

Creating and enhancing scholarly communities through a case study approach

Introduction

These guidance notes are designed to be used in conjunction with the resource 'Creating and enhancing scholarly communities' which can be found in the same download location as this document. While this approach can be used to enhance scholarly activity in college higher education (college HE) providers with mature provision, it is aimed primarily at those colleges considering the development of an HE portfolio or those newer to running higher education provision. It is important to note the case studies method employed within this model can be adapted to any scale of delivery and is equally valid to any curriculum area.

Why do you need a scholarly community?

There are several reasons the capturing of HE scholarly activity (particularly collaboration with students) and recording this information is of value. From an institutional perspective, scholarly research and development data can be used to inform internal HE policies, internal and external quality reports, track professional and academic development of individuals and support the enhancement of tutor/student engagement. The same information can be used for a variety of external quality functions such as alignment with national HE policies (UK Professional Standards Framework, Quality Assurance Agency/Ofsted requirements), to inform EE reports for individual courses and to support applications for Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (FDAP), taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) and Teaching Excellence Framework applications. In addition to this, the formation of a scholarly community encourages the sharing

of best practice and provides genuine opportunities for debate, discussion and cross-institutional collaborative working.

Methodology

The underlying methodology of this approach is to capture existing evidence of scholarly activity within a college rather than generate contrived examples, and in so doing form a community based on shared experience and practice. This will rely on institutional-level support and the buy-in of senior management, including integration with or development of a scholarship policy synthesising with continuous professional development, human resources and other relevant policies and codes of practice. It is also strongly recommended that a single point of contact for the coordination of scholarship activities is developed where feasible – for the purposes of these guidance notes and continuity with the resource, this will be referred to as a Scholarship Development Manager (SDM) although the title may differ according to specific institutions. It is the SDM's functionality that is important, not the title.

The role of the SDM is to:

- Support staff in their scholarly activity
- Develop opportunities for scholarly activity
- Record scholarly activity output
- Disseminate scholarly activity internally and to the wider community

For this approach to work, it is crucial the approach generates minimal impact on staff, who are often reticent to engage in anything that is perceived will create additional work. In this way, the goals of ensuring professional development, developing curriculum and applying scholarly activity to the benefit of the learners can be attained.

Employing the resource

The document 'Creating and enhancing scholarly communities' can be found in a .docx and PDF version in the same download area in which this guidance document is situated.

This document is designed to be a continuous tracking record that brings together the scholarly activity of all individuals teaching within HE and required to evidence their research and scholarly projects. As this approach is based on an action research model, it is structured in such a way that contributors begin the

process by proposing a case study that meets the criteria of either the institution in which they work and/or the definitions outlined by American educationalist Ernest Boyer. A precis of his scholarly activity definitions can be found as an appendix at the end of the resource, and can be used to inform potential contributors and inform the categorisation of scholarly activity for both the scholarship development manager and members of staff.

Resource breakdown

Please note: all type in *Italics* can either be amended or deleted as relevant to the staff/institution employing the resource.

Cover page

This page can feature the college's logo and be titled/formatted according to institutional preference.

Index page

Four categories and two appendices are featured, but can be amended as required.

Introduction

This should introduce the methodology and reasoning behind the capturing of scholarly activity at the individual provider. There are several suggested areas of content which can be selected and expanded upon with relevance to the particular college.

Scholarly activity policy

Please see the notes accompanying this section within the resource.

Contributors to the scholarly community

Please see the notes accompanying this section within the resource.

Individual case study details

This section will form the majority of the resource. As the projects expand and mature, so too should this document to include all case study activity from initial proposal to eventual conclusion. Throughout, the SDM should maintain a commentary on the data provided to them by the contributors. To ensure this,

the SDM should sustain effective communication links with all case study authors at all times and be available to advise and support staff.

Initial submission of scholarly activity proposal

Once relevant staff have been identified for inclusion for HE scholarly activity engagement, they should be briefed by the SDM as to the nature of Boyer's categories of scholarly activity and what may be acceptable to the institution's requirements. The resource should clearly outline how contributors can submit their proposals and to whom. This initial submission should be broken down into **title, author, context, evidence base and impact** – an example is shown (in italics) of a typical submission in the resource document.

Scholarship Development Manager's comments

This is the main mechanism by which the SDM can evaluate the work in progress, from initial submission to eventual completion. Over time, it forms a data-rich resource of information, and contributors should be encouraged to include as wide a variety of data as possible (A/V materials, questionnaires and responses, charts, stakeholder comments etc).

The first response the SDM will make to the submission is the **Initial Scholarship Development Manager's comments**. It should address the five submission categories directly, and allow for constructive criticism and suggestions on how the case study may proceed (e.g. timescales, potential issues, areas of focus etc). It can be further contextualised (if required) via categorisation in relation to **Boyer's scholarship model** which can prove to be extremely valuable in focussing the relevance of the work being undertaken to scholarly activity.

It is vital the SDM maintains regular contact with all contributors throughout their case studies. This may be via a series of group or individual face-to-face meetings, through email or other forms of communication. If feasible, an online self-recording system for scholarly activity may be developed, allowing staff to regularly update their progress. Such a system would require full access by the SDM, and would also have to include free text input so the contributor could expand on their progress to date. This will facilitate the content for the **current stage of development** (usually verbatim from the updates given by the contributor), and allow for subsequent commentary following every update with the SDM's commentary and analysis.

At the end of the academic year, whether the contributor's project is finished or has the potential to be ongoing, they should present their **author conclusions**.

Based on these and the case study as a whole, the SDM will then be in a position to present the **SDM's conclusions**, thus providing final feedback to the contributor. This material may also prove valuable in research conferences, HE quality and curriculum meetings, and a variety of other contexts in which an overview of scholarly activity is required. An example of this recording process is presented in *italics*.