

Developing a research and scholarship-rich curriculum for higher education students in college settings

Based on the work of Mick Healey, Alan Jenkins and John Lea (2014)
Developing research-based curricula in college-based higher education

Full report available from:

https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/resources/developing_research-based_curricula_in_cbhe_14.pdf

The report contains 50 cases studies, presented as examples of innovative practice from around the world on embedding research-rich activities for students on undergraduate courses in college settings.

“New models of curriculum... should all... incorporate research-based study for undergraduates.” (Ramsden 2008, pp. 10–11)

1. Introduction:

Key propositions:

- “For the students who are the professionals of the future, developing the ability to investigate problems, make judgments on the basis of sound evidence, take decisions on a rational basis, and understand what they are doing and why is vital. Research and inquiry is not just for those who choose to pursue an academic career. It is central to professional life in the twenty-first century.” (Brew, 2007; 7)
- “[We should] Encourage and enable students to learn in ways that parallel or reflect the ways academic staff themselves approach research and learn in their disciplines or professional area.” (Healey and Jenkins, 2009; 28)

Key issues:

- Developing the research skills of college HE teachers tends to be at the foreground of debate in the sector;
- College HE practitioners seem to be keen to operate with wider notions of scholarship, more geared to their ‘provider context’;
- We found strong evidence of colleges engaging students in research and scholarly activity at classroom level, but little evidence of this being embedded at institutional level.

2. Starting early

A key point from the report was to establish the importance of starting early to embed research-rich experiences for students. We recommend this is undertaken in a staged manner; introducing First Year students gradually, in order that a full research-rich experience can become embedded by Year Three:

Strategies for course teams to introduce Year One students into research and knowledge complexity

1. Create a strong opening activity that involves students doing guided research
2. Help students to read academic literature critically
3. Involve library and other learning support staff
4. Demonstrate how research mindedness can support future employability
5. Guide students into the nature of research in their discipline(s)
6. Provide opportunities for students to make their research public
7. Recognise that students will find such work challenging
8. Ensure how the students are assessed supports research mindedness
9. Involve upper level students in supporting student research in Year One

3. Underpinning principles

The developmental journey of the undergraduate student is based on the following formulation:

The developmental journey of the student¹

Developmental level	Student traits
Reliance on external references [<i>Foundations</i>]	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge viewed as certain• Reliance on authorities (e.g., professors, parents) as source of knowledge• Externally defined value system and identity• Act in relationships to acquire approval
At the crossroads [<i>Intermediate Learning</i>]	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evolving awareness of multiple perspectives and uncertainty• Evolving awareness of own values and identity and of limitations of dependent relationships
Self-authorship [<i>Capstone</i>]	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awareness of knowledge as contextual• Development of internal belief system and sense of self capacity to engage in authentic, interdependent relationships

¹ Source: Hodge et al. (2008)

