Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PCAP)

York St John University

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Whether experienced or new to the profession, we all need to reflect on and improve our practice. PCAP offers an opportunity for academic and suitably qualified academic-related staff to pursue a course of study at Masters level.

PCAP offers you:

- The opportunity to study for a recognised professional qualification which links closely to your academic practice.
- Engagement with up-to-date approaches to teaching, learning and assessment.
- Support from experienced colleagues offering similar provision in a range of settings.
- 60 credits towards a 180-credit MA with opportunities to progress to a full Masters.
- Opportunities to share ideas and practice with colleagues.
- Insights and confidence to develop your professional practice.
- An opportunity for structured professional development and for reflection on practice.

The modules focus on:

- Learning, teaching and assessment in academic practice.
- Reflection and critical thinking in academic practice.
- Personal and professional development.

Why study for a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice?

Many universities have introduced programmes designed to focus on issues of learning, teaching and assessment. There is a recognition that many lecturers have the extensive knowledge of their subject and a depth of experience in the area of study but may not have a background in teaching and could benefit from a course of study that supports and enhances their teaching and awareness and understanding of learning. Experienced colleagues, too, may feel that they lack the reflectivity to address issues that need to be tackled if they are to maximise the benefits of their teaching.

Why PCAP and why now?

The world of Higher Education has changed rapidly in recent times. The number and diversity of students have increased. There are growing demands for accountability, increasing calls for educational relevance, either static or reduced funding levels and the challenge of a global marketplace for the knowledge economy. In other words, greater demands and a call for more sophistication against a backdrop of limited resources.

How can PCAP help?

PCAP offers an opportunity for staff to share and build on their knowledge and experience and develop the critical faculties to learn from others, take models of good practice from experienced practitioners and supported by the literature, apply them to their situation in a supportive learning environment. PCAP is about creating a community of practice within which staff can develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to experiment and grow.

How are participants supported?

As well as lecturer input and materials, participants are supported by mentors and, where appropriate, mentor groups which meet regularly to share ideas and good practice. Further support is provided by senior colleagues on a structured and/or an ad hoc basis.

What about the workload?

There is a requirement for formal study and attendance at seminars, etc and also an expectation that participants will read around the subject and engage in research into their own practice and discipline. There are also assessment requirements that form an integral part of the course. Experience tells us that students value the assessments because they:

- Relate directly to their work.
- Provide the stimulus to read.
- Structure the thinking and dialogue that are fundamental to the course.

What form does the assessment take?

There is a range of assessment tasks: journal writing; peer assessment; critique of a research article; a portfolio and dissemination of staff development experiences. All are designed to promote reflection and improve practice.

How do we know that it works?

Participants are following our PCAP course in very different educational settings. They report to us that it has a number of positive effects and encourages lecturers to continue the dialogue after the course has finished and to involve a wider circle in the community of practice previously mentioned.

The question is: do you want to lecture for 20 years or lecture for one year 20 times?

Students who have completed the course have said that PCAP gave them:

- The opportunity to share their views, practices and concerns
- The encouragement and the need to read and engage with the literature
- The group dynamic and the chance to support each other in their learning
- New ideas and directions for their teaching.

One student summed up his views:

"It's opened our minds"

Further details from:

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