

APPLICATION FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING/LEARNING SUPPORT BY A TEAM
AWARD 2013

QUB TEACHING AWARDS

**APPLICATION FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING/LEARNING SUPPORT BY A TEAM
AWARD 2013**

(Open to teams of academic and learning support colleagues)

Contact details (lead applicant)		
Name (including title) Lisa Burns Placement Co-ordinator		
School/Department: Management / Placement Office		
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Number of years your most experienced team member has been teaching in higher education: 6 years		
Contact details of team members		
Name (including title)	School/Dept	Tel No and E-mail address
Ms Jill McGrath	Management / Placement Office	028 9097 5582 jill.mcgrath@qub.ac.uk
Ms Lisa Burns	Management / Placement Office	028 9097 5557 lisa.burns@qub.ac.uk

1. PREVIOUS TEACHING AWARDS (200 words maximum)

If you have ever previously won a Queen's Teaching Award, please note the year and category (e.g. Rising Star, Team etc) below. You should also provide a short explanation of how the work outlined in this application differs from the work for which you were previously recognised.

2. CONTEXT FOR THE APPLICATION (300 words maximum)

Please provide a brief summary of your application and a context for your work. Examples of the information you might include are; the subject you teach or the area of learning support you work in, the type of learning and teaching/learning support activities you are involved in, how many learners are involved, your particular learning and teaching/learning support interests and an outline of your overall teaching/learning support philosophy?

Within the Management School we have a dedicated Placement Office. We are a team of 4. The Placement Office has been established for over 20 years. Our remit is 2 fold – working with employers and students. A major aspect of our role is delivering the Placement Learning Module to students with a compulsory placement year –BSc Finance and BSc Actuarial Science and Risk Management. Each year we support over 450 students. Within the PLM we deliver learning/teaching in areas including interview techniques, self reflection, CV writing, presentation skills, stress management, report writing. All students complete a placement year.

We empower and support students in the development of their employability skills and finding a placement. We encourage students to identify their areas of interest in terms of career and also reflect on their skills and identify areas of development which will aid them throughout the placement process and future career.

Over the past 3 years the support structure we provide to students has been significantly reviewed and developed in line with student and employer needs due to additional resources and expertise. The Placement Office is now able to offer a more holistic approach to the development of student employability skills. This has led to wider opportunities for students both internationally and professionally. This is in line with aims of the QUB Education Strategy 2011-16 'Employability, entrepreneurship and citizenship in a global world to develop high quality graduates and postgraduates who are equipped for life in a global society and work in a global economy.'

3. DISCUSSION

You should illustrate your discussion throughout with reference to specific learning and teaching/learning support activities. You should also provide examples of the influence of learner feedback on your learning and teaching/learning support practice.

(a) Promoting and enhancing the learners' experience (1000 words maximum)

Stimulate and inspire learners. Develop, organise and present resources

The inspirational teaching we provide is informed by industry as we know employers want economically valuable skills. This is done through intensive one to one support, peer networking, large and small teaching, interactive computer based classes. This is done to not

only educate and empower students but also to inform them about how to meet the needs of an ever competitive graduate labour market. Examples:

Employer Engagement:

- A Careers Fair was introduced in 2008 to facilitate the development of the new Actuarial degree. Initially this commenced with 4 companies targeted at year 2 students and through active engagement this has expanded to 33 employers being represented. This event now incorporates both placement and graduate opportunities for BSc Finance and BSc Actuarial and MSc Risk Management. In addition to job opportunities the students are informed about the professional routes by the attendance of the Institute of Actuaries and Chartered Accountants Ireland.
- Networking Events From student and employer feedback we recognise that a variety of networking events between student, Alumni and employers is a very valuable tool for the enhancement of employability. We have organised events in Belfast and London including Business Breakfasts, a networking evening hosted by City Leaders. All new opportunities that have been rolled out to students to assist them with making informed careers choices and to develop personal skills including the ability to network.
- First years Through focus group feedback we have increased our engagement with first years so they are better prepared and more focussed when entering second year and empowering them to make informed choices about placement. In consultation with students, employers, Alumni Office and academics we have designed initiatives such as City Scholarships and promoted Citi Quest and Company insight days. We have introduced a variety of interactive workshops.
- Master Classes New initiatives include Morgan Stanley 'Life of a Trade' and Blackrock 'Insight into Hedge funds' BDO Assertive and Networking Skills all designed to enhance the student knowledge of industry.

I found Mark Fitzgerald's (Blackrock) talk to be a fantastic insight into the industry we are studying. It was completely different to our normal lectures, and by getting an industry professional in to tell us about his job and his firm, we were able to see what to expect when entering the real financial world.

Fionntán Connolly (Bsc Finance)

- Quality Work Placements We quality assure each placement in line with 'The Quality Assurance Agency's Precepts for Work-based and Placement Learning (QAA 2007)'. This is done in conjunction with appropriate academics to ensure each placement is appropriate to their learning needs and the requirements of the degree programme. This provides students with reassurance that the placement is of high quality.

We have been impressed by the placement team's genuine commitment to the students at Queen's and their ability to act quickly and effectively in communicating the needs of our organization to the faculty and students.

**David J. Tkalcic, Executive Director
Morgan Stanley**

Peer Learning

In 2010 we introduced the following initiatives:

- Speed networking between those seeking and those returning from placement
- Linking students seeking placement with those on placement for company and interview information
- Interactive CV preparation class
- Interview tutorials
- Establishing links with Alumni through LinkedIn.

