Research- and Enquiry-led Learning

Centre for Learning and Teaching
Aims of this presentation

• To identify some of the benefits and challenges of incorporating research- and enquiry-led learning (RELL) into the undergraduate curriculum

• To explore practical ways to increase opportunities for RELL within your own courses
What is meant by research-led learning?

Dimensions of research-led learning (based on Healey 2005)

NB within context of UoB Curriculum Design Framework ‘research- and enquiry-led learning’ would encompass all of these approaches
Discussion

• Do the categories shown on the previous slide make sense within your subject?
• What do you think your students understand by the term “research”?
• Drawing on these or other definitions, what kinds of RELL happen within your course(s)?
• When do these activities take place?
  – May be useful to mark on course diagram
CDI Guidance

• “Opportunities for students to undertake research and enquiry should be embedded throughout the course, from induction, and through the first year, not just in the final year

• Where they involve group work, these activities can also play a key role in inclusive practice through creating safe spaces for students to share their own interests, backgrounds and opinions

• Be creative: draw on all stages and aspects of your life as a researcher or practitioner, give students opportunities to try out different roles.”

• (from CDI guidance notes)
Research-led inductions

• Students may arrive with little or no sense of what research is, or the role of universities in creating new knowledge
• Important to help them move beyond passive/consumerist approach as soon as possible
• Raising expectations also increases motivation
• Think about what explicit and implicit messages their induction experience will convey about
  – university
  – the course
  – the subject discipline or profession
Good inductions should help students to.....

• Get to know each other
• Get to know staff
• Get to know the campus
• Get to know more about your subject:
  – why does it matter? motivation, values
  – what kinds of questions/problems/issues does it address?
  – how is research carried out?
  – critical thinking, complexity
  – current hot topics/interesting questions?

Can we combine all these into a one-week project?
Some examples/ideas

Awareness raising during first weeks:

• Display of research posters by members of staff (and L5/6 students?) + time for Q&A session with students

• Students work in pairs to interview members of the department about current research interests, then report back to the larger group

• Staff members present series of 15 minute talks about current “big questions” in the field (or upload short videos to VLE for students to review and discuss later)
Examples (continued)

Students (in pairs or small groups) explore campus and surrounding area from a disciplinary perspective:

- could be pre-structured as a quiz trail OR
- could invite them to identify interesting subject-relevant questions for themselves
- eg looking at built environment (design/architecture), waste disposal (environmental science), human behaviour (psychology)
- report back and discuss how they would go about researching the issues they’ve identified
“Once you have learned to ask questions - relevant and appropriate and substantial questions - you have learned how to learn and no one can keep you from learning whatever you want or need to know.”

Teaching as a Subversive Activity
Throughout course…

Explicitly develop:

• Students’ awareness of current research
• Their ability to pose questions and consider how they might be investigated
• Skills in research methods, information literacy, critical analysis
• Opportunities for small scale research/enquiry projects, leading up to major L6 project
Prompts from ‘Student as Producer’ project

To what extent do these statements currently apply to your course?

• Students are familiar with the research work of the department
• Students have the opportunity to contribute to the department’s research work
• Students at all levels work on collaborative projects where learning is driven by inquiry
• All students complete a substantial piece of independent research
• Students are introduced to a range of appropriate research methods and skills, including ethics
• The development of research skills is explicit in programme learning outcomes
• Students are encouraged to make explicit how the research skills developed contribute to their personal development and employability
• Students have the opportunity to present and/or publish their own research work in a public forum

What opportunities can you identify to build on current practice?
What resources would you need to do so?
Some examples from elsewhere

• Student as Producer
  https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/project/student-producer-research-engaged-teaching-and-learning-institutional-strategy
  “A key aspect of Student as Producer is that students are regarded as part of the research culture of the university, raising fundamental questions about the meaning and purpose of higher education”

• Grand Challenges  https://www.exeter.ac.uk/grandchallenges/
  Week-long programme end of 1st year – students work with staff researchers on series of real life global issues