

# Introducing a Scholarship Policy

## Implementation Guidance Note

(To be read in conjunction with: *Scholarly activity policies and practices research project – Combined report September 2016: A research report*)

### Introduction

It is clear that for scholarship to become embedded in a college it needs to be supported by college-wide policies that can set a standard or benchmark where achievement against that standard can be measured.

For example, on staff appraisal forms scholarship should be an essential heading, should be discussed and, if appropriate, targets set, possibly with an expectation that, say, 80% of completed appraisals will include targets for scholarship.

However, it is unlikely that one isolated scholarship policy will suffice as scholarship has implications for a range of practices including teaching and learning, quality assurance, student and employer engagement and employability.

So, there are probably two models (which are likely to be hybrids):

- One 'scholarship policy' that has links to other policies; this may mean amending other policies so that all are cohesive, coherent and fit for purpose.
- Several scholarship policies relating to specific areas such as teaching and learning and student engagement.

A thorough strategy and action plan, with milestones, will be needed to achieve this.

### Some ideas on implementation

1. Vision/Mission. Discussion and practice indicate that the college *may* want to start with some form of vision (the present) and mission (the future) statements, both probably linked to the college's overall vision and mission. However, there is little point in having a strong employer-engaged scholarship vision/mission if, for example, the college's higher education (HE) provision exists mainly to provide an access/widening participation service. Another approach might be to just ensure that the scholarship vision/mission is aligned with the college's vision and mission.

2. Definition. It probably also makes sense for a college to develop an accepted definition of scholarship or a statement indicating what scholarship means for the college. This is important – and could provide a useful opportunity to consult widely to develop understanding and future support. The Simmons Report also indicates that in developing this definition (a) you may want to provide a theoretical or philosophical base such as West Nottinghamshire College [page 3] and Bradford College [appendix 4 page 19]; (b) a list of scholarly activities is not a definition, but could be included as an explanatory or indicative appendix; (c) if you include CPD you need to differentiate that from scholarly activity [see page 3 for a useful out-take from the Madeleine King and John Widdowson paper]; and (d) it is probably sensible to be aware of your validating institution's definition.
  
3. Embedded-ness. The first two outputs could take some time, especially if the college wants to consult widely with all staff? Both, of course, are fairly ineffective instruments unless you have a plan and processes/practices that will meet the ideals contained in the vision/mission and the content in the definition. Drawing on the Simmons Report, here's what you could include:
  - A scholarship culture. Possibly the trickiest to implement and sustain. Much will depend on present cultures and norms in the college. One element will undoubtedly include senior staff 'buying in' to such a culture and they themselves acting in a scholarly way. This is likely to include some form of discussion with the Executive/Senior/College Management Team/because if the other members of staff don't observe this behaviour they will be far more reticent to embed such an approach in their own practice. It is also important for staff to understand that scholarship is not just about writing an article for a peer-refereed journal or producing a piece of fine art, although both are, of course, appropriate. Engaging with employers and students in a scholarly way, developing a new curriculum and being active in your professional/occupational association(s) are all forms of scholarly activity. It is important that structures are established that capture these activities (see below). Moreover, cultural change can take time, although some argue for a 'big bang' approach. Each college will need to think deeply about this issue.
  - Appraisal. For scholarship to become embedded it must become part of the appraisal process. This will probably need to be a mandatory measure. How it is achieved will depend on present appraisal policies and practices but could include simply adding a scholarship heading onto the present appraisal form(s).
  - Annual and Programme Review Committees (APRC). Again, it would make sense to add scholarship, and possibly student and employer scholarship, as standing agenda items in these committees – and this could also facilitate programme/team approaches to scholarship. It will also be appreciated by your validating partner and external examiners if you can add evidence to an external quality assurance report such as Annual Programme Review, improved National Student Survey (NSS) scores

and, of course, the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) institutional commentary. An Executive will also see the sense in this.

