

Fostering cross-programme research projects to build employability skills

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Background

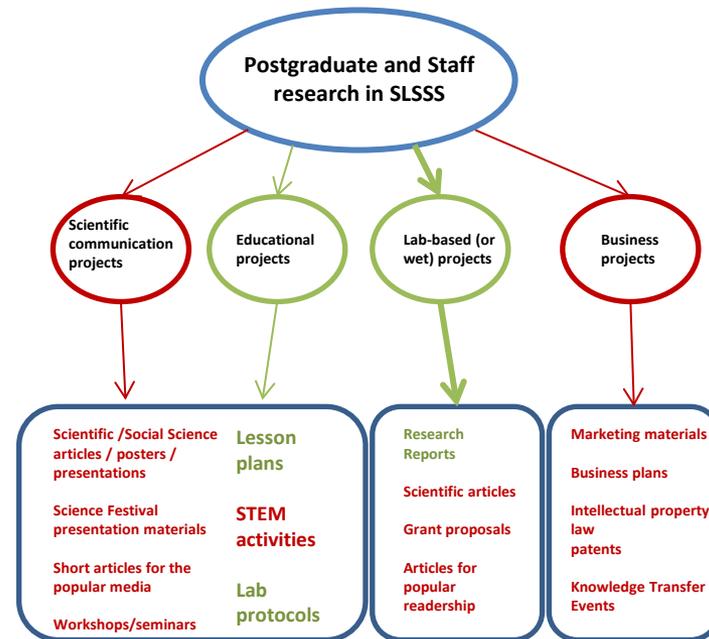
Within SLSSS, it is getting harder to resource projects for 4th years students, many of whom will not be going into careers in scientific research. As a way of building useable skills for different career destinations in science, it is proposed to offer a small number of alternative projects in Science Communication/Business/Education (Fig.1.), an approach already in use by other institutions (e.g. Durham University¹, Plymouth University). These could be in collaboration with staff from other faculties, with outcomes helping to build interdisciplinary and employability skills for students and potentially incorporating a vertically integrated approach. There is also potential to increase the public profile of our research both within the University and the larger community (outreach). Three education projects have been offered for the first time this year (2012-13) and these students will graduate this year, one having already been accepted into teaching college.

Requirements

- Interested 4th Year project students.
- Postgraduate students and research staff within SLSSS.
- Staff members in FECCI or The Business School interested in collaborating.
- Placements in Practice: Schools, Colleges etc.

Fig.1. Proposed routes for 4th year projects in SLSSS

Current routes and outputs are shown in green; potential routes and outputs are shown in red.



Potential Outputs

- Proposal
- Reflective diary
- Portfolio of evidence including proof of ethical literacy in social justice/cross cultural values/ research skills and competency/ project management skills
- Written report on process/ background/methodology including quantitative or qualitative measurement of success/analysis of physical output /conclusions
- Physical outputs (see Fig.1.) e.g. poster; presentation; lesson plan; STEM activity; business plan; marketing material; science article; science festival presentation; lab protocol; other.

Problems to be overcome

- There is a need to make sure project assessment criteria are appropriate to the type of project being offered and that they are assessed at same level as current wet projects. This requires clear guidance for staff and students (some problems may only be highlighted when marking comes around).
- Criteria should assess development as well as the final output.
- There may be an argument for changing the assessment of lab-based projects to allow better alignment of different styles of project.
- Depending on the final output it is possible that this will need to be assessed by an external from another discipline/school/faculty.
- There is potentially a need for experience in qualitative research methods to assess impact of the final outputs.
- Running costs – how would these be divided up?
- Input canvassed from interested members of FECCI and The Business School (building faculty links); potential for reciprocal arrangements
- Need for Enhanced Disclosure (Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme through Disclosure Scotland)