# Academia:

# The View from Within

Edited by

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# Contributors' Profiles

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> 2008. From Agency to Apperception: Through Kinaesthesia to Cognition and Creation. *Journal of Ethics and Information Technology* 10(4). 255–264.

> 2008. Authenticity: A Red Herring. *Journal of Applied Logic* 6. 534-44.

> 2007. Unifying Experience: Imagination and Self-Consciousness. In Brendan Wallace & Alastair Ross (eds.) *The Mind, The Body and The World*, 116-31. Imprint Academic.

**Jeremy Smith** is Professor of English Philology at the University of Glasgow. The main focus of his current research is English historical linguistics, and he is working on a new Grammar of Middle English in collaboration with the Universities of Stavanger, Norway, and Oxford. He has also published on Scots and English in Scotland and is a Co-Investigator on the AHRC-supported Corpus of Modern Scottish Writing 1700-1945. Professor Smith has long-standing research collaboration with the Edinburgh Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English. Some of his recent publications include:

> 2009. *Old English: A Linguistic Introduction*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

2009. 'The metre which does not measure': the function of alliteration in Middle English alliterative poetry. In J. Jefferson & A. Putter (eds.) *Approaches to the Metres of Alliterative Verse*,11–23. Leeds Texts and Monographs, New Series 17. School of English: Leeds.

2007. *Sound Change in Early English*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

**Graham Caie** was appointed Clerk of Senate and Vice Principal in 2008, but remains the appointed Professor of English Language, a post he has held since 1990 after having been 18 years in the University of Copenhagen. His research and teaching interests include Old and Middle English language and literature, the history of the English language, Scots language, interdisciplinary medieval studies, medieval drama, literacy, codicology and editing. Some of his recent publications include:

2006. The Manuscript Experience: What Medieval Vernacular Manuscripts Tell Us About Authors and Texts. In Graham D. Caie & D. Renevey (eds.) *Medieval Texts in Context*, 15–42. Routledge.

2006. Ealdgesagena worn: What the Old English Beowulf tells us about oral forms. In Else Mundal (ed.), *Oral Art Forms in Medieval Literature*, 109–120. Bergen: University of Bergen Press.

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# Introduction and Acknowledgements

Doctoral study is an apprenticeship, a training process during which we, as students, are expected to gain the skills required to pursue a career, either in academia or beyond. Every year in their progress reviews, students need to prove they have engaged in training activities that are aimed at developing their transferable skills or graduate attributes; many of these activities follow the Joint Statement of the UK Research Councils' Training Requirements for Research Students[1] produced to outline the basic skills all doctorate students should be able to demonstrate upon graduation. Though many of the skills in this list are dissertation-related, a number can only really be fully achieved by engaging in something outwith the basic three years of writing. Additionally, the attributes potential employers seek from candidates invariably go beyond those obtained simply by writing seventy thousand words. So how can students best plan their doctoral study so that they can demonstrate the basic skills required, showing potential employers that they are able to go beyond the baseline of what is expected of them, while also proving they understand the requirements and demands of a full time job? Furthermore, postgraduate students rarely think beyond getting that elusive academic job, but it is equally important for us to gain some insight into how we might deal with the resulting pressures once we get it.

The 2007 lecture series *Academia: The View from Within* addressed these issues; all salient topics for doctoral students today. The aim of this series was to move beyond the standard advice on teaching and learning and give postgraduate students a flavour of academic life, teaching and research as it really exists within modern universities. Established academics based at the University of Glasgow and beyond, were invited to give lectures which

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[1] http://www.vitae.ac.uk/cms/files/RCUK-Joint-Skills-Statement-2001.pdf

provided current postgraduates with an insight into academia. Prof. John Corbett had the rather post-modern task of lecturing on how to give good lectures: preparation; student involvement; presentation; and a personal, practical account of lecturing. Dr Jonathan Hope gave advice on how to gain an academic job from the perspective of one who has been heavily involved in these decisions, giving insights into what academic employers really value on C.V.s and in interviews in the current job market. Dr Susan Stuart, whose lectures on Kant have previously topped the *iTunes* Educational chart, examined the uses of technology in teaching. This focused on how best to use (new) technologies in the dissemination of information to ensure student learning is facilitated and supported in the best environment possible. Prof. Jeremy Smith gave a candid account of how academics manage the three major pressures of academic life: teaching, research and administration. This was tempered with a discussion of ways in which to maintain a healthy balance of work and life. Prof. Graham Caie discussed the relationship between research and scholarship, with emphasis on the role of the Research Assessment Exercise and its effect on both. Finally, Dr Beth Dickson and Dr Raymond McCluskey gave practical tips on teaching and learning on a smaller scale, within tutorial groups and seminars.

