University of Lincoln: Teaching and Learning Plan 2011-16

Introduction

The University of Lincoln Teaching and Learning Plan 2011-16 supersedes the University of Lincoln Teaching and Learning Strategy 2007-12. The Teaching and Learning Plan is designed to inform and give effect to those parts of the University of Lincoln’s Strategic Plan 2011-16 which deals with teaching and learning. The aim of the plan is to provide the intellectual, technological and institutional resources for all students to enjoy an academically excellent student experience, as well as enabling them to contribute to the university’s wider educational and social missions.

Over the period of the plan, English higher education will undergo radical change quite unlike anything that has been seen in recent times. Such significant change demands radical solutions. At the University of Lincoln, our response is to adopt and implement the concept of Student as Producer as the central organising principle for teaching and learning, for both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Student as Producer recognises that undergraduate students, as well as postgraduate students, have a key role to play in the development of the academic culture and practice of higher education. It is the intention that during the lifetime of this plan, undergraduate students will come to be regarded as research students.

Student as Producer situates research-engaged teaching and learning at the core of the student learning experience and facilitates the engagement of students and lecturers as producers of knowledge in collaboration with academics and with other students. This concept affects every facet of the institutional organisation of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and learning, from course design to the spaces in which teaching and learning take place.

Student as Producer has thus been integrated into quality processes at the earliest stages. The work of the Office of Quality, Standards and Partnerships has been, and will be, critical in ensuring that these are managed with due regard for academic standards and the enhancement of learning opportunities.

The University of Lincoln’s commitment to Student as Producer has already been nationally recognised. The Higher Education Academy (HEA) has funded Lincoln to lead a multi-institutional, international project not only to implement Student as...
Producer, but also to create a fully operationalised model for implementing research-engaged teaching by other interested higher education institutions, both in England and further afield. Since this is an HEA-funded project, the University is committed to achieving a number of designated milestones within the first three years of its Teaching and Learning Plan. The plan will, therefore, be monitored against these milestones, but will also include a number of additional intra-institutional imperatives. These imperatives will assume greater significance following the conclusion of the HEA project, and will be subject to further review three years into the plan.

What follows is an explanation of the Student as Producer concept, its place in the University of Lincoln’s institutional strategy and its implications for institutional organisation and processes.

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**Student as Producer – Research-Engaged Teaching and Learning**

**Organising Principle**

Research-engaged teaching is the organising principle for teaching and learning at the University of Lincoln.

Research-engaged teaching and learning involves a research-oriented style of teaching where the curriculum is designed around research questions, inquiry-based and problem solving activities, emphasizing the ways by which knowledge is produced.

The title for the Teaching and Learning Plan is Student as Producer, stressing the role that students play in shaping the academic project of the university, producing new knowledge and meanings as part of their learning experiences.

The concept of Student as Producer frames an intellectual debate at the University of Lincoln about teaching and learning in the context of national and international policy for Higher Education, and challenges academics to engage with the concept in the context of their own subject-specific customs and traditions.

Student as Producer will promote the engagement with research topics that will impact positively on issues of local, national and global significance.

Student as Producer is a based on the University’s commitment to ethical values of dignity, autonomy, beneficence, justice and the common good, and to the promotion and defense of academic freedom for students and academics alike. All of these principles are vital to the success of research-engaged teaching and learning.
Research shows research-engaged teaching to be a highly effective way of teaching and learning across a wide range of disciplines. Research-engaged teaching is the essence of student centredness. Academics working with students will contribute to the body of research on research-engaged teaching by exploring and evaluating the contribution of Student as Producer to the teaching and learning process.

Teacher Education

The University requires all staff involved in teaching to have a higher education teaching qualification (PGCE) or professional Higher Education Academy (HEA) recognition through the National Professional Standards Framework. The University will support staff to achieve PGCE qualification or HEA recognition as appropriate. The University will recognise and reward excellence in teaching and learning as a means of both emphasising the University's commitment to these practices and strengthening the status of teaching in academic life.

Use of Technologies for Education

Technology supporting teaching and learning is ubiquitous at the University of Lincoln, featuring the Blackboard virtual learning environment (VLE) and a host of on-line customised web-based tools. In order for students to succeed as producers of knowledge in their learning environments, it is essential that they have open access to the highest-quality learning resources and technologies required for their work. The possibilities that may be created for this by developing multi-media open educational resources (OER) need to be continually assessed, developed and applied. The University will, therefore, promote the wider and more creative use of the VLE and other technologies for enhancing and enriching students' education.

