Proposal to the ESCalate conference 2008

Su White
School of Electronics and Computer Science
University of Southampton
Highfield
Southampton
SO17 1BJ

Email: saw@ecs.soton.ac.uk
Tel: 023 8059 4471

Experiences at the teaching-research interface

Abstract

The relationship between research and teaching, its possible benefits and its inherent tensions, form a frequent topic of discussion amongst academic colleagues. Such debate may be sparked by policies, funding directives or institutional strategies which seek to promote a symbiotic relationship between these two activities. A considerable body of literature has emerged which discusses the teaching research nexus, and initiatives have been established to explore and disseminate research findings. Institutions, departments and individual academics have developed and promoted approaches across a broad spectrum which are described by a variety of terms including 'research-led', 'research informed', or just plain 'scholarly'.

The individual academic in the classroom may find the proliferation of understandings and interpretations intimidating, and may feel more comfortable considering the teaching research interface in the context of their own discipline. Theorists may value a disciplinary perspective and have an interest in identifying the extent to which practice diverges or coheres across subjects. For this reason, when considering the interface between teaching and research, it may be useful to place under the spotlight evidence of current practices in specific disciplines or fields of study.

This paper examines the relationship between research and teaching in the undergraduate curriculum within the subject area computing and its related disciplines. It compares and contrasts evidence of the beliefs and experiences of the academics with that of the student. It presents and analyses the result of surveys which gathered qualitative and qualitative data to explore the inter-relationship of research and teaching in the curriculum, and as it is delivered and experienced in the lab, seminar room and lecture hall.

This research builds on existing work developed in a preliminary study undertaken in two different universities (one research intensive and on teaching intensive) which examined ways in which synergies between research and teaching could be achieved particularly in the 'hard/applied' areas of the curriculum.