THE SCHOLARSHIP FRAMEWORK

# 'Going public': Disseminating the results of scholarly activity

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Preface

This guidance document summarises the content, activities and feedback from two scholarship project workshops aimed at encouraging college higher education (college HE) practitioners to disseminate the results of the scholarly activity they have taken part in.

It is split into two equal parts: the first part looks at the importance of scholarly activity for higher education in general and looks at the question of what it means to 'go public' with scholarly work; the second part offers practical advice to busy practitioners on how to get involved in the public dissemination of their scholarly activity. It also offers advice to college HE managers when seeking to recognise and reward those who have taken part in such activities.

If you have read Part One or you are already familiar with why scholarly activity is important in higher education, you can jump straight to Part Two.

Part One: The role of scholarly activity in higher education
Part Two: Practical advice on getting involved in scholarly activity
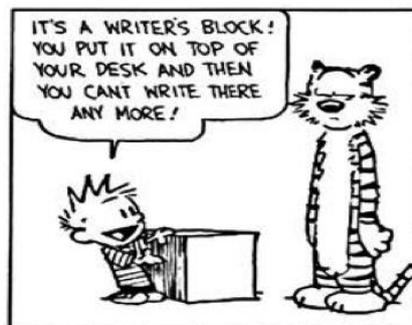
Bill Watterson, *Calvin and Hobbes*: Calvinandhobbes.co.uk

Part One: The role of scholarly activity in higher education

1.1 The importance of scholarly activity to higher education

In equal measure, both policy and academic literature emphasises the significance of scholarship to the higher education experience – for both staff and students:

"The relationship between teacher and learner is ...completely different in higher education from what it is in schools. At the higher level, the teacher is not there for the sake of the student, both have their justification in the service of scholarship." (von Humboldt, 1810)

"The pursuit of research takes academics into territory where they have to rethink, rework, explore and test fundamental concepts of their discipline. Through such work, scholars play a role in the development of their discipline and gain insights into the constitution of the problems that confront their peers. When they teach, they do not merely transmit knowledge but involve students in a common project. And when they teach, they don't simply communicate ideas read in books but also insights gained through the experience of pursuing research." (Furedi, 2004a)

"The Quality Code notes that 'Scholarship and research lie at the heart of higher education', while acknowledging that the precise nature of these scholarly activities is determined by subject differences as well as by differences in focus, level, scope and provider context...Such activity does not necessarily mean doing original research but it does mean doing more than simply professional development. An applicant for taught degree-awarding powers is required to provide evidence of productive scholarly activity by its staff, demonstrating active involvement in the generation or reformulation of academic knowledge and the dissemination of understanding or ideas to both internal and external audiences." (QAA, 2013)

From these extracts we can conclude that scholarship is integral to the very meaning of a higher education experience, although it may be appropriate to

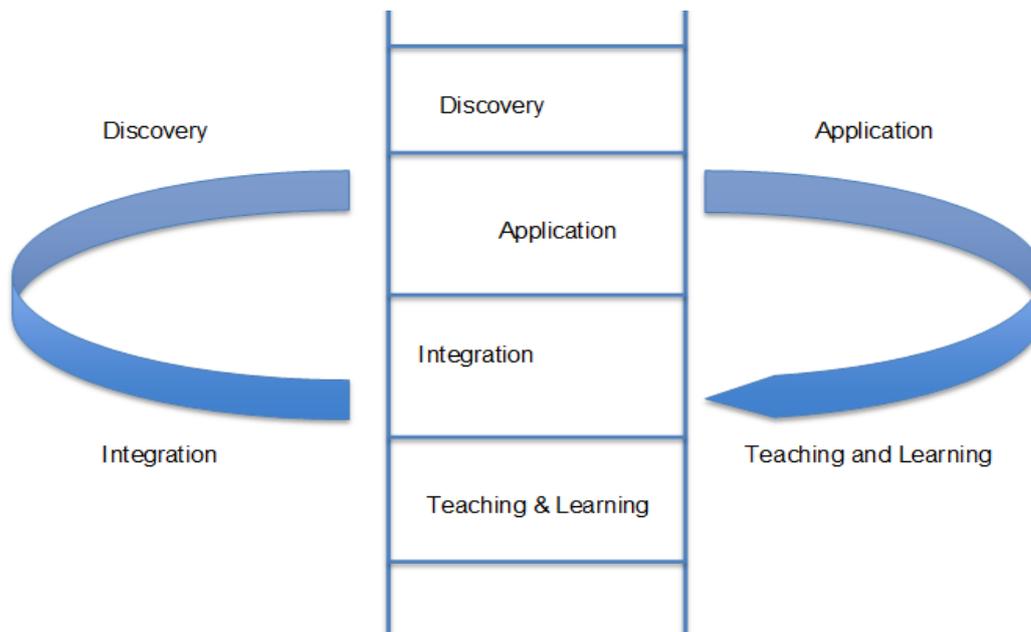interpret that meaning in a number of ways according to context, while acknowledging a core component.

