professional skills development.

Vignette submitted by Dr Jennifer Jackson-Preece, Deputy Head of the European Institute & Associate Professor of Nationalism, LSE, course convenor and instructor.

3. Preparing internationally recruited students to become effective and reflective teacher-researchers at the UCL Institute of Education

The UCL Institute of Education and the Institute of Ismaili Studies jointly deliver a Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP)

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that prepares internationally recruited students to become effective and reflective teacher-researchers. The programme philosophy is to enable students to understand the value of research as a way of improving teaching practice in their specific contexts and pursuing their personal continuous professional development. In this way they link their academic learning with future workplace learning.

Over two years students learn to engage critically with research and to consider the relevance of research for practising teachers in general and also for themselves in their specific home countries. Using core readings as a starting point, students are challenged to review their preconceptions relating to research and think more strategically about how they can make changes and improvements to existing practices. This theoretical understanding leads into the formulation of a proposal for research. On their research modules on the Master of Teaching and the MA Education (Muslim Societies and Civilisations), students learn about qualitative and quantitative research as well as about methodologies and methods that are specifically suitable for small-scale investigations within education. Students then carry out their proposed research within their teaching practice and produce a report or dissertation. The preferred frameworks are action research projects or case studies, and the research questions are always relevant to their specific teaching environments in their home countries. For example, one student used action research to investigate the relevance of music within Muslim Societies and Civilisations lessons in Canada, while another explored the concepts of diversity and pluralism within Muslim Societies and Civilisations lessons in India. Both of these students acknowledged the contextualised nature of their findings but made clear recommendations for teaching practice – changes which they have actively implemented and are still using.

Students are able to highlight their personal learning in relation to their theoretical and practical understanding of research, and to consider undertaking similar projects for their own developmental purposes in the future.

Vignette submitted by Nicole Brown, Lecturer in Education and STEP Programme Leader at the UCL Institute of Education.

4. Masters students volunteering to support excluded and isolated people at the University of Sheffield, UK

In October 2014 a group of Masters students from the Information School at the University of Sheffield were recruited as volunteers for SAVTE (the Sheffield Association for the Voluntary Teaching of

English), supporting some of Sheffield's most excluded and isolated people via our local public library networks and the national Six Book Challenge (now Reading Ahead). The students supported English language or conversation classes in one of four venues in Sheffield, including a women's refuge, a primary care centre, a community room within a block of flats, and a conversation club.

For the students, participation makes a valuable addition to their CV, via a volunteering role with a third-sector organisation. Curricular impact and outputs include reflective pieces for an online professional development journal, coursework and dissertation options relating to the students' experience and the role of public libraries in adult literacy education. In terms of extra-curricular impact the project has helped the volunteers to develop skills in cultural awareness and civic engagement.

For the academic department, this has been an effective way of engaging with the local community, in particular with some of the most vulnerable people living in Sheffield. Now in the third academic year of the project, we are continuing to recruit volunteers and to link elements of our curriculum to the workplace, adding value to the Masters programmes.

The students are engaged and enthusiastic throughout the project and there has been a noticeable (and reported) increase in awareness of the application of academic learning to the community, as the following comments illustrate:

'The experience has given me a greater appreciation of the variety of needs and challenges facing members of my community. This will be beneficial in future jobs within libraries as I will now be more aware of attempting to ensure their needs are met and they feel welcome and valued.'

'I would certainly recommend participating in this project, as it provides you with a wonderful opportunity to support and help others...it is an incredibly rewarding experience.'

Case submitted by Dr Briony Birdi, Senior Lecturer in the Information School at the University of Sheffield. This project was initially funded by the University's Engaged Curriculum initiative, which aims to work with the local community in mutually beneficial ways.

5. Work-shadowing and observations lead to oral presentations and contributions to a patient newsletter at UCL Institute of Neurology

Students on the Stroke MSc programme are invited to undertake clinical observership placements on the Hyperacute Stroke Unit.

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They are introduced to the opportunities during a lecture series on the clinical manifestations and hyperacute treatment of stroke. Observing practice enables them to see how evidence-based stroke treatment is being implemented in a clinical environment. They then participate in a session in which they consider their own place within that context and also how this links with both the London and world-wide systems for the treatment of stroke. We consider their future professional identity, how they would feel working in that environment and what specific professional challenges they might face.

Students also shadow the stroke research team in order to understand how patients are recruited to large multicentre trials. They observe the challenges faced when doing this and develop their understandings of the structure of the stroke research network. They address themes that are key in the clinical system, such as ‘door to needle’ times for treatment and optimisation of delivery of thrombolytic agents.

Giving oral presentations on the underpinning evidence, current situation and possibilities for further research within the theme of their choice, students are also given the opportunity to write for a stroke newsletter for patients, with distribution throughout South London. They explain what they think would be the most high-impact development in stroke treatment over the coming years, and why. This allows them to connect the academic material with the patient cohort that they would be working with as researchers in the future and to learn skills that would enable them to communicate complex ideas effectively.

Submitted by Dr Sumanjit Gill, Professor David Werring and Dr Robert Simister of the UCL Institute of Neurology.