Increased One to One Support

The teaching of the Module was traditionally delivered through a weekly lecture however we have used our knowledge, expertise and feedback to become more student centred. We have introduced the following:

- Intensive and unlimited CV surgery
- Flexible appointment system including appointments on a Saturday
- Targeted mock interviews
- More holistic approach to one to one reviews
- Main campus drop ins
- Placement staff conduct all student visits to continue and strengthen the relationship with both student and employer

New Assessment techniques and reflective learning

We have reviewed the assessment process over the last 4 years and have moved away from traditional essays to focus more on allowing the students to explore their personal and professional development through presentations and reflective learning reports to assist with development of both 'soft and technical skills'. This includes:

- Reflective presentation in year 2 and supported by a self critique report
- New lecture on reflective learning and report writing techniques to assist the students with this process. This is followed up by an assignment.
- Reflective presentation on placement this includes their mentor which encourages the tripartite model.

- More intensive involvement between Placement Office and employers with the reflective reports whilst on placement.

Communication and Technology

- Promotion of opportunities and engagement with students through social media such as tweeting, texting, LinkedIn, and newsletters.
- Interactive computer based workshops

Physical Resources

- Dedicated Placement website
- Queens online
- Variety of External Placement websites
- Access to student reports
- Interview rooms with telephone / Skype/ Video conferencing
- Access to a bank of interview questions and recruitment techniques
- Feedback on interview experience

Workshop and lecture material is developed through ongoing research and review. We aim to construct practical, relevant value-added learning activities, with a focus on tailoring sessions for the needs of our students and the demands of employers

Assessing learners appropriately

All students we work with undertake a module which is a mandatory element of their degree. Examples of assessment are:

- Presentations
- Reports
- Portfolio
- We have moved away from essays to professional skills development through addressing the needs of employers and skills required to be successful in today's current labour market.

We work in collaboration with relevant academics to ensure all students are treated equally and ensure consistent feedback is received to an equal standard. The following stakeholders have verified that our assessment is to an extremely high standard, City and Guilds, University internal and external examiners and Institute of Actuaries. This is also supported by student and employer feedback.

Queen's University Belfast is a well- established and highly successful exemplar of the City and Guilds delegated authority and has a dedicated staff to coordinate the programme not only in the centre, but also in the different Departments which offer 'year out' student experience.

Prof Ken Mortimer City & Guilds

In addition to the university module review we collate feedback at various stages. Recently we have hosted a focus group with final year students to review our module this proved to be a very informative process and have taken forward a number of suggestions.

(b) Supporting colleagues and influencing support for student and/or staff learning (350 words maximum)

Contribution to the development of colleagues:

Examples of collaborative workshops:

- As a result of student and employer feedback we developed VBA/Excel workshops in conjunction with Industry Experts and Academics to enhance students excel skills pre placement. The aim is to integrate this with course modules
- The Employer Liaison Forum has been developed over the last 2 years to be more an interactive tripartite arrangement; a new initiative is to include Student and Employer Awards. This allows our colleagues to understand and meet the demands of current labour market
- We encourage academics to support our employability strategy in the provision of one to one student support, workshops, attending employer meetings and co-teaching. This reinforces our message to students.
- Meet with Staff from Computer Science, SU Enterprise, Alumni, Biological Science to share best practice
- QUB Placement Learning Expert Group
- Contribute to the Institute of Actuaries Quality Assurance review visit.

Contribution to institutional initiatives

- City Leadership & Scholarships: consulted with employers, academics and Alumni in the design and development very successful initiatives which are embedded in the wider University
- Attend and promote University Open Days
- Promote events within Careers e.g. London Study tour and promotion of various workshops.
- Engaging with and promoting the services of Students Union and Learning Development Services.

Contribution to regional/national/international initiatives

Members of:

- ASET Placement and Employability Professionals' Body
- The National Association of Student Employment Services
- Higher Education Academy.
- Previous member of FSSC Careers Practitioner Panels (UK wide)
- Invest NI
- Ireland-U.S.Council Programme: Select a student for this programme; this has led to stronger links with Pramerica.
- BIP Italy – International networking

We have attended numerous events and embedded learning gained into our teaching and professional practices.

(c) Ongoing professional development (350 words maximum)

We have undertaken range professional development activities that have had direct impact on our module development and the service we provide.

We volunteered to undertake the PGCHET as we believed this would be a valuable learning experience, this has enabled us to reflect on practice and apply new learning. This led to more interactive teaching method, introduction of smaller workshops and increased one to one support. Peer review among colleagues and students has become integral part at all levels of our teaching and learning. According to Race¹ regular review sessions with colleagues 'is one of the most productive ways to gain ideas to use in your own approaches to working with large groups'. We have both gained from this process in terms of teaching and aiding with other process such as external reviews.

This process has given us more professional recognition and has developed a more collaborative approach to developing employability skills among our colleagues.

We have attended a number of courses:

- Disability awareness
- Small group teaching for Arts and Humanities
- Supporting students with Asperger's Syndrome
- Understanding and Supporting Students with Mental Health Problems
- Project Planning and Time Management
- Generating Ideas and Solving Problems
- Setting Up a Work Placement
- Health and Safety in Student Placement
- Centre of Educational Development 5th Annual Conference

We ensure our professional development is kept up to date and in line with the QUB Educational Strategy 2011-16 and use this in our work with employers to make sure are students educated for a global world.

We are proud to be part of the Placement Programme at QUB in order to support local students become part of the global workforce. The Placement Programme at QUB provides students with a vital insight into working in the financial sector and ensures that upon graduation they have the required skill set desired by employers worldwide."

Joanna McArdle, Associate Director, Barclays Bank Plc.

¹ Race, P (2006) *The Lecturer's Toolkit*. (3rd Ed). London: Routledge.

Reference

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