

SELF FUNDED PHD OPPORTUNITY

Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education.

Two years ago, the Department for Education published guidance for the HE sector as to how best statutory requirements for inclusive practices in HE could be attained (DfE, 2017). The document made explicit mention of the potential that Universal Design for Learning (UDL) had to impact positively on student experiences and learning outcomes. Accordingly, educators adopting this conceptual framework are urged to pay close attention to students' learning requirements through anticipatory curriculum and assessment design processes.

To date, there is some anecdotal evidence that adoption of attributes of the UDL framework have influenced wider inclusive change practices in the UK HE sector. For example, following publication of a recent paper (Hanesworth, Bracken and Elkington; 2018), colleagues from Advance HE have used inclusive assessment strategies aligned with UDL principles to bring about systematic change within at least one other HE provider (Hanesworth, 2018). Recently, case study evidence has emerged from another UK HE provider that the UDL framework has been adopted to bring about a whole university approach to widening participation and strengthening learning outcomes (Moriarty and Scarff, 2019). However, there remains very limited empirical research into how UDL is realized in a diversity of HE settings in the UK and how its application informs policy, learning and teaching in universities across the UK.

Consequently, three colleagues with extensive HE experience; Dr. Sean Bracken, Principal Lecturer, PFHEA (Department for Education and Inclusion), Dr. Peter Gossman, Principal Lecturer, PFHEA (Course Lead PGCHETL) and Dr. Helen Scott, Principal Lecturer and Deputy head of the School of Psychology have agreed to supervise a PhD studentship with a specific focus on realizing UDL in a UK and/or an international Higher Education context. While the proposed research project is unfunded, the colleagues concerned will work collaboratively to identify potential funding streams (for example, Newton Advanced Fellowships) and will ensure, through established project management expertise, that there are no additional costs incurred by the university of Worcester regarding this studentship. The proposed methodology will use an appreciative inquire approach to the framework's application (Kadi-Hanifi et al., 2014).

The aim of the proposed PhD student project is that it will build upon existing pedagogical and research practices, within UW (Bracken and Novak, 2019). Notably, UDL features as a strand of inclusion within the PGCHETL. There is scope to interrogate how 'new to teaching' colleagues in HE implement this pedagogy within the UK context. There will be a focus on researching how educators identify the efficacy of differing policy and practical strategies for embedding of UDL within and across 5 university sites. As some travel internally within the UK is to be expected, the PhD student project proposes an annual budget of £2,000. This will cover the costs of attending one relevant conference and it will also cover travel costs incurred for travel to and from the 5 proposed research sites. At this time, no additional costs will be covered.

References

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- Department for Education (2017). *Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Higher Education as a Route to Excellence*. Available from [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/587221/Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Higher Education as a route to-excellence.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/587221/Inclusive_Teaching_and_Learning_in_Higher_Education_as_a_route_to-excellence.pdf) Accessed 13/02/2019
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