This eBook brings together a number of these lectures so that the training provided throughout the series can be available to future postgraduates both at the University of Glasgow and beyond. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our speakers for giving up their valuable time to talk to postgraduates about many of the issues relating to academia which all too often go un-discussed: Professors Jeremy Smith, Graham Caie and John Corbett, and Drs Susan Stuart, Jonathan Hope, Beth Dickson and Raymond McCluskey. We would also like to thank the contributors for their patience in producing this eBook and for their continued support of postgraduate-led projects and training initiatives, as well as the Graduate School of Arts and Humanities, the Graduate School of Education and the Faculty of Law,

Business and Social Science for their financial support of this and many other projects. Finally, we would like to thank all the postgraduate students who have been involved in this project, especially the members of the 2007/8 *eSharp* editorial board, for continuing to challenge and improve the doctoral training offered to them, and for never being too afraid to ask for more.

Johanna M. E. Green and Ellen S. Bramwell

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# Teaching and (New) Technology

Susan A. J. Stuart

*Why does this magnificent applied science, which saves work and makes life easier, bring us little happiness? The simple answer runs: because we have not yet learned to make sensible use of it.*
Albert Einstein, California Institute of Technology, 1931

## Abstract

Einstein's remark is as applicable now as it was seventy-seven years ago, but in a number of very different ways. My concern in this short paper is not just with our inability to make sensible use of technology, but also with the assumption that Einstein makes in his question, that technology saves us work and makes our lives easier. With a few exceptions I will restrict the subject of this essay to teaching and teaching-relevant technologies, and I will refer to my own case-studies for examples of thought-out and ill-thought-out uses of technology.

## Introduction

It has become our habit to embrace new technologies, to surround ourselves with them and, with a greater frequency, we will be, and become, comprised of them. From pencils and spectacles, to bicycles and telephones, and now to cyberware and cyber-implants, we welcome objects with immense, and frequently unknown, influence into our lives without giving them the sort of careful pre-consideration we, and those around us, deserve. However, this verve does not always stretch itself into the teaching environment and we can often be slow to embrace change; though, naturally enough, there are sometimes very good reasons for this hesitance.

## Teaching

It is no longer controversial to claim that teaching is not simply didacticism and the passivity of the silent recipient instruction. For my own part I favour a form of teaching which is, usually, strongly interactive and more closely akin to a joint process of exploration, illumination and enlightenment. We might think of the move away from rote-learning to a more dynamic student–teacher engagement as a fairly modern turn of events, but in a series of essays, written between 1916 and 1927, Alfred North Whitehead speaks very vividly about the importance of the imagination and the utility of ideas:

> By utilising an idea, I mean relating it to that stream, compounded of sense perceptions, feelings, hopes, desires, and of mental activities adjusting thought to thought, which forms our life (Whitehead 1953: 89).

After all, Whitehead continues:

> [W]e are dealing with human minds, and not with dead matter. The evocation of curiosity, of judgment, of the power of mastering a complicated tangle of circumstances, the use of theory in giving foresight in special cases all these powers are not to be imparted by a set rule [...] The mind is never passive; it is a perpetual activity, delicate, receptive, responsive to stimulus (ibid.: 91–2).

In a post-Gradgrindian world[2] Whitehead emphasises the active role played by the learner who is not to be conceived as an empty vessel waiting to have its head filled with whatever the educational institutions of the day deem appropriate; rather, she is an active, thinking creature with a natural curiosity, who learns by having her senses, mind and imagination roused and challenged. We see such a conception taken right back to its roots in Rudolf

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[2] The reference here is to Dickens' character Thomas Gradgrind who sets up a model school in *Hard Times* and who values facts and objective measurement in education above imagination and the passionate engagement of the mind. Gradgrind is "A man of realities. A man of facts and calculations. A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who is not to be talked into allowing for anything over" (Book. 1, Chapter. 2).

Steiner's educational philosophy and its practice in what have come to be known as Waldorf or Steiner-Waldorf schools.

Of course, active, engaged inquiry is also familiar to us through the Socratic Method or elenchus, where the central theme to which the interlocutors are committed is the dialogue. With Socrates the aim is to reveal to his interlocutor the error in his reasoning, which he does by showing his initial thesis to be inconsistent because it leads to a contradiction. This is not the method of engagement recommended by Whitehead, Steiner, and Kant, and practiced by me. My aim in my teaching is not to catch someone out but to open up conceptual and imaginative possibilities, to challenge preconceptions, and to enthuse, such that learners can find their own way to the relevant questions and have the confidence to ask them. Once learners can recognise, for themselves, which questions are relevant, they can, at least, be said to be beginning to understand the issues under discussion. This method is known as the zetetic method, from *zetein* meaning 'to seek', and like the Socratic Method, it proceeds through a form of joint inquiry or dialogue.

> The justification for a university is that it preserves the connection between knowledge and the zest of life, by uniting the young and the old in the imaginative consideration of learning. [...] This atmosphere of excitement, arising from imaginative consideration, transforms knowledge. [...] It is no longer a burden on the memory: it is energising as the poet of our dreams, and as the architect of our purposes" (Whitehead 1953:130-1).

## To whom should we teach philosophy, and what should we teach?

There has been a very positive movement in Scotland to have philosophy taught in schools and not just as a Higher Still subject. One might look for evidence of this at the work of Catherine McCall in introducing the

methodology of *Philosophical Inquiry* (alongside *Community of Enquiry Methodology*, Matthew Lipman's *Philosophy for Children* programme, and Leonard Nelson's *Socratic Method*) to primary schools,[3] or more broadly at the work carried out by Sapere.[4] But it has not always been so.

