EXTRACT FROM ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES: 12.5.15

15.25 KEY PRINCIPLES OF THE ULSTER STUDENT EXPERIENCE (ADEC/15/09)

Mrs McEvoy presented a report from the Working Group and advised that the Group had been established to develop the Key Principles of the Ulster undergraduate student learning and teaching experience. It was noted that:

* The Group had reviewed Ulster’s Graduate Qualities, had sought to determine how the University ensured these would be fulfilled for all students, and that students were made aware of the qualities they would graduate with.
* Six proposed Key Principles, focused on the academic curriculum, had been developed, covering the following areas: The Ulster Learning Model (an overarching Principle that incorporated both the pedagogic approach to learning and the partnership nature of student engagement in learning and teaching); Employability; Internationalisation; Digital Literacy; Research/ Teaching Nexus; Ethics and Sustainability.
* The Ulster Learning Model had not been intended as a one size fits all approach but rather for Course Teams to determine the right combination of elements in the right proportions to ensure an excellent student experience. This would look different for different subjects and different levels of study.
* It would be important to manage students’ expectations in relation to the Principles and to provide peer support and tools for staff as part of a mutually supportive framework in the implementation stage.
* Evaluation/Revalidation would be an enabler to this journey, which would focus on the undergraduate experience before being rolled out to postgraduate and associate students.

The Committee endorsed the Key Principles and the proposed next steps regarding Communication, Implementation, Monitoring and Alignment with other activities.

[Website: <http://adl.ulster.ac.uk/principles> (username: principles; password: principles)]

STUDENT EXPERIENCE PRINCIPLES WORKING GROUP

BACKGROUND

The Student Experience Principles Working Group was established as a task-and-finish working group to define and develop principles of the Ulster Student Learning Experience. It was not intended to redefine the Ulster experience but to articulate in a set of Principles the aspirations of a range of existing and developing strategies as they impact on the student experience in relation to learning and teaching and the delivery of Ulster’s graduate qualities.

A Working Group with wide representation from Faculties and central departments was established to develop the principles. There have been three full meetings of the Group and the membership has been divided into sub-groups which have taken responsibility for further developing each of the principles. The draft principles were considered by the Student Engagement Sub-Committee at its meeting on 25 March 2015 and the principles have subsequently been further revised and developed.

THE PRINCIPLES

Six principles have been developed covering the following areas:

* The Ulster Learning model. This is the fundamental principle and incorporates both the pedagogic approach to learning and the partnership nature of student engagement in learning and teaching.
* Employability
* Internationalisation
* Digital Literacy
* Research/Teaching nexus
* Ethics and Sustainability

The principles should remain a living document reflecting the development of strategies and the organisational learning as strategies and the principles are implemented. Consequently, they will be regularly reviewed and refreshed. In addition, focus groups will be held periodically with student representatives to ensure that the principles are, and continue to be, meaningful for the student body.

NEXT STEPS

1. Communication

A number of communication strategies are proposed:

* Publication of short guides for staff and students;
* Development of a BBLearn site for staff;
* Engagement with ‘champions’ within each Faculty to facilitate discussion at course level;
* Launch activities (aligned to the Corporate Brand and in consultation with colleagues from Corporate Communications);
* Involvement in a range of existing activities to promote the principles, for example, presentations at the Employability conference and Faculty events and through CHERP activities.

1. Implementation

Each of the principles includes a section on implementation which considers how the individual principle might be implemented and suggests questions to prompt discussion within course teams. In terms of the set of principles as a whole, course teams are asked initially to consider the following questions:

* 1. In which of the principles is the course strong and where could we do more?
  2. What should we highlight to students pre-entry and during the induction phase?
  3. What does the student learning experience on the course look like against these principles throughout the student journey in the achievement of the graduate qualities? What should it look like for this discipline in year 1, year 2…?
  4. What is the (a) knowledge and understanding and (b) the behaviours that students in the discipline should be able to demonstrate and where are these developed?
  5. How do we ensure students are aware that they are developing their skills and are able to articulate their learning in relation to each of the principles?
  6. What is the expertise of the course team in developing these and what good practice exists within the University or the discipline that could usefully be used to inform thinking and stimulate course team discussions?

Discussion of these questions and the principles should form the basis for preparation for the new Programme Review and Development process. In the interim, the initial discussions of course teams will be explored through the revalidation process during meetings with the panel and should be articulated in the course document (see d) below).

1. Monitoring

Monitoring will be conducted in a variety of ways, where possible utilising existing processes. The following are example of monitoring activity:

* Periodic focus groups with student representatives organised in conjunction with the Students’ Union;
* Revalidation and the new Programme Review and Development process;
* Course reviews conducted under the new annual monitoring process;
* Faculty learning and teaching committee’s to facilitate initial discussions and, subsequently, oversee implementation and monitoring of the principles. This should be supported by Faculty ‘champions’, learning and teaching coordinators and Heads of School.

1. Alignment with other activities

Consideration of the principles will be built into the new Programme Review and Development Process. In the interim, the principles will be discussed with course teams by revalidation panels and should be considered alongside the Graduate Qualities and Employability aspects of the revalidation document.

The Student Charter and Learning and Teaching Charter will be reviewed in 2015/16 to ensure that the alignment is explicit and that the principles are fully reflected within the Charter content.

**Ulster’s Learning Model**

PRINCIPLE:

**Ulster’s Learning Model**:

* **Ulster students will be at the heart of the learning experience.**
* **Ulster students will engage in a collaborative, learner-centred, active and participative environment, with opportunities for inter-disciplinary learning where appropriate.**
* **Learner-centred teaching will promote inquiry-based learning methods to facilitate exploration, innovation, critical-thinking, leadership and problem-solving.**
* **Learning will be facilitated through critical reflection of transformative learning experiences individually and in teams.**
* **Ulster students and staff will be engaged in a learning community, which facilitates the transition through programmes of study and onto employment.**

EXPLANATORY NOTES / COMMENTS:

Further explication of the principle/definition of any terms included to ensure shared understanding.

Ulster’s Learning Model will promote the learner as a partner in the learning process and learners working closely with academic and support staff, will be empowered to determine their own learning journey. The learning, teaching and assessment strategy will adopt active learning pedagogies, underpinned by appropriate discipline-specific and pedagogic research and scholarship.

Learner engagement has been defined as “active and collaborative learning, participation in challenging academic activities, formative communication with academic staff, involvement in enriching educational experiences and feeling legitimated and supported by university learning communities” (Coates, 2007, p. 122). Keppell (2014) maintains that aligning pedagogical, technical and administrative issues is also a necessary condition of success in creating an engaging learning environment.

‘Learner-centred-ness’ is a complex interaction of the programs, practices, policies, and people as perceived by the individual learners (McCombs, 2000b). The learner-centred principles are foundational in determining methods for using and evaluating programs and practices that provide instruction (McCombs and Vakili, 2005). This will also require clear communication channels and appropriate sign-posting/referral to internal services eg. Student Support, Learning Resource centre, Employability and Marketing, Careers.