Spaces for Teaching and Learning

The University of Lincoln has been at the forefront of thinking about the design and development of teaching and learning spaces in higher education through the Learning Landscapes in Higher Education project, funded by the Leadership Foundation in Higher Education. During the lifetime of this plan the curriculum at the University of Lincoln will be designed with the production of pedagogical space in mind. The University understands that pedagogic space extends beyond the classroom, laboratory and lecture theatre to include engagement with local, national and international environments. The Learning Landscapes project has made important contributions to this success, providing critical development tools that facilitate cooperation amongst academics, students, colleagues in estates and other key stakeholders to develop and manage innovation in the design of teaching and learning spaces in Higher Education. To develop effective spaces for teaching and learning, the University will continue to review, promote and build on the lessons of the Learning Landscapes project.
**Student Voice and Engagement**

Students support teaching and learning at Lincoln through the Students’ Union and the student representation system, by acting as student ‘Producers’ and by working with academic staff to design, deliver and evaluate course content. The University will utilise all appropriate ways and means to ensure that the student voice is heard and that student contributions to teaching and learning are encouraged, acknowledged and addressed. These appropriate ways and means include the University’s formal committee structure, the student representative system, working groups and other recognized means of acquiring student feedback such as focus group meetings, so as to engage students in meaningful dialogue about teaching and learning at the University.

**Professional Support**

Professional and Support Services staff in the University Library, ICT, Student Services, HR, Finance and Estates and Commercial Facilities play key roles in working alongside and supporting the student and lecturer experience in teaching and learning. The contributions of staff working in these areas are vital for the objectives set out in the Teaching and Learning Plan. The University will continue to draw on the support of these staff in order to ensure that our students’ education in all its dimensions is supported to a high standard. The University will provide staff working in these areas with the institutional support that is necessary for this work.

**Quality and Standards**

Quality and Standards in teaching and learning are assured and enhanced by wrap-around processes based on Student as Producer, at all parts of the quality assurance and enhancement cycle: validations, Periodic Academic Reviews and Annual Monitoring Reports. The University will review these processes regularly to ensure they remain fit for purpose and that they are fully compliant with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and other relevant requirements of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

**Creating the Future**

The curriculum at Lincoln is designed so that students are encouraged and supported to see themselves as producers of the social world both whilst studying and beyond the university campus, through engagement with the worlds of work, community and global citizenship. Learning development is a central feature of this process. The University will provide students with necessary support for learning development and other forms of extra-curricular activity, such as the Lincoln Award and numerous opportunities for volunteering and community engagement that will help them prepare for and contribute both to their employability and to producing a socially responsible future.

**Promoting Internationalisation**

Many of our students will work in international environments that will require them to understand a diversity of cultural contexts and values. A range of global, national and local processes and systems will also impact upon their work as producers, both as
learners and as future workers and citizens. The University will prepare students for these experiences through ensuring that the curriculum includes appropriate international content, that our research and scholarship is internationally informed and disseminated, and by providing our students with opportunities to study abroad. Through increasing partnerships with institutions in other countries, the University will provide an environment for the greater mobility of students and academics, in which formal as well as informal contact, learning and exchange between people of different nationalities can take place.

Postgraduate Work

A high level of postgraduate activity and presence is the particular hallmark of a mature university. The University will strive over the period of the plan both to increase postgraduate student numbers and continually improve postgraduate training and student experience. All postgraduate students are members of the Graduate School, which facilitates interaction between postgraduates and supports their university experience through the organization of advanced academic development and professional training.

Connectedness

Teaching and Learning are connected with other strategies at the University of Lincoln through the organisational principle underpinning Student as Producer, which stipulates that teaching and research are interrelated activities. This connection is supported by a Committee structure which facilitates democratic as well as timely and effective decision making: these are the Teaching and Learning, Student Experience, Academic Affairs, Academic Board and Graduate Committees. Their terms of reference are designed to complement each other’s work and include patterns of reporting to one another, so as to ensure effective communication between them.

Sharing and Developing Best Practice

Student as Producer supports the development and sharing of the most effective practices for teaching and learning in higher education. This includes the creation of a Teacher Academy, an informal professional association for staff involved in teaching and supporting learning; an annual festival of teaching and learning; and regular symposia and workshops on pedagogical research and practice.