1.2 The role of scholarly activity in college higher education

Since the introduction of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in 1986 and its replacement by the Research Excellence Framework (REF) in 2008, UK universities have become accustomed to channelling, monitoring and evaluating the scholarly activity of their academic staff in accord with the perceived need to do well in this high-stakes exercise, and to ensure that any such activity fits the required definitions.

To a large extent those definitions of research (essentially, the process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared) follow from pre-existing custom and practice within academic disciplines which accords high status to the publication of research insights in prestigious international journals and subsequent citation by other academics. It is unlikely - for the foreseeable future - that any college in the UK, even those with large higher education provision, would be able to emulate and compete in this kind of research space. Indeed, it may not even be viewed as desirable.

For these reasons the scholarship project took its lead from the seminal work of Ernest Boyer (1990) in claiming that the elevation of a narrow range of research activity in elite universities in the US (which he labels the Scholarship of Discovery) to become the most important type of scholarly activity has had the effect of downgrading other equally valid forms of scholarship.

Figure 1: Depictions of Boyer's four scholarships

Discovery

Discovery

Application

Application

Integration

Application

Integration

Teaching and Learning

Integration

Teaching & Learning

Adapted from Lea (2015) *Enhancing Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, p2.

The significance of the re-application of this model to the college HE context in the UK has been noted and explored (e.g. Lea and Simmons, 2012; Healey, Jenkins and Lea, 2014), not only in terms of helping to elevate the validity of a broader range of scholarly activity but also in helping to produce a more rounded notion of what it means to be a scholar, along with all the implications this would bring in terms of professional development and professional identity.
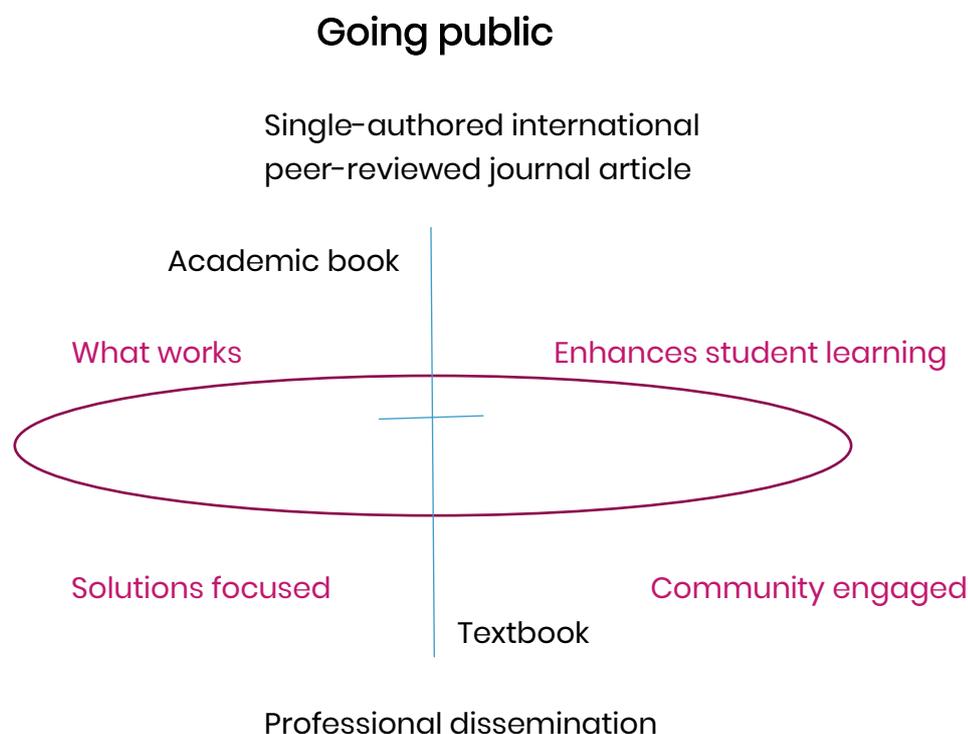
1.3 Going public in college higher education

Following on from the work of (amongst others) of Jacoby (1987), Shulman (2000), Furedi (2004b), Huber and Hutchings (2000) and Kreber (2013), we can also see here a call to restore a sense of public duty to ensure that the outputs of scholarly activity are truly in the public domain (not just in the academic journal) and are able to address wider issues of social justice, and what Boyer himself originally referred to as an overarching 'scholarship of engagement' (Boyer 1996). That is, a call to ensure that all four of his scholarships are turned outwards to maximise their impacts on students, the community and wider society. In simple terms, this is the scholar as public intellectual, not cloistered academic.

