

Scholarship Policy

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Introduction

'Scholarship' is a term used to describe engagement in academic study and the knowledge that is obtained from it. The knowledge pursued through scholarship has the potential to 'open up' new ways of thinking, critically and analytically. As a consequence, scholarship and research lie at the heart of higher education.

The Greater Brighton Metropolitan College (GB MET) has inherited a strong culture of research and scholarly activity, with recognition of the college approach recognised under Good Practice in the most recent HE review: "The effective promotion of research and scholarly activity leading to the direct enhancement of the student experience." The college was a lead institution in the AoC Scholarship Project, which aimed to enhance scholarship in College Higher Education (CHE) and created a scholarship framework that can be adopted by all colleges delivering higher education. This policy recognises the importance of scholarly activity to enable HE teaching staff to maintain and develop relevant pedagogic and subject expertise in their work. This is matched by an on-going commitment to planned and meaningful scholarly activity that will contribute towards the maintenance of the college's excellent learning and teaching within HE and the scholarly ethos of students and staff.

Mission and Vision

The Greater Brighton Metropolitan College's vision is to be recognised by students, staff, employers and all of our communities as an exceptional provider of technical, vocational and professional education. Our mission is to prepare our students for life and for work by equipping them with the knowledge and skills they need. By encouraging, supporting and inspiring students, the college aims to build the self- belief, confidence and resilience they need to meet their goals and aspirations.

We pride ourselves on our heritage of HE learning and teaching which combines industry specialism with high levels of academic pedagogy. This enables our graduates to be highly successful in their chosen professions, to build portfolio careers, and to progress to higher degrees.

Students on Higher Education programmes at Greater Brighton Metropolitan College are part of a vibrant and diverse academic community. Small group sizes and effective academic and pastoral support structures allow students and staff to work closely together to ensure learning and teaching are responsive to individual needs and interests, creating a bespoke and flexible student experience in a nurturing environment.

Our greatest resource is our staff who are already well qualified with exceptional industry links and experience. Supported to engage in research and scholarly activity, our staff are well placed to lead on fostering an ethos and culture for our students which is informed by scholarship and professional practice and inspires and challenges students and fellow staff to aspire to excellence.

An academic community is created when staff who are themselves researchers and practitioners work with students to facilitate them in their enquiry led learning, because enquiry is a fundamental characteristic of HE study. This academic community is enhanced when students are encouraged to innovate, experiment and undertake original work and collaborate across disciplines.'

Developing Scholarship in the college requires continued support for research and advanced practice across the whole HE provision which directly enhances the HE student learning experience through:

- The promotion and enhancement of a culture of scholarship based on collaboration and dissemination
- The integration of scholarship with learning and teaching
- The improvement of student academic and employment outcomes, and raised aspirations for further study
- The recognition of the value of scholarship for quality enhancement

Defining Scholarship

Scholarship may include conventional research (discovery of new knowledge), innovative application or integration of existing knowledge, for example in professional practice, or the study of learning and teaching processes and practices. This aligns with Boyer's (1990) four functions of scholarship, which have been identified as being of particular relevance to college higher education (Lea 2016).

Boyer challenged the dominance of the scholarship of discovery, or traditional research, and argued that there are a range of scholarly activities that are of equal value, namely:

Function	Purpose	Examples
Discovery	When producing new knowledge or original research for publication or review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publishing in peer-reviewed forums Producing and/or performing creative work Creating infrastructure for future studies
Integration	When making connections across organisations, disciplines or subjects through knowledge sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing literature review Writing a textbook for use in multiple disciplines Collaborating with colleagues to design and deliver a core course
Application	When using knowledge to solve problems in the real world such as in industry or vocational areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultancy to industry and other agencies Assuming leadership roles in professional organisations Advising student leaders
Teaching & Learning	When the enhancement and improvement of pedagogy including learning and assessment is central	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advancing learning theory through classroom research Developing and testing teaching materials Mentoring students in research Designing and implementing programme-level assessment systems

This policy also enshrines King and Widdowson's definition of scholarship as 'an activity or activities with the potential to:

- Create or affirm knowledge and/or expertise of a subject or discipline
- Develop or enhance understanding of a subject or discipline
- Develop or enhance methodologies for the delivery of a subject or discipline
- 'In order to be classed as scholarly activity, it must be shared with peers, disseminated across the institution and possibly beyond and used to enhance the student experience.' (2010, p. 10). The quality of scholarship may be evaluated by Shulman's criteria for evaluating scholarly activity,

namely:

- it becomes public
- it can be critically reviewed and evaluated for the academic according to accepted standards
- it can be used, built on and developed by other scholars (1999 p.11)

In addition to these is the overarching criterion that it leads to a recognisable enhancement of learning and teaching. However, 'scholarly activity' does not include such professional development activities such as mandatory training and updating of IT skills. The notion of scholarship does, however, encapsulate the expectation that staff will keep abreast of developments in their sector by, for example, attending conferences and workshops, reading journals and other peer reviewed academic literature.

At the Greater Brighton Metropolitan College, scholarship is professionally orientated, with teaching staff understood to be relatively autonomous, committed and responsible professionals acting as drivers for planned activities in the context of the college's aims and mission statement.

External drivers:

1. The UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance for Learning and Teaching:
<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>

The UK Quality Code lays out the guiding principles in Advice and Guidance for Learning and Teaching that, for any HE provider, 'Effective learning and teaching is informed through reflective practice and providers enable staff to engage in relevant, timely and appropriate professional development that supports students' learning and high-quality teaching.'

