

## The development of RIT within postgraduate public sector management courses

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### Background

**RIT is not strong in the Business School. Staff engaged in research do so largely on an individual basis and there are no formalised mechanisms or procedures to demonstrate that their research informs the teaching process. There is a means of recording and discussing staff research but this is purely internal to the Business School.**

The basic idea behind the project was to see whether the material postgraduate students produced as part of their research could be incorporated into the curriculum. The aim was also to deliver a curriculum which was more focused on the public services, rather than offering the high proportion of students who come from the public services generic Masters (M level) management courses.

The project aimed to ensure that students on management courses related to the public sector receive a higher education that is informed by research and scholarship, have teaching and learning experiences that engage them with broad pedagogic experiences and enjoy a teaching and learning experience enriched by their tutors' engagement with contemporary public sector research. It also aimed to enhance student employability through engagement with real-life public sector (research) situations.

Through a developing understanding of research processes, students would engage in a curriculum rich in the research experiences from national and international research as well as those of staff and ultimately the students themselves. The systems put in place were designed to disseminate research findings across the Business School (public sector) academics and practitioners but particularly students, and to ensure such findings are incorporated into developing curricula.

One aim was to encourage students to see work as a continuum, so that perhaps in the future they might take work done by someone else and move this forward, or suggest research that is needed.

### Approach/methodology

Visits were made to other universities to discuss with them how they archive research produced by students and staff and how they incorporate it into the curriculum. No university Business School had a structured, formal process.

The aims for the research were only partially met. An interesting discovery was how (comparatively) little staff research might enhance the curriculum and how much more applicable student research could be. Interestingly, no Business School visited seemed to 'deeply' consider the potential of student research - all started from the perspective of staff research.

### Outcomes

The establishment of an electronic database and network for dissemination - the Public Services Research network (PSRN) - enabled interested students to:

- be speakers at Masters Colloquia
- be involved in providing case study material for M level public services modules
- be part of an active alumni (also a bespoke social network)
- advise on curriculum development
- have electronic access to ex-student dissertations
- nominate speakers for public lectures.

In short, the opportunity for an active student community based around student research. Research active staff were informed by collaboration and supervision of postgraduate public sector students via forums for dissemination of potentially publishable work. There may be future possibilities for bespoke postgraduate courses, eg a Masters in Public Sector Management, where demonstrable practical research can feed into the programme.

### Advice for others

Focus on student research – although this project has only suggested the high value of student research at Masters level.

### Reflections and any future plans

There is a need to maintain the systems and events established. Part of the project touched on scoping the possibility of a Centre for Public Sector Management and this should be pursued further. Emerging from the project was the possibility of a 'virtual' Public Services Academy for Kent, located in the Business School.

There is also a need for administrative support to carry the positives forward.

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