

Case Study

Title: International COMPASS Programme for Postgraduate Researchers

What was done:

The International COMPASS Programme is a collaborative project between the Institute for Academic Development (IAD), the International Office, the Careers Service and the English Language Teaching Centre which comprises a series of events specially tailored to support 1st year international postgraduate researchers. The events focus on building transferable skills, career management, academic and social networking and the opportunity to learn more about Scotland. Examples of these events include:

- Induction and networking event
- Your supervisor and you: understanding the academic relationship
- Scottish Parliament Visit
- Career Development Session
- Burns supper

The programme was launched in 2007/8 and since then over 500 students have participated in the activities.

Links to:

- International dimensions to examination, supervision and the doctoral experience
- Approaches to training and support for doctoral candidates and supervisors

Motivation and aims:

The COMPASS programme was developed to fill a gap in the support services offered to international research students. Studies such as the International Student Barometer had shown that international research students had a set of specific needs such as difficulty in understanding the UK academic culture, becoming embedded in the culture and building networks outside their own nationality groups. The range of events offered by the COMPASS programme aim to address some of these needs through a combination of academic and career focussed events with social and cultural activities.

Lessons learnt:

Funding has been the primary concern of the project as Roberts funding was not available for supporting international students and once initial funding provided by the Scottish Government ceased in 2008, funding has had to be sourced from within internal University budgets. Currently, the programme has been secured within IAD for 2012/13.

Another ongoing challenge is ensuring provision remains relevant for current and future international research students. To address this, the programme is likely to require a comprehensive review in the near future and the results of student evaluations will be used in this process.

Scalability and transferability:

To date this programme has only been offered to 1st year students at the University and the question of whether it could be scaled up to include 2nd and 3rd year students is one which has not yet been fully explored. The workload commitments for this programme are greatest in setting up and

It seems likely that the current programme could be adapted for use in another institution provided there was sufficient funding.

Further information:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/institute-academic-development/postgraduate/doctoral/courses/compass/overview>

Location of practice: Institute for Academic Development (IAD)

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Work package titles and themes:

- International dimensions to examination, supervision and the doctoral experience
- Design and development of a doctoral supplement to cover broader activities, training and experiences with a particular focus on employability & mobility
- Employer engagement, including employers not traditionally associated with the recruitment of doctoral graduates
- Approaches to training and support for doctoral candidates and supervisors
- Dissemination and promotion

Note for authors:

These case studies will be made publically available via the project website and may be included in future project publications and reports (printed and online).

Project website: www.doctoralexcellence.dk

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