- Department/Faculty/College-wide HE committees. If the scholarship discussion/outcomes/actions were included in APRC minutes the issue would also naturally occur on other wider college committees – so the concept and associated actions then become embedded at all levels and there is an accountability tree. It's important to note that, as 'champions' emerge and their actions are noted and disseminated, others will try to emulate them. A 'virtuous' cycle, as it were.
- There also needs to be a body/committee that receives a final college-wide scholarship report and signs it off, with a report probably received by the governing body. This structure will need to be determined locally.
- Publication and dissemination is also critical and all colleges undertake this in different forms – conferences, newsletters, journals etc. Hopefully, the process described above will generate material as well as strengthening sustainability.
- Resources and associated allocation structures. All colleges have budgets for staff development, some for research – and in all cases demand exceeds the resource available. Various models seem to have been developed to support scholarly activity:
  - A central 'scholarship/research' fund where proposals are submitted and agreed using transparent rules and processes. Popular but possibly more difficult for colleges with small HE cohorts to maintain.
  - As part of the staff development fund – particularly popular for those undertaking further qualifications that include a research/scholarship element.
  - Successfully bidding for project monies and undertaking research as part of the project, sometimes including support to attend and present at conferences and external workshops. This is sometimes described as Research and Development and in almost all cases will include some form of research – data collection, surveys, questionnaires, interviews etc. This type of activity often functions outside the usual college structures. It needs to be identified, captured and disseminated as part of the college's scholarly output.
  - Timetabled time for scholarly employer engagement such as assessing new technology or work-based practices.
  - Possibly a clear distinction being made between the different types of scholarship identified in the Boyer model which might act as an invitation, for example, for some teachers to concentrate specifically on the scholarship of teaching and learning, and possibly with separate funds being made available for that type of research. There are many permutations here.
- Other forms of support include: the shorter HE academic year freeing up time for scholarship; adroit timetabling to release self-directed study time; some form of remission from teaching based on HE teaching load. Often, a college uses a

combination of these and other measures such as financial support to study at postgraduate level.

Each college will need to work out its own policies and practices in this area; some colleges leave it to local departments, usually Heads of Department, to decide practices in this area. This could be appropriate in colleges with one department that is 'HE-heavy' but of course covert practices usually come to light over time.

### **Capturing activity, dissemination and impact**

4. Support for embedding scholarly activity is unlikely to be successful unless its worth can be demonstrated to students, practitioners and senior managers. And providing causal relationships in such a complicated process such as teaching and learning is not easy. Before addressing the issue of impact, it is worth noting that unless you capture something that can be measured you cannot measure it. So, capturing scholarly activity is a crucial first step and can involve a variety of instruments: (a) through administrative and quality assurance structures as indicated previously; (b) seeking articles or opinion pieces for a regular internal newsletter; (c) seeking inputs into internal, possibly end-of-year summative conferences and celebrations of outputs and impacts, and recognition for staff and students engaged in scholarly activity; (d) some form of regular, possibly annual, scholarly activity college publication. Trying to capture inputs from students and employers, probably via the staff, could also be productive; this is only likely to be achieved if staff members understand that scholarship includes a variety of activities.

The above also covers dissemination; capturing without disseminating can make an impact appear weak. For other dissemination methods, see the section in the Simmons Report [page 7/8].

Measuring impact is more challenging. This note has already indicated that by capturing and including a summary of scholarly activities in external reports such as the institutional commentary for the TEF scholarship could be very useful. There are also other measures that could be improved by implementing a 'scholarship culture' such as NSS scores, improved retention, employability and a higher TEF award. It may also mean that a validating university is more prepared to validate honours programmes and local employers may be prepared to commission applied research. Scholarship activities can also be of mutual benefit to the college and local community: examples could include arts projects and social audits. It is likely that to achieve these improvements over time significant scholarly engagement would need to take place with students and employers. It is also sensible to explore internal surveys with college students to ascertain the impact of introducing a more scholarly culture. It is worth noting that trend results take time, and are not always possible in a fast-moving environment. Colleges thinking about Taught/Foundation Degree Awarding Powers or possibly 'challenger provider' DAP (to be confirmed) would already be making their case by acting in these ways.

## **Key recommendations**

- a) Decide the 'policy model': one scholarship policy, integrate in other policies or some form of hybrid.
- b) Develop a Scholarship Vision, Mission and Definition, likely to be aligned with the college's approach to these measures.
- c) Embed scholarship in some form in the college's appraisal processes.
- d) Embed scholarship in administrative and internal quality assurance structures.
- e) Develop some form of resource base and resource allocation process to support scholarship.
- f) Develop a policy on capturing and disseminating scholarly activity.
- g) Identify measures such as NSS scores and internal survey results that can measure impact.

## **Timescales**

The final scholarship framework will ready for adoption from May 2018.

Central Project Team

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