4. Utilising the Boyer approach to scholarship

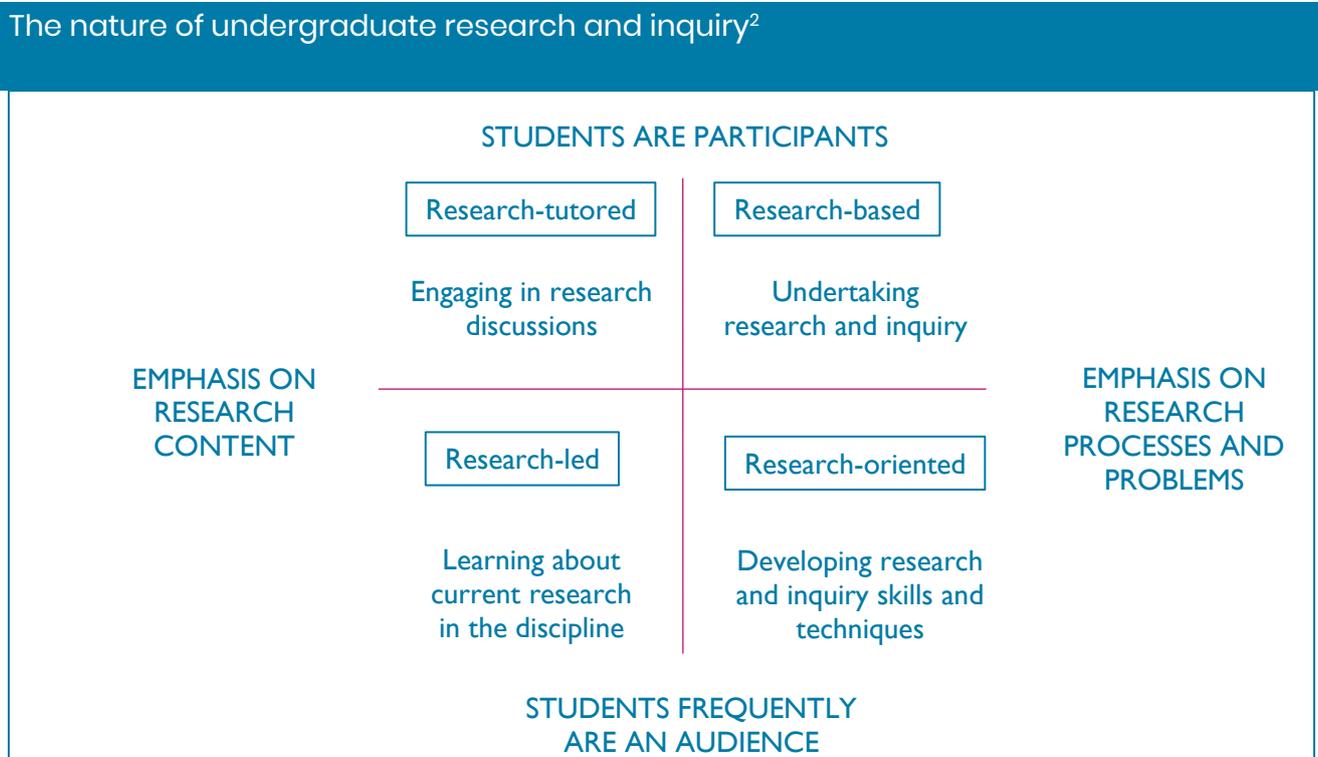
Boyer's (1990) model aims to widen the understanding of scholarly activity and place other forms of scholarship on an equal footing with original research (or discovery). The report applies this model to student scholarly activity.

Examples of ways in which learners may engage with Boyer's four scholarships

Types of scholarship	Illustrative example of ways of engaging learners
Scholarship of discovery	Engage in inquiry-based learning; undergraduate research and consultancy projects; co-research projects with staff.
Scholarship of integration	Engage in integrating material from different sources, including across disciplines; integrate life and work experience with academic studies; reflect on implications of studies for personal development.
Scholarship of application/engagement	Engage with local, national, and international community service projects; volunteering; knowledge exchange projects; apply knowledge and skills in work-based placements.
Scholarship of teaching and learning	Engage in mentoring; peer support and assessment; collaborative group work; learners as explicit partners in educational development and inquiry.

5. A curriculum development mapping tool

The report recommends the utilisation of the following chart to identify the ways that undergraduates currently experience research in an undergraduate module or classroom:



² Source: Healey and Jenkins (2009, p. 7)

6. Institutional support

The report emphasises the need for a whole institution approach to embedding student research and inquiry in the curriculum. This may need to include enhancing the course validation process and ensuring that new/enhanced staff ITE and CPD courses and activities are designed. Staff may lack confidence in these areas so a range of support mechanisms may need to be put in place.

Selected strategies for departments and institutions to increase the skills of staff to support student inquiry

1. Celebrate and share what is already in place
2. Create opportunities for staff and students to experiment
3. Review and enhance what is in place
4. Ensure initial training in teaching and subsequent CPD includes an emphasis on supporting student inquiry
5. Require and support all programmes to be redesigned
6. Reshape the timetable structure
7. Create alternative learning spaces

7. Conclusion

Some suggestion prompts when redesigning curricula:

- a) Produce a staged and integrated approach to curriculum redesign (see chart below) and don't be afraid to produce curriculum 'empty space' in which learning outcomes and learning activities can be negotiated by students and staff (possibly including local employers).
- b) Ensure that internships and other work experiences maximise the opportunities to engage in scholarly ways – e.g. problem-solving using research tools and analysis.
- c) Include in 'students as partners' schemes opportunities for students to work on institutional projects to enhance the student experience of college life and to enhance the learning and teaching environment (through paid and non-paid opportunities), i.e. utilise the idea of students as change agents.
- d) Provide a mixture of scholarly opportunities for students – to gain college credit for their scholarly activity but also provide extra-curricula options.

e) When courses or programmes are being revalidated ensure that providing opportunities for students to experience a research-rich learning environment are included in the discussions and/or are included as a heading in a validation document.

f) Ensure that the question of scholarly space and the integration of research, scholarship and teaching are regularly discussed as standing agenda items in all cross-college committees (including library and estates committees)

A simple staged credit structure aimed at embedding a research-rich undergraduate experience.