LINKS TO EXISTING STRATEGIES/POLICIES ETC:

Student Experience principles pertaining to Ulster’s Learning Model relate to:

UKPSF, QAA, L&T Strategy (2013-18), Transition Policy, Yr 1 Teaching and Learning Policy, HEA 'What Works' Project, Ulster SRS, UUSU Charters, Graduate Qualities, Student Support Strategy (2014-2018), Digital Learning Strategy. Key elements of a select range of these strategies and policies are highlighted below:

**Graduate Qualities:**

Ulster graduates will demonstrate:

* flexibility, creativity and an entrepreneurial approach to problem solving
* self-confidence, global citizenship, ethical leadership, and a commitment to life-wide learning, professionalism and employability
* effective collaborative working, communication skills and the capacity for reflective practice, including the ability to give and receive feedback

**UKPSF:**

**Dimensions of the Framework:**

* Areas of Activities
* Core Knowledge
* Professional Values

**QAA: UK QUALITY CODE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

**B3 Learning and Teaching**

UK higher education embraces a wide variety of modes of both learning and teaching, which can be used in different combinations. These include flexible and distributed learning, work-based or placement learning, and technology-enhanced learning.

In the case of learning and teaching, a partnership between staff and students can empower students to develop further as active and independent learners who recognise and take responsibility for their own learning. Such a partnership, whether through formal or informal arrangements, acknowledges that while providers are responsible for providing inclusive learning opportunities and support for learning, the effectiveness with which the learning opportunities are used is a matter for students themselves.

In agreeing their strategic approach, higher education providers recognise that effective learning occurs when students are enabled to:

• engage actively in learning, and participate fully in the learning opportunities that are presented to them

• understand their learning environment, its culture and resources

• embrace the aims and expectations of their chosen programme of study

• demonstrate understanding of, and an ability to reflect upon, the ways in which their skills and knowledge are developing

• recognise and value their existing knowledge and skills, and build upon them

• make effective and responsible use of advice, guidance and feedback from formative and summative assessment that is provided during their programme of study

• avail themselves of the opportunities to acquire and develop learning skills

• understand sound academic practice and behave with integrity

• contextualise and apply their developing knowledge and skills to their wider experience and plans for the future

**QAA: B5 Student Engagement**

It is widely accepted that the views of students, individually and collectively, should

inform quality systems with the purpose of improving the student educational

experience both for current and future cohorts. Student involvement in quality can

have a positive influence on the delivery and development of any aspect of the student

educational experience, whether implemented by the higher education provider, a

faculty, a department, or an individual member of staff. Aspects of the educational

journey into which students can offer insight include:

• application and admission

• induction and transition into higher education

• programme and curriculum design, delivery and organisation

• curriculum content

• teaching delivery

• learning opportunities

• learning resources

• student support and guidance

• assessment.

All students should have the opportunity to be involved in quality enhancement and

assurance processes in a manner and at a level appropriate to them. In considering

approaches it is important that higher education providers create a culture and

environment where students are encouraged to take up the opportunities on offer. For

this environment to be effective, higher education providers are likely to:

• foster active student participation in their quality systems, including using individual and collective feedback from students

• implement transparent mechanisms, agreed with students, for the nomination and election of student representatives

• provide induction and ongoing support for students and staff appropriate to their quality assurance roles

• monitor, review and enhance the effectiveness of their policies and processes for engaging students in their quality processes.

**LEARNING & TEACHING STRATEGY (2013-18)**

L&T Strategy: “to provide transformative, high quality, learning experiences through the promotion of meaningful staff-student partnerships that engender a shared responsibility” and key supporting objectives.

* Its strategic intent is to enhance the student experience through the provision of well-designed, flexible, inclusive, relevant and accessible programmes and curricula that promote student engagement and success.
* It also commits us to involving students more in operational development and quality enhancement.

In striving to achieve our goal we have identified four overarching priority themes to shape and focus our activities viz student engagement and partnership, employability and graduateness, flexibility and responsiveness, and recognition and reward.

**Strategic Aim 1**

***To provide appropriate learning opportunities which are flexible, responsive to, and inclusive of, the needs of students, professions, industry and the wider community.***

**Key Enabling Objectives**

· To promote, *embed and develop safe, yet challenging, learning environments that support active learning, through a learning and teaching ethos underpinned by current and appropriate discipline-specific and pedagogic research and scholarship*, building, where appropriate, upon new and emerging technologies.

· To *promote and embed inquiry-based activities across the curricula which are designed to develop a range of generic, info literacy, critical inquiry, and/or subject specific research skills, and their transferability into professional settings* and/or further study.

· To promote *inclusive and flexible learning provision and communities in order to respond to student diversity and preferences*, and the needs and expectations of practising professionals.

**Strategic Aim 2**

***To provide transformative, high quality, learning experiences through the promotion of meaningful staff student partnerships that engender a shared responsibility.***

**Key Enabling Objectives**

· To develop *students’ knowledge, skills and confidence through active learning experiences with fellow students from diverse backgrounds*, to engender a sense of student belonging and identity.

· To develop *supportive partnerships and learning communities* amongst and between students and staff to engender mutual respect and trust.

· To develop ways of working that foster *students active engagement with their learning and career progression and values their contributions to shaping the design and delivery of programmes.*

**Strategic Aim 3**

***To enhance Ulster’s role as a sector leader for student employability as an integral part of the wider student experience.***

**Key Enabling Objectives**

· To provide students with opportunities to avail of *flexible work-based learning opportunities* in a wide variety of settings in the UK and internationally.

· To build upon and further support enhancements for work-based/related learning opportunities for students and graduates through the *development of new, flexible models of provision.*

· To encourage *faculty approaches to employability in curriculum design and delivery* that are transparent to both potential and current students, their families, and other relevant stakeholders.

IMPLEMENTATION METHODS:

Give examples of what this principle might look like when implemented in the learning and teaching environment – how might it look for different disciplines / different contexts / different stages in the student journey?

This overarching principle impacts on all aspects of the learning and teaching environment, as highlighted in the areas suggested below. The implementation of this principle will be visible in the 'how' rather than the 'what' ie the process rather than the product. A few examples of what this might look like are suggested below.

