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Going URB@N: Exploring the impact of undergraduate students as pedagogic researchers



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What is URB@N?

- URB@N stands for 'Undergraduate Research Bursaries at Northampton'
- It is an innovative scheme developed by the university where undergraduate students are selected to work as paid researchers on a pedagogic research project alongside an academic supervisor
- All projects focus on an aspect of the student experience and bursary students are actively engaged in all areas of research work including design, data collection, analysis and dissemination of findings

"I have had a wonderful experience...I feel much more confident in my skills...I know this project has assisted me immensely" (Student)

"It became apparent how powerful it was to have students acting as the project researchers...we would not have gained the same insight if the data had been collected by staff." (Supervisor)

The URB@N students showcase their research by presenting posters at our annual learning and teaching conference



Two URB@N students present the findings from their research project at a national conference



Why are we doing it?

- Teaching and research form the core components of the academic role but are often experienced as disparate activities
- Strengthening the research-teaching nexus is of central importance in higher education, and doing so offers a range of benefits for staff and students (Jenkins et al, 2007; Henkel, 2004)
- A key way of strengthening research-teaching links is engaging students in research and inquiry-based activities (Healey & Jenkins, 2006; 2009)
- There is much focus in the literature on involving students in disciplinary research. However, pedagogic research could provide a way of facilitating 'research-informed' practice (Griffiths, 2004) whilst also developing the scholarship of teaching (Weston & McAlpine, 2001)
- We argue that URB@N provides a model of engaging undergraduates in pedagogic research as a way of strengthening research-teaching links and promoting the scholarship of teaching and learning.

What have we found?

- Quantitative and qualitative evaluative measures over 3 action research cycles suggest wide-ranging impact of the URB@N scheme:
- Impacts for students:** Insight into the nature of research; Gaining research skills; New relationships with academics staff; Improved student experience for future students; Career development; Joining academic community; Cross-disciplinary benefits; Income from £500 bursary
- Impacts for staff:** Freeing capacity; Invigorating the student voice; Reconceptualised relationships with undergraduate students; Increased supervisory experience; Contribution to larger projects; Enhanced status
- Impacts for institutions:** Authentic data to highlight unexpected findings; Research-informed teaching developments; Invigorated interest in pedagogic research; Value for money; Response to national drivers.
- We hope other institutions adapt and implement URB@N for their own contexts. Please visit our website for more information.