

Abstract 1A

Improving support for Graduate Teaching Assistants, and encouraging engagement with Graduate Attributes: A mutually beneficial strategy?

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In the last 18 months the University of Glasgow has undertaken a project to explore perceptions of Graduate Attributes amongst its staff and students. Alongside this QAA Scotland established its 2008-10 enhancement theme as 'Graduates for the 21st Century'. One outcome of both the project and the University's engagement with the enhancement theme has been the development of a Graduate Attributes matrix which re-defines those attributes students should be looking to cultivate whilst studying at the University. Four Academic Development Fellows (ADFs), one from each college, are now working jointly with the LTC and their respective colleges to identify ways in which these Graduate Attributes can be implemented into the colleges' course and programme provision. This is one of the main aims for the project: "Academic Development Fellowships: identifying and supporting colleges' priorities". A further aim is to improve college-level support and development for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs). This included firstly identifying the different groups of GTAs, and the teaching activities they are involved in, which can vary greatly within and between institutions. Potential gaps in support for GTAs were then ascertained, and we now propose some ways of bridging these gaps at college level, to improve opportunities for GTA development, and enhance the learning environment of both themselves, and the students they teach. Further, GTAs represent a potentially powerful way of engaging students, by making the Graduate Attributes "real" for both themselves and the students they teach, and transforming the Graduate Attributes from abstract rhetoric to achievable goals.

This presentation will outline the findings of our project in relation to both implementation of the new Graduate Attributes and support for GTAs. It aims to highlight good practice, identify some of the obstacles to enhancing Graduate Attributes through GTAs, and consider the implications for learning in a global research-intensive university.

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:-

1. List examples of teaching activities GTAs contribute to in their College.
2. Recognise different ways in which GTAs can be supported, and consider which would be practical in their College.
3. Consider how involving GTAs in encouraging engagement with Graduate Attributes could be an appropriate strategy in their College.