* Learning Design eg students involved in Course Committees to input on designing new programmes in their subject area
* Curriculum Development eg students engaged in dialogue with Course Teams about the content of modules on their programmes of study and reflecting on modules studied, to aid the revision of modules, as well as looking at the modules they will be taking in the following year, to suggest improvements/enhancements
* Evaluation/Revalidation eg students and alumni actively engaged in contributing to changes being made to programmes during Revalidation
* Governance – Student reps empowered to proactively engage with their fellow students and members of staff, to inform staff/student consultations, Course, School and Faculty committees
* Transitions and support –greater partnerships with schools, in order to build a more seamless transition from school to university; early identification of students’ learning needs, in order to ensure the transition into university is a successful and enjoyable one; continued pastoral support for students from ‘widening participation’ backgrounds, particularly throughout 1st year, through studies advisor system, study ‘buddy’ and mentoring practices; excellent customer care practices in all central departments that front-face students, to provide a high standard of service to the new and returning student
* Students as change agents – students gain a greater awareness of issues facing wider society and are empowered to act, through the knowledge and skills they gain at university, in order to improve society and enhance the quality of life for all.
* Student Research network – students actively engage in developing areas of interest, whereby they research and share knowledge with peers and academics, thus contributing to new knowledge in their discipline and developing a professional ethos, which contributes to their employability
* Assessment and Feedback strategies – module co-ordinators and lecturers engage in dialogue with students in the design and modification of assessment briefs, adopting strategies as suggested by Gilbert & Maguire (2014)
* Physical and virtual learning environments – learning spaces will engender a partnership approach to learning, with opportunities for students to share knowledge and understanding, explore ‘troublesome knowledge’ and engage in ‘deep’ learning
* Digital learning – technology enhances the learning experience with ‘state-of-the-art’ resources, excellent technical support and continuing professional development for staff to develop their competency and confidence in this area

DEVELOPING THIS PRINCIPLE WITHIN COURSES

Suggest a few questions which academic staff/course teams might usefully consider to enable them to critically evaluate their current learning and teaching methods against the principle and which might help them to identify potential enhancements.

* How, in your Yr 1 curriculum, do students get to know their peers and promote a community of learning?
* How are students encouraged to develop enquiry and information literacy skills?
* What active and flexible learning pedagogies are applied throughout the student journey?
* How do your students build the skills and confidence to become autonomous independent learners?
* Where do you build opportunities for dialogue and critical reflection into the learning process?
* What mechanisms do you have within your programme to enable students to contribute to the design of the curriculum and assessment?
* How are Students informed of Student Support services and sign-posted to the relevant service(s)?

MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION:

Detail how progress towards ensuring this principle is embedded will be monitored.

It is envisaged that this overarching principle will be monitored largely through the monitoring processes of all the other principles ie if all the other principles are embedded within the Ulster University learning and teaching practices, the principles outlined in the Learning Model should be clearly visible. However, we envisage this as a two-way process, whereby underpinning all University systems and processes with these guidelines, should lead to developing excellent practices with regard to the surrounding principles. Evaluation and revalidation activity, as well as ongoing course review is a natural home for staff to review how this principle is embedded within their practice and what changes might be required to ensure that they strive for excellence in this area. Equally, the principle recognises that to make this learning model a reality for Ulster students, the principles must be embedded in all areas of the student experience. Thus central departments and other student-facing services must develop robust mechanisms by which they can measure their contribution to ensuring these guidelines match the realities of the student experience

LINKS/RESOURCES:

If you are aware of any useful links/key contacts/support available for staff, please detail these here.

CHERP 2013 annual conference on Student Engagement:

<http://www.ulster.ac.uk/centrehep/conference_presentations.html>

Cook-Sather, A., Bovill, C., Felten, P., (2014), *Engaging Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching, A guide for faculty*, Jossey-Bass.

Cullen, R, Harris, M and Hill, RR (2012), *The Learner-centred curriculum: Design and implementation,* Jossey-Bass.

Doyle, T. (2011), *Learner-centred Teaching, putting research on learning into practice*, Stylus.

Gilbert, F. & Maguire, G. (2014) *Assignment Brief Design Guidelines*, UK: HEA & Oxford Brookes University.

Hartley, P et al (2011),*Learning Development in Higher Education,* Palgrave Macmillan.

Laurillard, D. (2012), *Teaching as a design science, building pedagogical patterns for Learning and Technology*, Routledge.

HEA *Building student engagement and belonging in higher education at a time of change: a summary of findings and recommendations from the What works? Student Retention & Success programme*: <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/What_works_summary_report_1.pdf>

HEA strategic workstream / Ulster Student Engagement Steering Group: <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/centrehep/sws.html>

HEFCE – The Student Engagement Partnership: [www.tsep.org](http://www.tsep.org)

NUS Manifesto for Partnership

<http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/campaigns/highereducation/partnership/a-manifesto-for-partnerships/>

Parkes, S. “Fostering a sense of belonging: supporting the early formation of student identity as successful learners in higher education”, *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education* Issue 7: June 2014 ISSN: 1759-667X, pp. 1-22

[http://www.aldinhe.ac.uk/ojs/index.php?journal=jldhe&page=article&op=view&path%5B%5D=229](http://www.aldinhe.ac.uk/ojs/index.php?journal=jldhe&page=article&op=view&path%255B%255D=229)

[QAA Scotland Enhancement themes](http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/first-year) (2005) *The First Year: engagement and empowerment*

Thomas, L. Herbert, J. & Teras, M.  *“*A sense of belonging to enhance participation, success and retention in online programs”, *International Journal of First Year Higher Education*, Vol. 5, no. 2, 2014. <https://fyhejournal.com/article/download/233/251>

Weimer, M., (2013) *Learner-centred Teaching, Five key changes to practice*, Jossey-Bass.

[UK Engagement survey](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/consultancy-services/surveys/ukes) (2014)

**Employability**

PRINCIPLE:

**Employability: Ulster Students will develop the knowledge and skills to be confident and capable of competing for, and succeeding in, stimulating and fulfilling employment through the provision of opportunities designed into their programme of study. A student’s whole experience at Ulster contributes to successful employability.**

EXPLANATORY NOTES / COMMENTS:

The provision of employability skills is central to the University’s core strategic aims. The definition of employability, as recognised by the HEA, is the one adopted by the University, “A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy”, (Knight and Yorke, 2003). This definition places employability at the heart of curriculum design and development. Employability is closely related to the individuals’ skills development and ability to match these to the needs to employers.

Employability however, is about more than just employment and being able to find a job immediately after graduation; it is about engendering graduate qualities and providing opportunities for student development throughout the student journey. The University uses the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey (DLHE) as a measurement of employability outcomes at a programme level, along with other indicators of engagement with employability activity i.e. Ulster EDGE Award, and work-based learning activities.

Employability is very closely connected with the development of reflective practice and Personal Development Planning (PDP) which affords students the opportunity to record, reflect and act upon opportunities for personal and professional development. Encouraging students to develop their own personal learning, research and networking space, will equip them with sustainable lifelong learning skills. This should take place at regular junctures via Studies Advice, engagement with HEAR etc.

Employability supports and promotes opportunities for students to enhance and develop graduate qualities related to entrepreneurship and enterprise and to prepare them for a future of life-long learning and a constantly changing global labour market and society. Students are supported in developing these core employability skills and graduate qualities through the University’s Career Development Learning (CDL) framework. CDL is concerned with how individuals take control of their careers and are enabled to articulate the skills, knowledge, qualifications, experiences and attributes that will allow them to move into employment and manage their careers throughout their working life (Watts 1999). CDL is provided at Ulster via a framework of flexible assessed and non-assessed curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular employability interventions.

Employability supports the statement of the expected Graduate Qualities of Ulster graduates:

- Subject-specific knowledge and skills informed by current research and professional/vocational practice;

- Flexibility, creativity and an entrepreneurial approach to the resolution of problems;

- Self-confidence, global citizenship, appreciation of sustainability matters, ethical leadership, and a commitment to life-wide learning, professionalism and employability;

- Effective collaborative working, communication skills and the capacity for reflective practice, including the ability to give and receive feedback.

