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Academic Practice: Developing equality advocates: building capacity in programme leadership

Abstract:

The project, 'Embedding Equality and Diversity in the Curriculum' is a joint collaboration with the Higher Education Academy and aims to support the sustainable mainstreaming of equality and diversity in learning and teaching practices and processes in Scottish HEIs. The research team at Edinburgh Napier University have focused specifically on 'developing equality advocates: building capacity in programme leadership' within the HEA'S strategic enhancement themes of curriculum design and delivery.

This presentation aims to share our experiences of developing a 'Train the Trainer' programme with the purpose of embedding equality and diversity in the curriculum. To develop the programme, the research team conducted a baseline analysis to determine the extent to which equality and diversity are already embedded in the curriculum. This mixed methods study was conducted across six programmes, covering undergraduate, postgraduate, blended learning and face to face teaching and consisted of four stages to ensure a holistic approach was applied to the study:

- A literature review was conducted to establish who and what has been established as good practice in EEDC to ensure the project is in line with current research in the field.
- A desk based analysis reviewed documents relating to curriculum design and delivery. Data sources included programme/module descriptors and course handbooks.
- One to one interviews were conducted with academic staff to reflect on the extent to which equality and diversity are being embedded in the curriculum.
- Focus groups were conducted with students to gain a better insight into – students' perceptions and experiences of EEDC during their time at university.

The research informed the development of a series of seminars that aimed to give academic staff the opportunity to reflect and develop their capacity to embed equality and diversity in the curriculum. The seminars are also informed by the SEED project (National Seed Project.org, 2015), and it is anticipated that the seminars will:

- Identify and disseminate areas of good practice.
- Increase awareness of equality and diversity issues and foster further collaborative learning between the academic and student community.
- Encourage and equip participants to share new knowledge amongst the academic and student community.
- Act as a springboard for further inclusive practices within the student experience.
- Provide skills and tools that can be used in the development, approval and re-approval of curriculum

The presentation will provide an overview of current research being conducted within this field before discussing the preliminary findings of the baseline analysis as well as how this has informed the development of the seminar programme. The research will contribute to the current literature around equality and diversity in higher education and the issues faced by academic staff and students in Scotland.

Keywords: Curriculum design, curriculum delivery; staff development; equality; diversity; Inclusivity