Workshop 4: Support for non-traditional PGR students (15:20)

- Non-traditional degree and non-traditional students are different things
- Interview stage: expectation management noting higher risk of no guaranteed outcome
- Funding: likely not funded (Arts particularly) – for University to develop dialogue with external organisations
- Not funded means reduced opportunities and staff less likely to be driven by REF pressure
- Examinations: challenges for recipients of overseas funding, potential for final output being overseas
- Considering non-traditional needs could be a valuable way of considering support provision for ALL PGR students
- More variation in degrees/students likely – spread of core support and flexibility, dependent on cohort = formula for support.

Emerging PGR themes:

- Enhanced supervisor support – administration, academic and pastoral. Management of supervisors
- PGR community/peer support – mechanism for combatting isolation
- Physical space – for peer support/PGR community – academic and social
- Systems – student need should inform technology; flexibility of systems to accommodate variety of disciplines/methods of delivery/student demographic
- Management of expectations for student/supervisor

Support for Non-Traditional Postgraduate Research Students

Workshop Session 3 (14.30 – 15.20) Bryce Room

Dr Sophia Lycouris (Edinburgh College of Art) presented a session posing questions around the support needs of non-traditional postgraduate research students.

How do we go about proposing a formula for support?

Creativity produces the best results when based on a solid systematic approach. However, we need to adopt a dynamic attitude because there is always room for adjustment and improvement. We need to consider each aspect of the equation, yet the picture changes constantly as the data changes.

In group discussion we contributed some components of the makeup of a traditional postgraduate research degree (e.g. independent study, development of an area of interest building on previous study, scholarship, originality, a transformative element). We then added in some non-traditional elements (e.g. variety of outcomes, variations in assessment, professional doctorates, taught elements).

It was proposed that what counts is not so much the qualification at the end, but the process of personal development by which it is reached and that therefore what matters is the research community in which this happens.
Some of the discussion surrounded the issues of the form of evidence students might produce, the forms of assessment and the role of a ‘written bit’. The need to encourage students to see writing as a practice and a way of thinking and experimenting should be part of the process (i.e. it is not a matter of ‘writing up’).

In conclusion, it was argued that we need to reconsider the logic behind our entire provision for postgraduate research students for the following reasons:

- Postgraduate research degrees take a variety of forms and perhaps tradition should be regarded as the exception, not the rule.
- Such is the diversity of postgraduate students, there is no such thing as a traditional student as each student is a different story.

Ref: Bambuser (a way of broadcasting live and interactive video) [http://bambuser.com/](http://bambuser.com/)

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