The University has committed to providing Work-based learning (WBL) as part of all full time undergraduate and integrated Master’s degree programmes from the September 2015 intake. WBL provides students with an authentic, meaningful learning experience that is set within a relevant work environment. The models of WBL are variable and academic programmes will utilise different methods for integrating WBL into programmes. WBL provides academic teams with the opportunity to relate assessment and learning to the graduate labour market and Ulster Graduate Qualities.

Work related learning (WRL) is more likely to be classroom based but the context of the learning and assessment is inextricably linked with relevant industries, work environments and the development of employability skills. Similarly with WBL, models and methods of delivering WRL are variable and flexible and will inevitably involve employer engagement and simulated work based situations and assessment. WRL enhances knowledge and understanding of the graduate labour market and supports students in developing Ulster Graduate Qualities.

The new Ulster student ‘Employability Journey’, will provide a mechanism to support the measurement of and progress of students on their employability journey. Students will be asked two additional questions (to include a list of options to select from) on the online registration system that will be compulsory for all returning students UG/PG, FT/PT from 2015/16. The purpose of these questions is to identify where on the employability journey a student is when commencing their studies at the University and, year on year, monitoring their progress along this journey until graduation. This will enable course teams, on an annual basis, to review how their employability interventions are working and provide demonstrable evidence of the added value their programme is having on the student experience.

The Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) is the official Ulster University document which provides a record of achievements, both academic and non-academic for students gained while studying at Ulster. It is only available to students on full-time undergraduate courses who entered the University in 2011/12 or after. Section 6.1 is a key part of the HEAR, relating to additional awards, activities and interests (both academic and non-academic) which are verified by Ulster staff. The HEAR is both a formal exit document and a formative document that can be used by Studies Advisers and other academic staff in studies advice sessions and other academic tutoring contexts.

LINKS TO EXISTING STRATEGIES/POLICIES ETC:

[Ulster University Corporate Plan (2011/12 – 2015/16)](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/corporateplan/documents/CP.pdf)

**Corporate Goal 1**

To deliver high quality, flexible, student-centred programmes of study that are intellectually challenging and which provide our students with opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to:

* gain stimulating and fulfilling employment and to contribute to the advancement of their chosen profession;
* enable those graduates who have the ability, and who seek to do so, to undertake advanced study and/or research in their chosen subject; and which
* maintains our position as a sector leader in widening access to higher education.

[Ulster University Learning and Teaching Strategy (2013/4 – 2017/18)](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/centrehep/teaching_and_learning_strategy/Learning_TeachingStrategyGraphicVersion.pdf)

**Aim 3:** To enhance Ulster’s role as a sector leader for student employability as an integral part of the wider student experience. Also see objectives (pages 9-10).

[Ulster University Learning and Teaching Support Charter](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/quality/qmau/l&tcharterjuly2013.pdf)

“You can expect that, as part of your programme of study, you will have opportunities to develop attributes that will strengthen your employability and enhance your career management skills”, and “that we will provide opportunities, as appropriate, for work-related and work-based learning”.

[Ulster University Widening Access and Participation Strategy (2011/12- 2015/16)](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/secretary/policyimplementation/policies/wap_strategy.pdf)

“Widening access and participation lies at the heart of the University’s business and all those who can benefit from the University’s courses are encouraged to apply. All those who undertake study at the University have the opportunity to gain the knowledge, understanding and skills which lead not only to successful graduation but also allow them to secure rewarding employment”.

Ulster University Internationalisation Strategy (2011/12 – 2015/16)

**Supporting Objective One**

To enhance the international student expereince in an environment that promotes inclusion and recognises and celebrates cultural diversity.

1.4 – Promote awareness of the range of available student support services including access to employability information and guidance.

IMPLEMENTATION METHODS

Give examples of what this principle might look like when implemented in the learning and teaching environment – how might it look for different disciplines / different contexts / different stages in the student journey?

**Recruitment, Transition and Induction**

* School and College Engagement activities (hardcopy and online prospectus entry, open days, EDLink, work experience portal, programme marketing materials, on-line information / advice)
* Employability modules and support available at induction
* Early involvement of employers / insights from industry
* Transition modules / materials to develop early employability skills / awareness

**During University**

* HEAR particularly the formative aspects of developing the record
* Embedding work-related and work-based learning into the curriculum
* Embedding and making visible Ulster graduate qualities
* Employers contributing to course delivery
* Promoting opportunities that encourage entrepreneurship and enhance employability and enterprise
* Promoting opportunities for work / study abroad (Erasmus, Study USA, Gaeltacht residential, etc.)
* Embedding Career Development Learning into the curriculum
* Embedding Personal Development Planning into the curriculum
* Development of activities for EDGE / EDGE Excel Award
* Employer Engagement (career events, fairs, recruitment activities)
* Active approaches to learning and teaching including for example, experiential and problem-based learning with opportunities for reflection
* Preparation for work activities (CV, Applications, Mock Interviews, Self-Assessment)
* Professional practice and study skills modules
* Employability skills being evidenced via the assessment regime
* Opportunities through the Doctoral Innovation Programme

**Post University**

* Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey (collect data from students, preparation for survey)
* Graduate internships
* Alumni Mentoring
* Support for graduates (graduates can access the Career Development Centre for up to 3 years)
* Contact and support to graduates via course teams i.e. email, LinkedIN etc.

DEVELOPING THIS PRINCIPLE WITHIN COURSES

Suggest a few questions which academic staff/course teams might usefully consider to enable them to critically evaluate their current learning and teaching methods against the principle and which might help them to identify potential enhancements.

Staff can use the Employability Development Opportunities Review Toolkit ([EDORT](http://emas04.ulster.ac.uk/edort/introduction.html)) to review the structures in place at a programme level to support student employability (**staff and student questionnaires**). Staff can use EDORT as part of course design, development and review, to assess both the evidence and impact of employability at a programme level:

**EDORT collects staff and student views on the following areas relating to employability:**

* Curriculum development
* Work-based learning
* Personal development planning
* Enterprise / Innovation / Creativity
* Transferring learning between contexts
* Real world activities / engagement
* Graduate employment
* Career development learning / Career Development Centre engagement
* Extra-curricular activity
* Staff training

EDORT encourages course teams to identify and disseminate areas of good practice relating to employability.

MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION:

Detail how progress towards ensuring this principle is embedded will be monitored.

The University Committee Structure enables progress and good practice to be monitored (and shared) at Programme, School and Faculty level.

Indicative Operational Performance Indicators and Key Strategic Performance Measures for employability are monitored and reported to the Learning and Teaching Committee through the Sub-Committee on Employability.

Some Schools and/or Faculties have initiated their own Employability Sub-Committee and appointed Chairs, Campus Coordinators etc. to lead, encourage, coordinate and monitor implementation.