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/learning-and-teaching>

2. UK Professional Standards Framework.

The **UKPSF** sets out to "help individuals and higher education providers enhance the learning experience of their students, by improving the quality of their teaching and learning support". Of particular note are:

- Area of Activity A5: "Engage in continuing professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices."
- Core Knowledge K2: "Appropriate methods for teaching, learning and assessing in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme."
- Professional Values V3: "Use evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development."
- (HEA, 2011).

Staff who can evidence their use of the UKPSF are able to apply for professional recognition through the HEA Fellowship scheme. GB Met is a member of the HEA and supports staff who wish to apply for HEA Fellowship status.

3. The Higher Education White Paper and TEF

The White Paper: Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice defines major reforms to the sector to be implemented through primary legislation. The White Paper

indicates: “the new arrangements will [...] [encourage] more institutions to ensure their teaching is informed by the latest in scholarship, research and professional practice” (BIS, 2016, p.25)

The Teaching Excellence Framework rating is made against three criteria: Teaching Quality; Learning Environment; and Student Outcomes and Learning Gain.

One of the measures against which the Learning Environment is measured, is the extent to which it is enriched by linkages between teaching and scholarship, research or professional practice.’

(<https://www.psa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/TEF%20Bulletin.pdf>)

4. The Office for Students

Under the Higher Education Act and Research Act 2017 the OfS became the government-approved regulatory and competition authority for the higher education sector in England on the 1 April 2018. It merged HEFCE and the Office for Fair Access.

5. The University of Brighton’s Curriculum Design Framework

The requirements for a Curriculum Structured for Learning include 3.2.4 Enquiry and Research-led Learning: ‘The curriculum will be up-to-date and dynamic, incorporating current disciplinary and staff research, and centred on early opportunities for students to actively gain experience in their discipline and profession, as academic researchers or practitioners.’

This also relates to 3.3.3 Employability: ‘Employability is embedded in the curriculum through a consideration of the student journey, the development of personal attributes and responsibility for personal development, the focus on enquiry- and research-led learning preparing students for professional life, and the concept of employment being a key way to put wisdom into practice.’

Embedding Scholarship

Scholarship is embedded in the higher education culture of the Greater Brighton Metropolitan College through the following policies and procedures:

1. Appraisal/Teaching and learning professional practice development

For staff involved in teaching HE, the appraisal process will be triangulated with their teaching and learning professional practice development to determine the form of planned Scholarly activity/CPD. They will be expected to review their scholarly activities with their line manager on periodic basis and to complete an annual review of their scholarly exercise/s.

2. Annual and Programme Review Committees

Scholarly Activity is reported at HE course board level as well as forming part of each course’s annual health report.

A termly report on college-wide research and scholarly activity will be made to the termly Higher Education Board.

3. Publication and dissemination:

All staff engaged in research and scholarly activity are encouraged to discuss their ideas and share their projects-in-progress with colleagues at a termly Research Café.

Once projects have been completed, some staff will go on to present at local and national conferences, in addition some staff will go on to publish their outcomes in peer-assessed journals.

4. Resources

a) Remission

In most instances, where HE staff teach a regular pattern of HE hours across the 30 week year, they will simply extend those hours into a 34 week year, with the additional 4 weeks of time-tabled hours being given to Scholarly Activity/CPD. In circumstances where staff are not teaching a regular pattern of HE in the 30 weeks of the HE calendar, a commensurate individual arrangement will be entered into to ensure they are able to undertake scholarly activity.

Staff involved in teaching HE are encouraged to allocate this designated time for Scholarly Activity/CPD in ways that best enable the productive use of that time. Thus accumulated Scholarly Activity/CPD time may be taken as whole days or as hours per week in agreed weeks or at times deemed most productive by the member of staff, subject to agreement by line management.

b) Financial support

A Research and Scholarly Activity fund is made available on an annual basis to support staff wishing to undertake scholarly projects. The award process is competitive. A call for projects will go out in October and a panel will meet to evaluate proposals in November. If funds remain, a second call may be put out in February. Staff are assisted in the writing of bids, the undertaking of their research project and the dissemination of their outcomes.

5. Ethical policy and procedure

Staff are expected to adhere to the principles laid out in the college's Procedure for the Ethical Review of Research Proposals, in particular:

- Minimising the risk of harm to all participants
- Obtaining informed consent of all participants
- Protecting anonymity and confidentiality
- Avoiding deceptive practices
- Providing the right to withdraw without prejudice

6. The AoC Scholarship framework

The Scholarship Framework is a free toolkit of resources aimed at supporting English colleges with higher education provision to enhance student learning through forms of scholarship.

In the framework there is a wide range of resources that have been researched and approved by key college higher education experts.

Related Policy/Guideline documents:

- Greater Brighton Metropolitan College Strategic Plan 2017-2022
- HE Strategy
- Appraisal and Observation policies
- Teaching and Learning Strategy

References:

[BIS] Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2016. *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*. London: HMSO

Boyer, E (1990/2016) *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. San Francisco: Jossey- Bass

King M. & Widdowson J. (2010), *Scholarly Activity in Higher Education delivered in Further Education*. London: Mixed Economy Group

Lea, J. (2016) Are we nearly there yet?: The Scholarship Project's midterm report. AOC

Shulman, L. (1999) *The Scholarship of Teaching*, *Change*, 31(5)