

Editorial: Playing a positive role in enhancing teaching and learning: How do libraries demonstrate their own excellence?

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This issue of SCONUL Focus turns its attention to the opportunities for libraries in supporting the teaching and learning agendas within Higher Education (HE). HEFCE's Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is something that is exercising the minds of many working in HE Institutions. As is the case with many broader HE policies, the role that libraries can play is not often at the forefront of policy documentation and it is up to us, as professionals, to be able to demonstrate our value within our institutions or for organisations like SCONUL to advocate for us.

With regard to the latter, SCONUL responded to the initial TEF technical consultation in the summer 2016 (<http://www.sconul.ac.uk/tags/teaching-excellence>) <accessed 9th January 2017> noting that "the framework being proposed here provides clear opportunities for libraries to make a meaningful contribution to their institutions' TEF submission in year two, and we look forward to doing future work that will support libraries in demonstrating their input to and impact on teaching and learning".

This technical consultation, and subsequent policy updates, Teaching Excellence Framework Year Two: HEFCE guidance (<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/newsarchive/2016/Name,110700,en.html>) <accessed 9th January 2017> and Teaching Excellence Framework Year Two: additional guidance. (http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Pubs/2016/201632/HEFCE2016_32.p) <accessed 9th January 2017> focus on three key themes under which HE institutions will be assessed.

- Teaching quality
- Learning environment
- Student outcomes and learning gain.

SCONUL's response, noted above, articulated clearly the opportunities presented to libraries in all of these areas. Many of the articles of this issue of Focus demonstrate the good work that is already underway as evidence of the role that libraries play in supporting these assessment criteria.

Libraries do at least get a mention in HEFCE's latest additional guidance as an example of what might be assessed when considering the quality of students' learning environments. In this issue, the first article makes reference to SCONUL's library design awards of 2016 and some of the shortlisted candidates for these awards offer up their opinions as to how their newly designed / remodelled libraries can enhance students' teaching and learning experiences. Diane Bruxvoort from the University of Aberdeen extends this theme by looking at the library as "a third space", a framework which conceptualises the academic library as the heart of the university community.

Library spaces need to serve a number of functions in order to meet the increasingly multi-faceted teaching and learning requirements of students. These can range from places to provide silent and quiet study, areas for dynamic group work and catering facilities, all underpinned by state of the art technology – university-provided equipment, power for bring your own devices (BYOD), high speed networks and wifi connectivity. However two of the articles in this edition look at the importance of providing spaces and associated services that cater for specific requirements as well as the more generalised functions that would be an expectation of all users. David Clover describes how the library at the University of East London has been investigating how it can be more responsive in meeting the needs of those students who are parents / carers of young children, whilst Antony Brewerton and Becky Woolley demonstrate how library spaces at the University of Warwick are used to offer a number of well-being initiatives to assist students tackle stress – including the employment of canine "library assistants"!

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When looking at teaching quality, the importance of investing in continuing professional development for teaching and academic support staff, reward and recognition, promotion and progression opportunities cannot be understated. Leo Appleton and Elizabeth Staddon describe a bespoke teaching and learning programme that has been created for librarians at the University of Arts, London Library Services, highlighting the impact that it has had on teaching practice; whilst Donald Maclean looks at the development of online personal learning networks (PLNs) for librarians at Perth College and the University of Highlands and Islands as a tool to assist them remain in touch with the changing nature of libraries in supporting learning.

Developing students' information and digital literacies has clear resonance to both the teaching quality and student outcome and learning strands of the TEF. This issue of Focus includes a crop of articles on approaches to information literacy provision. Lorna Dodd from Maynooth University describes a collaborative approach to embedding information literacy, linked to the university's refreshed strategic plan and new curriculum. A co-ordinated approach to the development of a new framework for information literacy at the University of Chester is also featured, whilst an article from Middlesex University describes innovative approaches in evolving pedagogical practice, in particular the use of games and activities to encourage engagement and learning. On the theme of the introduction of games and activities to encourage student engagement, Jane Burns from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and University College Dublin describes how they have used an on-campus scavenger hunt to demonstrate that it is possible for students to learn collaborative skills whilst still having fun.

It has been noted that it is important to consider the needs of specific groups of students, for example making the library and associated services user-friendly for students who are parents / carers. To continue this theme, Carina Buckley from Southampton Solent University describes the development of "Gateway" an introductory programme for mature students who have been out of mainstream education for some time, highlighting the importance of designing a specific programme to build the confidence of this user group.

The continued development and exploitation of resources, whether digital or physical, would appear to tick the boxes in supporting all of the elements of TEF's assessment criteria. Or to put it another way: "Accessing and engaging with the right resources is one of the fundamental bridges between teaching and learning whilst facilitating this is the central role of a library service" is the opening sentence of the article from the University of Birmingham's Polly Harper and Ann-Marie James as they outline the launch of their new reading lists system "ResourceLists@Bham" and consider plans for its future development. Meanwhile, Library staff from University College Dublin present their experiences of the creation of their Academic Integrity LibGuide which provides teaching support materials on correct citation, referencing and avoiding plagiarism.

With regard to exploiting other collections, Anna McNally from the University of Westminster, shows how their Archive Services has sought to increase their collection as a teaching resource in relation to information literacy, whilst in a similar vein, Barbara McCormack looks at the opportunities that have been taken by Maynooth University Library to engage library users with information literacy sessions using materials such as manuscripts, early printed books, archives and artefacts. Finally in this section, Annette Hagan turns the attention to the training of librarians of the future by describing the development of a rare books librarianship module taught through the Centre for Archive and Information Studies at Dundee University.

Coming full circle, this editorial concludes by taking us back to its beginning, when the importance of developing libraries as spaces was promulgated.

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The final article dedicated to teaching and learning in this issue considers the planning and the operation of a new library – the Henry Grunfeld Library – in the London Institute of Banking and Finance. Gerry Power demonstrates its role in the organisation-wide drive to enhance the student experience, evidence as to how our learning environments, and the need to continually enhance them, remain pivotal in supporting not only the TEF, but the wider teaching and learning agendas underpinned by this framework.

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