LINKS/RESOURCES:

If you are aware of any useful links/key contacts/support available for staff, please detail these here

Ulster University Learning and Teaching Strategy (2013/4 – 2017/18), available at:

<http://www.ulster.ac.uk/centrehep/teaching_and_learning_strategy/Learning_TeachingStrategyGraphicVersion.pdf>

DEL Graduating to Success: HE Strategy for NI (Project 6: Enhance the employability prospects of graduates (page ref: 38), available at: http://www.delni.gov.uk/graduating-to-success-he-strategy-for-ni.pdf

HEA resources for Employability, available at: <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/workstreamsresearch/themes/employability>

HEA (2012) Pedagogy for Employability, available at: <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/pedagogy_for_employability_update_2012.pdf>

HEA (2013) Defining and developing your approach to employability: A framework for Higher Education Institutions, available at:

<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/4_8_Employability_framework_0.pdf>

A Review of business-university collaboration: the Wilson Review (2012), available at:

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http://www.hecsu.ac.uk/assets/assets/documents/wdgd\_september\_2014.pdf

High Fliers (2015) The Graduate Market in 2015 *(updated annually),* available at:

<http://www.highfliers.co.uk/download/2015/graduate_market/GMReport15.pdf>

CBI (2015) Best of Both Worlds: guide to business-university collaboration, available at:

<http://news.cbi.org.uk/reports/best-of-both-worlds/best-of-both-worlds-pdf/>

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National Centre for Universities and Business: <http://www.ncub.co.uk/reports.html>

Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR): <http://hear.ac.uk/>

Unistats – The official website for comparing UK higher education course data: <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/>

ASET - The Work Based and Placement Learning Association: <http://www.asetonline.org/>

Ulster Annual Employability Conference: <http://employability.ulster.ac.uk/2015conf/index.html>

Ulster Career Development Centre: <http://careers.ulster.ac.uk/>

Ulster EDGE and EDGE Excel Award: <http://edge.ulster.ac.uk/>

Ulster PACE System: <http://pace.ulster.ac.uk/pace/>

Ulster Graduate Qualities: <http://graduatequalities.ulster.ac.uk/>

**Internationalisation**

PRINCIPLE:

**Internationalisation: Ulster students will be equipped with the necessary skills, understanding and confidence to live, work and study in international and intercultural contexts.**

EXPLANATORY NOTES / COMMENTS:

Further explication of the principle / definition of any terms included to ensure shared understanding.

It is a reasonable expectation that all higher education students should have an international dimension to their student experience in the 21st century. Internationalisation involves:

* Preparing graduates for life in a globalised world – as economic, social and human beings
* The development of intercultural competence and graduate attributes
* An appreciation of global citizenship

Internationalisation of the curriculum is ‘the incorporation of an international and intercultural dimension into the content of the curriculum as well as the TEACHING AND LEARNING [ARRANGEMENTS] and support services of a programme of study’.

This definition implies that an internationalised curriculum [product] will:

* Engage students with internationally informed research and cultural and linguistic diversity,
* Purposefully develop students’ international and intercultural perspectives - the knowledge, skills and self awareness they need to participate effectively as citizens and professionals in a global society characterised by rapid change and increasing diversity,
* Move beyond traditional boundaries and dominant paradigms and prepare students to deal with uncertainty by opening their minds and developing their ability to think both creatively and critically,
* Be supported by services focussed on the development of intercultural competence and international perspectives.

Leask (2009)

Internationalisation supports students to be effective graduates in life and work. It involves creating and promoting opportunities for international study within the curriculum where practicable and outside of the curriculum. It encompasses aspects of knowledge and content about the international dimensions of a subject as well as the pedagogical approaches that are taken by teaching staff to help students understand the multiplicity of academic perspectives that exist in relation to their course or programme of study and to foster an appreciation for diversity and inclusion in the classroom. The latter recognises the fact that co-location of students from different cultural backgrounds is usually insufficient in itself to build integration and to encourage the development of intercultural competence and mutual understanding. The importance of the international dimension of the curriculum should be reflected in the learning outcomes articulated for each programme of study, adapted to the particular subject being taught. The international dimension of the curriculum should also be reflected in assessment where appropriate.

LINKS TO EXISTING STRATEGIES/POLICIES ETC:

Detail any existing University Strategies / policies related to this principle of which you are aware.

Graduate Qualities:

Ulster graduates will demonstrate:

* flexibility, creativity and an entrepreneurial approach to problem solving
* self-confidence, global citizenship, ethical leadership, and a commitment to life-wide learning, professionalism and employability
* effective collaborative working, communication skills and the capacity for reflective practice, including the ability to give and receive feedback

Learning and Teaching Strategy:

“It’s overarching aim is to provide students with a high quality, challenging and rewarding learning experience that equips them with the knowledge, skills and confidence necessary to demonstrate critical intellectual inquiry, to progress in their career, to adapt to change, and to become responsible global citizens who make meaningful contributions to their profession and their communities.” (Foreword, p.2)

*Key Enabling Objectives for Strategic Aim 2:*

To embed within the curriculum opportunities for students to develop as global citizens, socially, ethically and environmentally aware, sensitive to international contexts and cultures.

To exploit opportunities within course design and programme delivery for internationalising the curriculum and the student body.

*Key Enabling Objective for Strategic Aim 3:*

To provide students with opportunities to avail of flexible work-based learning opportunities in a wide variety of settings in the UK and internationally.

IMPLEMENTATION METHODS:

Give examples of what this principle might look like when implemented in the learning and teaching environment – how might it look for different disciplines / different contexts / different stages in the student journey?

Course teams will be encouraged to use Internationalisation of the Curriculum development materials in their annual review or redesign of their programmes of study – these have been developed by for example, the UK’s Higher Education Academy and the Australian Learning and Teaching Council.

One very useful resource for all subject disciplines is Leask’s Internationalisation of the Curriculum Questionnaire with guidance notes for facilitators. It can be used by course teams to audit their provision and incorporate an international dimension to all aspects of the teaching programme as they consider appropriate.

DEVELOPING THIS PRINCIPLE WITHIN COURSES

Suggest a few questions which academic staff/course teams might usefully consider to enable them to critically evaluate their current learning and teaching methods against the principle and which might help them to identify potential enhancements.

1. Where does your subject/course facilitate a variety of outward mobility opportunities for your students? How do your students find out about them?
2. How well does the professional/regulatory body associated with your programme of study support the international dimension of the curriculum?
3. What does progression of internationalisation of your curriculum look like from induction through to graduation/completion? This should be an incremental development running throughout the programme of study.
4. What do you do at the induction phase to signal to new students that the international dimension to their learning matters?
5. How do you foster integration between home and international students through the teaching and learning process? The pedagogical approaches employed in the teaching and learning process should support interactive, non-assessed and assessed (where practicable) group work that focuses on enquiry based problem solving and collaborative learning in small groups. Techniques to facilitate this can include using for example, the flipped classroom methodology.
6. Do you use international case studies for comparative analysis where appropriate?
7. Do you provide insights into alternative discourses/paradigms other than those that dominate in your subject?
8. Do you have guest speakers with differing perspectives where appropriate?
9. Do you help students understand why the international dimension to their learning matters for their employability and are they able to articulate the value of this?
10. How does the internationalisation agenda connect to and complement the other core student experience principles?

MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION:

Detail how progress towards ensuring this principle is embedded will be monitored.

A number of methods can be used:

* Numbers of students on mobility programmes and numbers of international students on programmes
* Student satisfaction with programme of study
* The extent to which internationally relevant learning outcomes are written into course documentation
* Audit of programmes of study to look at the international dimension of the curriculum being taught

LINKS/RESOURCES:

If you are aware of any useful links/key contacts/support available for staff, please detail these here.

Higher Education Academy Internationalisation workstream (various resources):

<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/workstreams-research/themes/internationalisation>

HEA (2014): Internationalising HE Framework

<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/InternationalisingHEframeworkFinal.pdf>

THE Journal – 10 Year Review of Internationalisation (2008):

<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/Journals/THE/THE/13_November_2008/attachments/Internationalisation-Bone.pdf>

International Association of Universities (2014) 4th Global Survey on Internationalisation of Higher Education – Executive Summary:

<http://www.iau-aiu.net/sites/all/files/IAU-4th-GLOBAL-SURVEY-EXECUTIVE-SUMMARY.pdf>

Liverpool John Moores University Internationalisation of the Curriculum toolkit:

<http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/HSS/HSS_Docs/internationalisation_toolkit.pdf>

Betty Leask Resources:

- Internationalising the Curriculum: Converting theory into good practice (2013): <http://www.nvao.net/page/downloads/PPT_Betty_Leask_NVAO-seminar_The_internationalised_curriculum.pdf>

- Internationalisation of the Curriculum (2011):

<http://www.aieaworld.org/assets/docs/Additional_Resource_PDFs/internationalizationofthecurriculum-leask.pdf>

Internationalisation of the Curriculum in Action: Fellowship Report (2012):

<http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-internationalisation-curriculum-action-2012>

Leask and Wallace (2011) Good Practice Report: Learning and Teaching Across Other Cultures:

<http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-good-practice-report-learning-and-teaching-across-cultures-2011>

Leask, B. (2009). ‘Using formal and informal curricula to improve interactions between home and international students’. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 13*(2), 205-221.

**Digital Literacy**

Principle:

***Digital Literacy: Ulster students will develop the knowledge, skills, experience and digital capabilities to equip them for living, learning, communicating and working in a digital world and to maximise their employability.***

**EXPLANATORY NOTES / COMMENTS:**

It is widely recognised that the ability to use appropriate technologies for communication, collaboration and information management is critical for learning and professional practice (NMC Horizon report, 2015) Whilst a recent JISC report predicted that 90% of new jobs will require “excellent digital literacy skills” (JISC, 2013). Informed by JISCs, ‘Seven areas of Digital Literacy, a digitally literate Ulster graduate should be able to develop skills to be able to find, critically evaluate, interpret and communicate information. They must to be able to produce academic and professional communications in a range of media including digitally, utilising relevant software packages to do this. They must be equipped to communicate and collaborate in a digital society, participating in digital networks and developing ethical standards for these interactions, which can be applied in a professional context. Depending on their discipline they will need to be competent in the use of relevant software and equipment and able to adapt to the introduction of new technology and digital devices. They need to develop life-long learning skills and be able to study in both formal and informal digital learning environments, participating in emerging academic and professional practices that make use of digital processes and systems. (See <http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/infokits/digital-literacies/> for further information)

The world which our graduates will work in is dependent on digital technology and communication, therefore, digital literacy needs to be developed in order to best equip our students for employment in a digital society. The assumption that the digital native generation is adept at using technology has been discredited (Bennet et al, 2008) and it has been realised that students require support in developing their digital competencies (Wright et al, 2014, Hack, 2015). Currently at Ulster, (and elsewhere across the HE sector), there is variable provision for students to develop and use digital practices. For Ulster to meet the aims of the Learning and Teaching Strategy, in particular to “enhance Ulster’s role as a sector leader for student employability”, it is critical that students are provided with opportunities to develop the digital skills, competencies and practices required in their disciplines. This requires that course teams take a strategic approach to develop these skills across their curriculum. Two current strategies will inform, in part, the student digital learning experience:

Digital literacy is rooted within **Ulster Library’s Information Literacy Strategy**. From the Library’s perspective, Information Literacy is defined in the broadest sense to encompass both information and digital literacy skills. The Strategy seeks to equip students to be able to find, evaluate, organise and use information in order to support their academic studies and professional life.

**Ulster’s Digital Learning Strategy** seeks to encompass the academic, technical and user requirements; to address the student experience, student/staff engagement, learning spaces, and economies of scale; to support the provision of quality learning and teaching; and to promote pedagogic development, staff development and provide future resilience. It also seeks to improve accessibility, engagement, personalisation and interactivity – to put the student experience first and use digital technology as a liberator rather than a barrier to learning.

Digital learning developments arising from the strategy will provide the environment for academic staff to lead innovative pedagogic and curriculum development and the opportunity to target new educational markets.

**LINKS TO EXISTING STRATEGIES/POLICIES ETC:**

* The Ulster Digital Learning Strategy – once finalised
* Ulster’s Learning & Teaching Strategy – upon review may need to further take account of the Digital Learning Strategy. Ultimately we should be working towards embedding the principles and priorities of the Digital Learning Strategy more fully within the University’s Learning & Teaching Strategy rather than having two separate strategies – but for now a separate Digital Learning Strategy is still required.
* Ulster Library’s Information Literacy Strategy <http://library.ulster.ac.uk/info/information_literacy_strategy.pdf>
* Ulster’s Principles of Assessment and Feedback
* Ulster’s Graduate Qualities
* HEA conference: [www.heacademy.ac.uk/node/9833](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/node/9833)
* JISC: <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/developing-students-digital-literacy>
* Ulster’s IT Strategy: <https://secure.ulster.ac.uk/isd/policies/Policies/Approved/IT-Strategy-v1_1-Final-No-Costs.pdf>

**IMPLEMENTATION:**

Digital needs to be considered at every stage of the student journey and staff should look to fully exploit digital technology to enhance the student experience where possible (right from enquiry to registration, induction and as students and then alumni) and to provide learning opportunities that are fit for truly equipping students for living and working in a digital society and maximising their employability.

Different learning, teaching and assessment methods will obviously be employed within different disciplines, with some requiring students to have access to and training in various specialised software and technologies or equipment. This may require a change in the University’s ISD and digital strategy and policies – for example with respect to provision of student access to relevant software or equipment. This may also require staff training in the use of new software, technology and digital communication tools to ensure that our teaching and the learning experience of our students is up to date and fit for purpose.

**MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION:**

On an individual course basis this will be monitored at course evaluation and revalidation events – via examination of the paperwork and discussion at the event to ensure that the learning and teaching and the assessment methods are embedded within the provision and are fit for purpose to equip students for living and working in a digital society.

