

Introduction

As a school in a research intensive university the Institute of Education is committed to enabling our students to learn through and about research, enquiry and professional scholarship. This newsletter highlights just

a few of the ways in which research is integrated into the curriculum on our programmes and some of the enhancement activities with which we are involved.

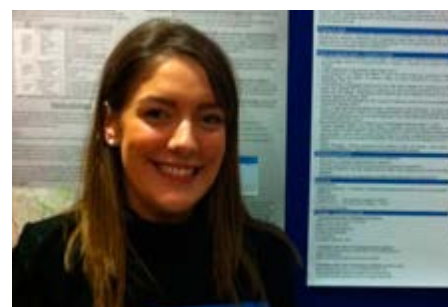
Undergraduate research opportunities programme (UROP)

UROP placements provide exciting opportunities for undergraduates in their second year to work with academic staff on a research project. Placements last 6 weeks over the summer break (or can be part time during the autumn term) and UROP students receive a bursary of £1,200. Undertaking a UROP placement is a good way to develop a range of transferable skills including skills for employment, it can also enhance your understanding of the research environment and academic careers and develop your subject knowledge.

In 2012 the Institute of Education hosted 3 UROP placements. The first, led by Dr Eileen Hyder, involved Emily Millard, a third year BA(Ed) student, working with a team from the IoE on a pilot project investigating 'Reading Aloud in Secondary Schools'. During the placement she had experience of questionnaire design, data input and analysis (including training in the use of quantitative and qualitative software) and how to use literature to underpin research. As a full member of the team she attended research group meetings (and several more with different individuals/groups within the team) and so had the opportunity to see how the data from the pilot project was used to formalise the research questions and research design in readiness for a drafting an application for further funding. She was, therefore, involved in discussions of different types of research methodologies and their suitability for answering specific research questions. Emily is now submitting a proposal to the British Conference of Undergraduate Research.

The second project was run by Liz How and involved Jessica Platt undertaking an investigation into home/school books in relation to early reading involving her being part of a team: reading the books and coding the comments; discussing trends and possible lines of enquiry; interrogating the data once it had been loaded on to Nvivo; joining in with discussion about what the data indicated; and helping with a literature review. Jessica gained a valuable insight into research skills through this experience. She really became an equal member of the team.

The third project, run jointly between the Institute of Education and the School of Economics, involved conducting a local area social cohesion audit in an ethnically diverse neighbourhood in Slough. Coordinated by Dr Ellie Francis-Brophy (IoE) and Dr Christian Nygaard (School of Economics), the placement was undertaken by Chris Porter and involved administering the survey to 100 residents and collecting



Emily Millard presenting a poster of her work at the UROP showcasing event on Wednesday 28 November 2012 attended by the Vice-Chancellor.

additional qualitative data. Chris also entered the data into SPSS and gained an understanding of how to construct a range of economic and sociologically informed research tools (e.g. those typically used in research consultancies for government and third sector agencies). Working on an interdisciplinary project also had the added benefit of presenting practical examples about the intersections within research fields and social science research more broadly.

Summer placements

UROP placements for summer 2013 will be advertised from 11 February to 22 March 2013, please see:

www.reading.ac.uk/internal/UROP/ForStudents/For_Students.aspx

Prizing Undergraduate Research in the Institute of Education

Both our BA Ed and BA CDL undergraduate programmes involve significant research dissertations, carried out via students' final year Advanced Teaching Projects (BA Ed) and Special Studies (BA CDL). Both of these modules are designed to offer students an opportunity to investigate an area within teaching and learning in much greater depth as well as consider the value of research for informing practice. Students on these programmes undertake research methods training and then, with a supervising tutor, carry out a piece of original research in an area of interest to them.

The Institute of Education places a great emphasis on the value of undergraduate research and in the last academic year we introduced a number of ways to both recognise and showcase our students' work. For example, both programmes introduced prizes for the Best Dissertations – as well as two runner-up prizes each – and these were presented by the Head of Institute. In addition, the ATP module ran a half day conference where final year students who were awarded a Distinction for their ATPs presented their research to the third years. This was very well received by our students and is something we intend to repeat.

The quality of the research our students produced is typically very high and students frequently comment on the impact that an opportunity to engage in research has had:

'Undertaking this [research] study was at times fun, interesting, exhausting and all consuming. However, the skills that it enhanced, such as time management; attention to detail; charting and reading statistics; research; developing and implementing questionnaires and surveys are life skills that are transferrable and beneficial in any field.'

Leanne Graham, the first prize winner on the BA CDL programme, 2012.



Special Study first prize winner Leanne Graham, 2012.

'Behind the High Achievement of Boys: Is there a relationship between reading and attainment?'

This was a small study in a primary school which focussed on the possible relationship between reading and attainment; considering attitudes towards reading and whether these differed by gender. Using the research to reflect on an area of interest within her own setting – where boys were out performing the girls – Leanne's findings suggested that reading ability and attainment were indeed related. Alongside a number of interesting findings, she concluded by suggesting that it was important to move away from a focus on gender issues, in order to develop an enjoyment of reading, thereby empowering all children to reach their full potential.

Leanne Graham

British Conference for Undergraduate Research

The British Conference for Undergraduate Research is an academic conference where there will be spoken papers, lecturers, poster presentations and workshops led by undergraduate students presenting work they completed as part of their course or an internship.

It is a great opportunity to showcase your work and to meet and to learn from students from other universities. The 2013 BCUR conference will take place on 15th and 16th of April 2012 at Plymouth University. The call for papers is now open and closes on January 7th 2013. Some financial support may be available from the Institute of Education and the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Science to support attendance.

PGCE Primary Students value their case study

During their second school experience PGCE trainees undertake an intensive case study focused on a child with additional needs.

This is presented as an assignment for their Masters level study. The child study involves observations, as well as interviews with the child and those who work with him or her. Trainees also draw on the theoretical perspective to analyse the inclusive practice around this child. At this early stage of their teaching career, the opportunity to focus and reflect intensively on one area of practice is invaluable. As Joss Kitching reflects: *'The child study had a significant impact on my understanding regarding the challenges that teachers face in practice. The needs of our SEN children are paramount but balancing them with demands of the curriculum, limited resources, full classes and parental aspirations will always be taxing. My academic experience has enabled*

me to deal with the real life dilemmas with more confidence and assurance.' Nell Charleston based her research in a special school and is now working in a special school: *'The child study was an important part of preparing me for working in an SEN school. It gave me an insight into working with children with profound and multiple disabilities, which still informs in my practice today. I intend to further my research into this area with masters study upon completion of my NQT year'*

Contact information

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