	20 credits	20 credits	20 credits	20 credits	20 credits	20 credits
1 st year	Research-tutored					
2 nd year	Research-oriented	Research-oriented				
3 rd year	Research based	Research based	Research based			

In this simple model – assuming a 20-credit module structure – a First Year student would expect (at least) one module which invites regular discussion about the use of scholarly practices within their chosen subject. This might also include an introduction to what might follow in Year One and Year Two, and an invitation to take part in joint research projects with staff or other students in Year Two and Year Three, and opportunities to act as change agents on institutional enhancement and change projects.

A Second-Year student might expect (at least) one third of their credit to be gained by taking part in research-orientated work, either by analysing the application of research tools in their subject area, and discussing the limitations of knowledge production using those tools, and/or opportunities to use research tools in a small-scale research project, possibly in a work-based learning environment.

A Third-Year student might expect (at least) 50% of their credit to be gained by negotiating a research topic with a tutor, including learning outcomes, using and analysing research tools, engaging in epistemological discussion about knowledge

creation, drawing conclusions and recommendations, and possibly disseminating and/or publishing the results in a report or article. In all cases tutors might facilitate employer and or community liaison to heighten the opportunities for student research projects to solve 'real' 'live' problems and enhance employability.

In all cases, these research and scholarly activities might draw on the knowledge gained from other modules in order to meet cross-module or cross-year learning outcomes, rather than just a set of individual module learning outcomes (perhaps utilising a patchwork approach to portfolio building). In all cases, assignment tasks might include oral and/or group tasks, and utilise peer assessment practices, including the use of a range of assessment criteria which judges process-orientated activities as well as content (e.g. ability to work in a group, etc.) In some cases, this might include participation in dissemination activities (e.g. organising a conference or exhibition, and/or working on an editorial board or preparing a publication)

Enhancing and embedding a research and scholarship-rich undergraduate curriculum

Self-assessment aide memoire for HE managers and course leaders

1 Does the course/programme validation process incorporate consideration of the need to provide student scholarly space in the curriculum?

Yes

No

No: Approach the validating partner/Quality department to discuss how this might be achieved.

2 Do new HE students have research and scholarship skills included in their college induction programme?

Yes

No

No: Take a look at the 'Research Induction' guidance note and consider the desirability of providing all new students with their own self-assessment tool to provide support for developing a scholarly approach to studying.

3 Is there at least one First Year module which could be considered to be research tutored?

Yes

No

No: Take a look at chapter 2 and the accompanying case studies in Healey, Jenkins and Lea (2014).

4 Do any Third Year/Honours course/programmes include the opportunity for students to negotiate their own research project and related activities?

Yes

No

No: Take a look at chapter 3 and the accompanying case studies in Healey, Jenkins and Lea (2014).

5 Under the heading 'students as partners' (or related initiative) are students invited to take part in college change projects and or learning and teaching enhancement initiatives in scholarly ways?

Yes

No

No: Take a look at Eaton et al (2015) and Lea (2015), chapter 6.

6 Does the college have an intern or student ambassador programme where students have the opportunity to undertake paid work of a scholarly nature?

Yes

No

No: Take a look at the 'Student intern' guidance note and consider how such a programme could be implemented.

7 Are staff provided with CPD opportunities to enhance their capacity to provide a research-rich curriculum experience for students?

Yes

No

No: Survey staff to find out their CPD needs and read chapter 6 of Healey, Jenkins and Lea (2014).

8 Does the college have an active register of partnership agreements with local employers and community engagement networks, which could be utilised to provide students with live problem-solving opportunities?

Yes

No

No: Consider producing a register and accompanying guidance note on the value of scholarly activity for staff, students and the wider community.

9 Is the question of scholarly space and the integration of research, scholarship and teaching a standing agenda item on all major college committees (including library and estates)?

Yes

No

No: Ask to make a case at each of the major committees of the college, making links with potential positive outcomes for future Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and Annual Provider Review (APR) submissions and applications for degree awarding powers.

10 Does the college celebrate and reward staff who enhance the learning experience of students through scholarly activity and students who successfully participate in scholarly activity?

Yes

No

No: Consider the ways in staff development days and conferences might incorporate and encourage the dissemination of student scholarly activity and recognise the successes in some way.