Other measures of success will be:

* The NSS scores
* Internal module feedback survey – qualitative and quantitative response
* Analytics on how students are utilising technologies
* Staff VLE analytics
* An increase in assessment and feedback routed via the VLE
* AN increased proportion of fully online and blended learning modules
* Increased engagement with the library’s digital resources and student training
* Evidence of engagement with the E-moderation training course and other relevant staff development activities
* Evidence of digital literacy being embedded in applications for Distinguished Teaching Fellows and in probation reports and applications for promotion
* An increase in external recognition such as NTF’s
* An increase of relevant scholarly publications both internally and externally and a growth of research informed teaching
* An increase in short course registrations and an increase in students via educational partnership

**Research/Teaching Nexus**

PRINCIPLE:

**Research/teaching nexus: Ulster students will experience research and/or scholarship-informed teaching to gain the skills to demonstrate critical intellectual enquiry in their taught courses to enable them to become independent learners and progress to their chosen careers and/or as a preparation for further study or research.**

EXPLANATORY NOTES / COMMENTS:

Further explication of the principle/definition of any terms included to ensure shared understanding.

Students in higher education are expected to be actively engaged in the learning of their subject specific content and also in learning skills in how to become an independent learner within their future studies and chosen career. It may be argued that the key element that unites research and teaching is the learning process.

Students studying in HE at all levels need to develop and refine their abilities in critical inquiry in order to analyse and synthesise information available to them and make important and new connections that will enable further learning in their chosen career and further academic and professional studies. This process includes assessing the quality of information they are retrieving and referencing in their academic work.

It is important to recognise different understandings of research and its conduct held by staff and students in terms of originality, motivation and standards. Students learning about the research process need to be inducted and supported to develop the fundamental skills they need to undertake independent research, and to engage with relevant scholarship and research at a level that is appropriate to their level of learning and their subject.

Healey et al (2010) argue that the interplay between teaching and research may be seen in four key areas depending on the differing emphasis on the research content, research processes and problems, the degree to which students are viewed as active participants or audience members in the interaction. The four perspectives were outlined as:

* Research-led: where students learn about research findings, the curriculum content is dominated by faculty research interests, and information transmission is the main teaching mode;
* Research-oriented: where students learn about research processes, the curriculum emphasises as much the processes by which knowledge is produced as learning knowledge that has been achieved, and faculty try to engender a research ethos through their teaching;
* Research-based: where students learn as researchers, the curriculum is largely designed around inquiry-based activities, and the division of roles between teacher and student is minimised.
* Research tutored: where students learn in small group discussions with a teacher about research findings

Healey, M. et al (2010)

LINKS TO EXISTING STRATEGIES/POLICIES ETC:

Detail any existing University Strategies/policies related to this principle of which you are aware.

**Graduate Qualities**:

Ulster graduates will demonstrate:

* subject-specific knowledge and skills informed by current research and professional/vocational practice
* flexibility, creativity and an entrepreneurial approach to the resolution of problems
* effective collaborative working, communication skills and the capacity for reflective practice, including the ability to give and receive feedback

**Ulster University Learning and Teaching Strategy**

Strategic Aim 1

*To provide appropriate learning opportunities which are flexible, responsive to, and inclusive of, the needs of students, professions, industry and the wider community.*

Key Enabling Objectives

* To promote, embed and develop safe, yet challenging, learning environments that support active learning, through a learning and teaching ethos underpinned by current and appropriate discipline-specific and pedagogic research and scholarship, building, where appropriate, upon new and emerging technologies.
* To promote and embed inquiry-based activities across the curricula which are designed to develop a range of generic, infoliteracy, critical inquiry, and/or subject specific research skills, and their transferability into professional settings and/or further study.

**Strategic Aim 3**

*To enhance Ulster’s role as a sector leader for student employability as an integral part of the wider student experience.*

Key Enabling Objectives

* To encourage personal reflection and the acquisition of subject-specific, critical thinking and broad-based skills to enable students and graduates to achieve success in their career paths and make a valuable contribution to society.

IMPLEMENTATION METHODS:

Give examples of what this principle might look like when implemented in the learning and teaching environment – how might it look for different disciplines / in different contexts / at different stages in the student journey?

Staff need to think about how assessment methods and the application of learning are defined in light of this principle. At Level 4, for example, students will be asked to “locate and describe”. At Level 5, students will be expected read, critique and begin to understand application in research methods and to begin to formulate research questions. At Level 6, students will be expected to critically evaluate and apply their knowledge about the research process. Where possible, the opportunity should be made available to undertake research projects that encourage students to explore new perspectives and alternative paradigms. This demonstrates progression from rudimentary concepts and processes through to more sophisticated approaches in the learning outcomes and associated assessment. These can be linked to the generic level descriptors in the PAMR. At an introductory level the emphasis is more likely to be on scholarship moving into research at the higher learning levels.

Where practicable, research active staff should be engaged in teaching about the research process, using their research as case study exemplars to help students better understand research principles in their subject.

DEVELOPING THIS PRINCIPLE WITHIN COURSES

Suggest a few questions which academic staff/course teams might usefully consider to enable them to critically evaluate their current learning and teaching methods against the principle and which might help them to identify potential enhancements.

* Which of the four perspectives outlined in the Healey reference are you using in your teaching?
* What does progression from the beginning of the programme of study through to completion/graduation look like?
* Where is this evident in the knowledge, skills, application to practice, impact and new insights dimensions of the teaching programme?
* How do you evidence your chosen approach to incorporating the research – teaching nexus in to your teaching?
* Is it appropriate to build a research project into the programme of study?

MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION:

Detail how progress towards ensuring this principle is embedded will be monitored.

* Revalidation documentation
* External Examiner reports
* Discussion at DAR – evidenced via staff promotion route (both the Learning and Teaching and Research routes with more emphasis being given to the validity and desirability of pedagogic research)
* Adapt module evaluation survey to introduce these elements
* Peer supported review process to focus on principles and their implementation

LINKS/RESOURCES:

If you are aware of useful links/key contacts/support available for staff, please detail these here.

Centre for Research informed teaching. [www.uclan.ac.uk/research/explore/groups/centre\_for\_research\_informed\_teaching.php](http://www.uclan.ac.uk/research/explore/groups/centre_for_research_informed_teaching.php)

Guerin, C. and Ranasinghe, D. (2010) “Why I wanted more: Inspirational Experiences of the Teaching-Research Nexus for Engineering Undergraduates, *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice, 7 (2)*

Healey, M. et al (2010) “The Research Teaching Nexus: a Core Study of Students Awareness, Experiences and Perceptions of Research,” *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 47 (2) pp. 235-246

Pan, W. et al (2014) “Linking Research and Teaching: context, conflict and complementarity” *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 51 (1) pp.5-14

Robinson J (2007) Beyond the ‘research / teaching nexus: exploring the complexity of a experience. Studies in Higher Education, 32 (5) 541-556

Stappenbelt B (2013) “The effectiveness of the teaching–research nexus in facilitating student learning” *Engineering Education* 8(1) pp. 111-121.

