

Employer Engagement Mosaic: A tool to identify and capture scholarship in college higher education (HE)

What we urgently need today is a more inclusive view of what it means to be a scholar – a recognition that knowledge is acquired through research, through synthesis, through practice and through teaching. We acknowledge that these four categories – the scholarship of discovery, of integration, of application, and of teaching – divide intellectual functions that are tied inseparably to each other (Boyer, 1990: 24-25).

While not a sector in its own right (Lea, 2015) college higher education (college HE) is seen as an increasingly important mechanism for developing the high-level skills needed by the local economy (ETF, 2016). Teaching staff working in college HE have very little time to participate in or conduct research (King and Widdowson, 2009; 28) and with HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) recognising that higher education provision can no longer 'fit all' (2016), new ways to undertake scholarship need exploring. Accordingly, as well as furnishing industry with a highly skilled workforce, college HE staff could be working with students and employers to develop a scholarly culture of knowledge exchange, consultancy and work placement with employers (Simmons and Lea, 2013: 4).

This tool developed through a year-long action research project (Brewer, 2016) as part of The Scholarship Project (AoC, 2016) offers college HE staff, students and their employers or work placements to not only showcase scholarship in employer engagement (EE) through collaboration, but demonstrates that good quality EE enhances the student experience and promotes employability. Not all employer engagement will be scholarly but there is 'a hidden world of scholarship involving employers which already exists' (Leonard, 2016) which needs to be uncovered and used as an example of what good quality employer engagement might be.

This tool uses Boyer's four Models of Scholarship (1990), that of Discovery, Integration, Application and Teaching alongside indicators developed by Davy (2016) and HEFCE (2009) to determine whether the engagement that staff and students have with employers has a scholarly profile. This will be achieved through a cross-discipline, cross-faculty four stage process.

There needs to be a dedicated lead to undertake this process which in itself is deemed to be a scholarly activity.

1. Conduct interviews with college HE teaching staff to identify which employer engagement has a scholarly profile.

Follow recognised methods of undertaking interviews including pre-discussion, confidentiality, appropriate venue and method of recording the interview. Suggestion: Do not map with the work of Boyer until after the interview; the free flow of information will be disrupted if the interview stops and starts while tracking whether it has a scholarly profile.

Conduct the interview using Davy's indicators as prompts to draw information from the interviewee, allowing at least an hour per interview.

The interview prompts can be found [here](#).

2. Through collaborative enquiry, which sits within the Scholarship of Discovery (Healey et al, 2014), the interviewer and interviewee map the interview recording or transcript with Boyer's Models of Scholarship. A guide is included ([download here](#)) but scholarship entails engaging with the text books and literature signposted at the end of this guide too.

This activity will provide the catalyst to reconsider how you engage with employers. It is important to use the indicators from HEFCE (2009) and Davy (2016) as part of your practice to ensure employer engagement has HEness (Lea and Simmons, 2012).

3. Once it has been identified through collaboration and reading that the EE has a scholarly profile, write a case study that includes links with Boyer's Models of Scholarship. Share this exemplary practice cross-college and in the public arena in order to:

a) celebrate the scholarly activity undertaken

b) demonstrate exemplary employer engagement to other members of staff, students and employer

Suggestion: Case studies should remain confidential until all stakeholders (other staff, students or employers mentioned in the case study) have agreed that the information can be made public. If any stakeholder does not wish their identity to be made public then either the case study should be re-written or not used at all.

4. Add the identified employer engagement to the Mosaic ([Link to Employer Engagement Mosaic here](#)). The Mosaic is a visual celebration of scholarship through employer engagement and could be posted on notice boards, on online learning platforms and shared with employers. College-wide exposure emphasises that this is an accepted form of scholarship and normalises exemplary employer engagement.

The mosaic, like any tiled space, is open to the manipulations and interpretations of individual colleges although it is recommended that Davy's (2016) indicators (blue tiles) remain as part of the mosaic, as do sources of information found in relevant literature such as information from HEFCE (green tiles). The remainder of the tiles (mauve) can be populated to suit each college as long as the findings are mapped against Boyer's Models of Scholarship (1990) through his original writing and other related literature.

Additional resources

Exemplar Employer Engagement Mosaic ([here](#))

Exemplar case studies can be found here:

Exemplar Case Study 1. Golf Management FdA and BA (Hons) Top Up Degree ([here](#))

References

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