

Title: **Becoming a student as researcher**

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will

- understand how the York St John University “Student as Researchers” scheme operates
- have ideas about implementing a similar scheme at their own institutions
- identify the benefits and challenges of Student as Researchers schemes
- apply the lessons we learnt to similar projects in their institutions
- evaluate the impact of student engagement in staff research projects

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

Research at a number of universities suggests that across institutions, student perceived significant benefits from staff research, including the credibility of their course, staff enthusiasm and, to an extent, an understanding of research and research skills (Jenkins & Healey, 2005).

Initiated, originally, through a TQEF Enquiry Based Learning project and continued through the use of TESS funding it has been possible to provide the opportunity for students from York St John University to experience research first-hand as research assistants. One of the aims of the scheme is to contribute to a growing research culture across the institution by actively engaging staff and student in collaborative research projects and to provide opportunities for students to be actors in the production of research rather than purely as recipients (Zamorski, 2002). As the scheme has matured, increasingly this means that students are engaging in research projects that contribute to pedagogic change as well as subject based research. Additionally our aim has been to build a community of student researchers through encouraging collaboration through an annual student researcher conference that is organised and run by students themselves.

This paper will provide an outline of the institutional scheme with a focus on reporting the findings from an evaluation that takes place this year. A previous small scale evaluation demonstrated students increased confidence not only in research but in communication with others, confidence in presenting themselves, enhanced team work skills and a clearer idea, for some, of their future career plans. The paper will also discuss the difficulties and opportunities

that students and staff faced though out the process and prompt discussion about the sustainability of the scheme as a paid student opportunity.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

This paper will be structured as a 20 minute paper presentation, accompanied by visual slides and video clips of student researchers (resources will be available on our website <http://www.yorks.ac.uk/ltd/ltd.aspx> from March'12). This will be followed by a 15 minute discussion led by presenters, 5 minute feedback activity and a 5 minute slot to sum up the ideas and bring the session to the definite close.

The discussion will focus on the following questions

Is student engagement in staff research important?

How can we develop and enhance student engagement in extra curriculum research activities?

How can we make student researcher schemes sustainable?

How might such a scheme operate in your own institutional context?

References

Jenkins, A. and Healey, M. (2005) *Institutional strategies to link teaching and research*. York: Higher Education Academy.

Zamorski, B (2002) Research-led teaching and learning in higher education: a case, *Teaching in Higher Education*. 7(4), 411-427