Given the role of colleges in serving, particularly, their local communities – including their role in the training and education of a local workforce, and their often avowed duty to widen educational opportunities to local students, it is clear that 'engaged' forms of scholarship could and perhaps should be pursued,

resulting in a clear message for colleges about what it might mean to go public with research and scholarly activity, and a wider recognition of the public channels through which the results of scholarly activity might appear.

Figure 2: Going public with the results of scholarly activity

Going public

Single-authored international
peer-reviewed journal article

Academic book

What works   Enhances student learning

Solutions focused   Community engaged

Textbook

Professional dissemination

Here we see a challenge for colleges depicted as a distinction between a traditional research-focused academic (working and aspiring upwards on the vertical access) and a more rounded Boyer-type college teacher seeking to explore a wider range of engaged scholarly activity.

The challenge to college HE here is clear but it would also need institutional support and resource, which is itself high risk – particularly given the pre-existing status and income streams which surround success in exercises like the REF. Without careful management and bold articulation there is a danger that the activities of colleges in seeking to widen notions of going public might result in them being accorded second-class research status. On the other hand, the scholarly activity of colleges might equally make an enormously valuable contribution to widening what it means to go public with scholarly work; what it means to be a scholar; and to measure the impact of scholarship more in terms of engagement and social justice, not just advances in academic knowledge (important as the latter might be). Indeed, one of the main reasons for moving

from the old RAE to the new REF was to try to capture and assess research in terms of its wider impact, in which case there need not be an unhelpful dichotomy here, rather an emerging broader synergy of activities.

Part Two: Practical advice on getting involved in scholarly activity

2.1 Practical advice on getting involved in Boyer-type engaged forms of scholarly activity and going public with the results.

Scholarship of Discovery
If you are involved in advancing knowledge in your field but have never published in   a peer-reviewed journal, try out your ideas first in a small conference setting, or consider writing a blog post or opinion piece, or seek publication in an academic magazine, such as Educational Developments or Nursing Times – or equivalent publications within your subject area.

Scholarship of Application
If you have close links with your subject's professional practice and/or local firms, consider engaging in some small-scale research aimed at solving a commercial problem. This might be conducted in collaboration with representatives from a local firm and/or some of your students. Seek public recognition for this in a local newspaper and/or a relevant professional publication.

Scholarship of Integration
If a course you are working on is about to be revalidated or redesigned treat the exercise as a scholarly activity – utilising some research tools to evaluate existing practice – and/or seek to include innovative ideas, knowledge and research from a range of subject areas, including ideas to encourage interdisciplinarity (see separate resource on this subject). More ambitiously, consider producing a textbook or guidance document for fellow practitioners in your field.

Scholarship of Teaching
When evaluating your teaching or a course, or when seeking innovation in pedagogic practice, treat this as an action research cycle (or series of cycles) (McNiff, 2009). Identify a professional/pedagogic problem and include colleagues and students as collaborators in enhancing practice. Consider presenting the results at a learning and teaching event and possibly publishing it in a journal or magazine.

The role of action research in promoting scholarly activity – James McKernan

"…teaching is not one activity and inquiring into it another."(McKernan, 1996; 3)

"Action research is carried out by practitioners seeking to improve their understanding of events, situations and problems so as to increase the effectiveness of their practice." (McKernan, 1996; 4)

"Action research is systematic self-reflective scientific inquiry by practitioners to improve practice."(McKernan, 1996; 5)

N.B.
In all of the above examples consider whether the outputs from the scholarly activity need to be in strict, traditional, written form (e.g. consider videos and other digital media as a dissemination mechanism).

2.2 Practical advice on getting involved in scholarly activity in general

For practitioners

1 The importance of collaboration
In a busy professional context always be looking to collaborate: with colleagues who are interested in the same thing and/or colleagues from other subject areas; with your students who could become research assistants or interns and/or get course credit for their work; with representatives from the local community (including employers); with other educational institutions and partner universities.

2 The importance of your professional context
Always be thinking about how everyday routine work practices could become the subject of a scholarly activity. For example, what frustrates you about anything that happens at work? This could become a researchable topic. How could quality assurance activities become quality enhancement activities involving investigative activities? For example, could peer review of practice and teaching observations become a space for collaborative action research?