The teaching-research nexus: a guide for academics and policy makers: [www.trnexus.edu.au](http://www.trnexus.edu.au)

UNISA web page on research teaching nexus: <http://w3.unisa.edu.au/academicdevelopment/engagement/nexus.asp>

**Ethics and Sustainability**

PRINCIPLE:

***Ethics and Sustainability: Ulster students will gain an understanding of and exemplify ethical behaviours and learn productive resolutions to problems for current and future needs.***

EXPLANATORY NOTES / COMMENTS:

Further explication of the principle / definition of any terms included to ensure shared understanding.

The QAA defines education for sustainable development as:-

“Education for sustainable development is the process of equipping students with the knowledge and understanding, skills and attributes needed to work and live in a way that safeguards environmental, social and economic wellbeing, both in the present and for future generations.”

Ulster’s graduate qualities commit the institution to developing in all graduates ethical leadership and an appreciation for sustainability. Ulster students should therefore be provided with:

* Multiple opportunities to learn about the ethical dimensions of their subject/discipline as well as what the professions they are seeking to join require of their membership in relation to ethics and sustainability;
* Opportunities to encourage the development of their understanding of what integrity requires of them and why it matters, as they develop their professional capacities within their respective programmes of study;
* Teaching which emphasises the need to understand the importance of using research and information at their disposal in a responsible manner and to think about the consequences of their actions for themselves and others both in the short term and longer term;
* Opportunities to encourage understanding that their behaviour should reflect the University’s commitment to ethics and sustainability in terms of how they take responsibility for their learning within the institution and how they behave outside of the institution in communities while they are studying at Ulster.

In order for students to understand and exemplify ethical behaviours and learn problem resolution, it is essential that the University is seen to lead by example. Therefore the ethical and environmental behaviour of the University must be of a high standard, promoted, visible and communicated to students.

LINKS TO EXISTING STRATEGIES/POLICIES ETC:

Detail any existing University Strategies / policies related to this principle of which you are aware.

Ulster Graduate Qualities:

- self-confidence, global citizenship, appreciation of sustainability matters, ethical leadership, and a commitment to life-wide learning, professionalism and employability

L&T Strategy Strategic Aim 2: “to provide explicit opportunities for students to learn about sustainability, formally and informally, engaging with communities and employers”.

Research Ethics (important for students undertaking human studies); Research Integrity (important for all students who carry out research as part of their course – covers ethics and issues such as falsification and plagiarism.)

Ulster Environmental Sustainability policy sets out the University’s strategic approach to managing its environmental impact and details the key initiatives both planned and in place to improve environmental performance. Ulster University is also a current member of EAUC – the environmental association for universities.

The validation/revalidation process requires the Ulster graduate qualities (including flexibility, creativity and an entrepreneurial approach to the resolution of problems, self-confidence, global citizenship, appreciation of sustainability matters, ethical leadership, and a commitment to life-wide learning, professionalism and employability, effective collaborative working, communication skills and the capacity for reflective practice, including the ability to give and receive feedback) to be integrated into the content of all programmes.

IMPLEMENTATION METHODS:

Give examples of what this principle might look like when implemented in the learning and teaching environment – how might it look for different disciplines / different contexts / different stages in the student journey?

Leading by example and being seen to lead by example is vital. Therefore Ulster University should actively promote its excellent ethical and environmental practices outlined and detailed in the Ulster Environmental Sustainability Policy this raising student awareness about the institutional commitment to ethics and sustainability.

Much progress has been made regarding research ethics and the focus for course teams could shift to include the ethical dimension of the wider world of work and what professionalism requires within their subject/discipline.

Integrity is a fundamental aspect of the learning and teaching environment. This leads to respect for and acknowledgement of the work of others, in understanding the importance of making a contribution, knowing what is right and wrong in terms of using materials, in working solo or as part of a team. All of these aspects of the academic enterprise should be made explicit to students and they should be given the opportunity to explore fundamental tenets of ethical considerations as their learning of their subject deepens.

Course teams should be encouraged to use a variety of course development materials to help them embed ethics and sustainability principles in their curricula. For example, the QAA guidance on embedding education for sustainable development approaches into the teaching process would be useful, along with others listed in the resource section.

DEVELOPING THIS PRINCIPLE WITHIN COURSES

Suggest a few questions which academic staff/course teams might usefully consider to enable them to critically evaluate their current learning and teaching methods against the principle and which might help them to identify potential enhancements.

Questions for course teams to ask themselves and discuss as they design or refresh curricula:

* How do you help students appreciate some of the key ethical and sustainability questions related to your field of enquiry? Is your approach incremental, i.e., evidenced throughout the student learning journey?
* Do you introduce the principle of integrity early in the programme of study and reinforce throughout all programmes?
* Are students made aware of the risks around plagiarism, misrepresentation and falsification?
* Do they understand the consequences of breaching these rules and protocols and why they matter so much to the academic enterprise?
* Do students understand the importance of making a contribution in class, as well as being engaged in independent thought, individual and team work?
* Do students know about the ethical environment and University policies around project work?
* Are there opportunities to help students recognise and manage risk related to the professional dimension of your subject/discipline?
* How do you model ethical/sustainable behaviour in your teaching with students, for example, encouraging students not to print things unless absolutely necessary?
* What do you professional and regulatory bodies require of students regarding ethics and sustainability and do students understand these requirements? Are they able to articulate them clearly?
* How do you help your students understand key sustainability principles like the “do no harm” principle and the precautionary principle?
* What are some of the big ethical/sustainability questions or challenges affecting your sector/area of practice and do you use examples of these as case studies for your students to explore and critically reflect on?
* How do you help your students understand the limitations on resources and a system’s “carrying capacity” and to encourage decision-making behaviour that takes account of this with regard to resource consumption or allocation?

MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION:

Detail how progress towards ensuring this principle is embedded will be monitored.

* General principles embedded within coursework and assessed as part of overall marking.
* Student feedback on these principles through module monitoring process
* Completion and submission of ethics application (RG1a) for any human research projects.
* The introduction of an annual prize/competition for community focussed engagement, sustainability and/or ethical issues and the extent of student engagement in it.

LINKS/RESOURCES:

If you are aware of any useful links/key contacts/support available for staff, please detail these here.

[QAA Education for sustainable development: Guidelines for HE Providers](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Education-sustainable-development-Guidance-June-14.pdf)

QAA Benchmark statements on ethics (see The HEA S[ubject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies](http://78.158.56.101/archive/prs/projects/ethics/index.html))

[Approaches to Ethics in HE, Learning and Teaching in Ethics across the Curriculum](http://www.basr.ac.uk/trs_resources/pubs_and_resources/projects/ethics/ethics_across_curriculum.pdf)

[Poznan declaration](http://revistas.usc.es/gcompostela/en/activities/PoznanDeclaration.html) Whole-of University Promotion of Social Capital, Health and Development, September 2014

[Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (UN)](http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1073)

[HEA workstream](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/workstreams-research/themes/education-sustainable-development)

[UNESCO World conference on education for sustainable development, 2009](http://www.esd-world-conference-2009.org/en/background-information/desd.html#c991)

[www.eauc.org.uk/life.home](http://www.eauc.org.uk/life.home)

[HEFCE’s Sustainable development framework](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/lgm/sd/sdstrategy/framework/)