

The Science Shop

The Science Shop is a knowledge exchange initiative within Educational and Skills Development which provides opportunities for students to develop their skills by carrying out curriculum-based research projects with community and voluntary organisations. It also enables community and voluntary groups to access the knowledge and information resources of the University through student research work.

The Science Shop is also a founding member of the International Science Shop Network and is currently involved in the Horizon 2020 EnRRICH (Enhancing Responsible Research and Innovation through Academic Curricula in Higher Education) project, with a focus on encouraging innovative practice in engagement through the curriculum.

The Science Shop is a collaborative programme with the Ulster University, funded by the Department for Employment and Learning under the Higher Education Innovation Fund.

PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS AND ACADEMIC STAFF

The Science Shop provides a point of contact between community groups and the University. Community groups submit research ideas to The Science Shop and Science Shop staff support students to carry out this research as part of their course work. New topics are submitted throughout the year. A complete list is available on The Science Shop website www.qub.ac.uk/scisho

The Science Shop works with undergraduates and postgraduates right across the University who are carrying out research as part of their degree. This includes humanities, management, social sciences, geography and engineering students as well as those studying science subjects.

Often The Science Shop works with academic staff to develop a shortlist of research projects suitable for use within a particular module. They can then come and talk to students who are in the process of developing their research ideas, giving them a range of ideas from community and voluntary sector organisations and meeting with them individually to help them think through how they might go about doing such research. Academic responsibility always remains with the academic staff members and Science Shop staff support all parties through the process.

The Science Shop can work with students to negotiate a project suitable for the amount of time they have and the type of research they need to do. Staff help students break the research down into manageable parts and decide which parts they might not be able to address.

The first step for students is to contact The Science Shop and make an appointment. This is an opportunity for an informal discussion to provide the student with more information about any projects they are interested in. They are encouraged to go back and talk to their academic supervisor or module co-ordinator to establish that the project is suitable for them. If the student and academic are in agreement, a meeting is arranged between the student, group and Science Shop to discuss the project in more detail. Supervisors may also attend if they wish. The Science Shop broker an agreement between the student, organisation and supervisor to ensure that the project is suitable for all needs.

PROCEDURES FOR COMMUNITY BASED ORGANISATIONS

The Science Shop works with community organisations who want small pieces of research carried out and with students who need to carry out a project as part of their degree, seeking to make a match between the two. Any community or voluntary sector organisation can use the service

Science Shop staff are available to talk through research ideas with community organisations and help design a suitable project. Staff are available to discuss new ideas throughout the year. However summertime is a particularly good time to develop new projects since most students come through at the start of the academic year in October.

Once a project has been discussed, it is placed on the Science Shop database and advertised to students across both universities. It is important that students choose a project that is meaningful to them and unfortunately it is not possible to guarantee that a student will take up a project within a given timescale. However projects are kept on the database and updated at least annually.

Students working on projects will normally have had research training and will have a supervisor in the university. They carry out this work as a dissertation or research project which forms part of their degree programme. Science Shop students work on many different issues including policy research, architecture and planning, business and management issues and environmental issues as well as a broad range of social issues.

Once academic agreement in principle is secured, Science Shop staff contact the organisation. A meeting is arranged between the community organisation, the student and The Science Shop. At the meeting the general scope of the project is discussed, what needs to be done, what methods will be used and how long it will take. If everyone reaches an agreement, a contract is drawn up between the community organisation and the student. However if either party feel at this stage that they don't want to proceed, it is still possible to withdraw until the agreement is signed.

Students are not paid for the work they undertake through The Science Shop. However if students are likely to incur additional costs through carrying out the project organisations may be asked whether they can make a small contribution towards expenses.

If community or voluntary organisations are approached directly by a student from either University of Ulster or Queen's University about a project on The Science Shop list or about a project they want to work on organisations can request that students work through The Science Shop if they want to access group resources. Science Shop staff then helps to manage the process and ensure that the organisation gets a final copy of the project when it is finished.

Groups can contact the Science Shop office for further information or for an informal discussion on how The Science Shop works. They can also meet with a member of staff to discuss research ideas.

For more information, please contact Eileen Martin or Emma McKenna on 028 9097 3107 or by email science.shop@qub.ac.uk or see the website www.qub.ac.uk/scisho