3 The importance of initial teacher educational and CPD

Ask yourself whether your teacher training prepared you to undertake research and scholarly activity, and/or whether there are sufficient CPD events and activities which will advance your ability to become more scholarly in your work. Do you think that there is momentum, incentive and support to continue with scholarly work outside of formal training contexts? Discuss these ideas with the educational development team, HR and/or the teacher-training department, including conversations on how engagement with the UKPSF could be supported in scholarly ways.

See the separate guidance documents on the Continuum Model for Scholarship

Questions for college HE managers

1 To what extent do you believe that the evaluation of teaching staff adequately supports scholarly activity? For example, does the appraisal process give sufficient attention to scholarly activity; does the review of teaching give sufficient attention to scholarly activity?

2 What support is given to teaching staff to undertake scholarly activity – both in terms of resource and time, and is this a transparent process, available to all staff (pro rata)?

3 What reward and recognition systems operate in your college and how could these be enhanced? For example, what is the process to encourage staff to undertake higher degrees; are there sufficient conferences and workshops for people to present and discuss scholarly activity; are those who take part in such activity recognised formally for their work (perhaps in a college magazine, or by being given a title or role which recognises their contribution).

Please refer to the separate guidance note on developing a college scholarship policy

N.B.

In a scarce resource environment, consider targeting some scholarly activity where it is most likely to have significant impact such as where it can be demonstrated to have enhanced student learning; enhanced the college environment for staff and students; and/or enhanced the standing of the college in the wider community.

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And remember that a focus on engaged forms of scholarly activity has the potential to enormously enhance a TEF submission, a DAP application, and to be considered a strength in the APR process.

Furthermore, public recognition for scholarly activity has the potential to produce a significant funding stream to a college to support future scholarly activity.

2.3 Practical advice for practitioners with 'writer's block' and other similar ailments

The prospect of going public with the results of scholarly activity can be daunting (much like the actor about to go on stage). This daunting dimension should be acknowledged by everyone involved in enhancing scholarly activity in colleges.

The following is a range of advice from practitioners in support of other practitioners:

Tips from a busy professional educator – Anita Gibbs
Paraphrased from Gibbs, 2016; 257–258

Regularly attend conferences - to prepare a paper or do a presentation...a good bulk of the reading will then be done;

Revise and learn from referees' comments on submitted manuscripts - rejected manuscripts have found an alternative outlet - use rejections to improve your writing;

Mentor colleagues or students - for joint publications ... and seek out others with more experience as joint authors;

Set publication targets ... without such goals plans will drift away and merge with teaching and administration;

Spend frequent (3–5 times a week) 15-min breaks focused on a topic;

Focus on small research and small teaching projects - the everyday work of a profession-based educator is important.

'I teach what I research and research what I teach'
(Martínez et al., 2011, 706, quoted in Gibbs, 2016; 256)

The Write Everyday mantra – Robert Boice

Daily writing prevents writer's block.
Daily writing demystifies the writing process.
Daily writing keeps your research always at the top of your mind.
Daily writing generates new ideas.
Daily writing stimulates creativity
Daily writing adds up incrementally.
Daily writing helps you figure out what you want to say.

Sword, 2016; 314, based on the work of Boice, 1990)

The Broad Church approach – Helen Sword

"...roughly seven out of eight academics surveyed do not write every day; daily writing turns out to be neither a reliable marker nor a clear predictor of overall academic success. (Sword, 2016; 316)

"The secret to their academic success lies not in any specific element of their daily routine but in a complex cluster of attributes and attitudes that I call their 'writing BASE': behavioural habits of discipline and persistence, artisanal habits of craftsmanship and pride, social habits of collegiality and collaboration, and emotional habits of positivity and resilience (Sword, 2017; see also www.writersdiet.com/base)."

(Sword 2016; 320)

NB

All the above advice would apply equally to scholarly activity which is not presented in traditional written form. In this context 'writer's block' is a metaphor.

'Writer's block' could be purely a mental phenomenon – related to nervousness and lack of confidence, but it might also be related to material circumstances – that you are being made to feel guilty about other things you should be doing. It is important to be open about this and discuss these issues with colleagues whenever possible. Managers should be especially mindful of these issues in relation to supporting the dissemination of scholarly activity.

Scholarship playing cards

This document is accompanied by a series of playing cards, which concisely summarise some key concepts and ideas aimed at enhancing scholarship. They are written for busy practitioners but include references to further reading on each subject. They were prepared by Gail Hall, Scholarship Development Manager, with support from colleagues involved in the Scholarship Project.

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