In Part Eight, Book Seven of *The Republic*, in section four, *Selection and Curriculum*, of *Education of the Philosopher*, Plato sets the minimum age for engaging philosophically at fifty:

> [You must] stop their getting a taste of [philosophic dispute] too young. [...] [Y]oung men [...] are always contradicting people just for the fun of it [...] like puppies who love to pull and tear at one anyone within reach. [...] [We must] ensure that only men of steady and disciplined character [...] be admitted to philosophic discussions [...] And when they are fifty, those who have come through all our practical and intellectual tests with distinction must be [...] made to lift their mind's eye to look at the source of all light (Plato 1974: 539b-540b).

And, in an advertisement for the four lecture courses he would be delivering in the winter semester of 1765/66 (Metaphysics, Logic, Ethics, and Physical Geography), Kant also warned his students of 'the precocious garrulousness of young thinkers, which is blinder than any other form of self-conceit, and less curable than ignorance' (Ross 2007). Which is exactly the one thing of which I cannot accuse my Kant students when I teach his first Critique, the *Critique of Pure Reason*; if anything it seems to render them very thoughtful, but more of this later.

But in a better humour Kant exhorted his colleagues to teach their students how to think and not simply to learn thoughts in a mimetic fashion.

> The trust of the state is being abused if teachers fail to increase the intellectual abilities of the young people in their charge, and educate them to *their own* more mature insight in future, but

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[3] Sophia: http://sophia.eu.org/About%20SOPHIA/about_sophia.htm
[4] Sapere: http://sapere.org.uk/

instead deceive them with a supposedly already complete philosophy, which was thought up for their benefit by other people (ibid.).

So, 'the teacher should not carry [her students], but *lead* them, if [s]he wants them to be destined to make progress by themselves in future' (ibid.). But this should be at all surprising to a teacher of philosopher because teaching philosophy is not about imparting a body of facts, rather it is about teaching the invaluable, and very active, skill of how to philosophize, that is, how to think for oneself.

My own teaching practice is, though at no point did it deliberately become, a combination of Kantianism and enactivism; two elements that permeate my more traditional research. Enactivism emphasizes the dynamic and coupled engagement of the embodied agent with their environment, and so, in a pedagogical environment the aim is to engage attention, stimulate enquiry and encourage an intellectual interplay between every participant, staff and student, in the class.

## How should we create a dynamic learning environment?

The short – and rather trite – answer to this question must be that we should create this environment by any means available to us as long as they are the right ones. Passion is important but even the best run out of energy. So, in my own case, the means have also included using whatever technology there has been to hand to support my endeavour. One of the most valuable things I have learnt from this is that technology is not always beneficial; in fact on some occasions it can throw up unanticipated obstacles in the learning experience.

An excellent example of this is given in the *Phaedrus* when Socrates comments on the gift of writing given by the god Theuth to King Thamus.

Theuth's claim is that writing 'will make the Egyptians wiser and five them better memories; it is a specific both for the memory and for the wit' (274e). But Thamus replies that:

> [...] this discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves [...] they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing (274e – 275b).

All of which is very much the same claim as that being made in currently by Nicholas Carr in relation to search engine technology and Google in particular (Carr 2008).

There are also any number of, what have become, unseen technologies like chalk, overhead projectors, and data-projectors, all of which have become so familiar to us that they are no longer noticeable to us. In fact, it is only when we need one and it is absent that we begin to realise just how commonplace and invisible they have become, but also how integral they are to engaged communication. Heidegger makes exactly this point when he says that tools become conspicuous to us when they are missing and we need them (Heidegger 1962). Or, as Wittgenstein says:

> The aspects of things that are most important to us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something – because it is always before one's eyes.) The real foundations of a man's enquiry do not strike a man at all (Wittgenstein, 1953: 129).

So, there are, at least, four points to bear in mind when setting out to incorporate the use of some technology into a learning environment. The first is identifying a relevant technology and not just using something for the sake of it; the second, what particular aspects of the subject or course do you want to facilitate; the third is, how easy is it to use and how adaptable will

you and your students have to be; and the fourth is, what are, or might be, the potential drawbacks. It is also important to reflect carefully on whether the anticipated advantages outnumber the anticipated disadvantages, while at the same time bearing in mind that there may be some of each that you cannot factor in at this stage. In the remaining section of this paper I will bear these points in mind as I discuss several of my own attempts to use a variety of technologies to create a more dynamic and engaging learning environment.

Since 1996 I have been actively using novel technologies in my teaching and because they are novel they have required some adaptability on my part and on the part of my students, sometimes this has been easy, sometimes it has not.

The very first idea I had was to use Computer Mediated Teaching (CMT), in the form of web-based self-assessment exercises, to support learning in the large first and second year Philosophy classes (Stuart 1999a, 1999b, 2000). Becoming a competent philosopher, even student philosopher, is a little like becoming a competent language user. It is not possible to use a language properly if all you know are the syntactic rules; you also need to know what the words mean and the proper contexts for their employment. And, becoming a competent philosopher requires an understanding of basic terms and theories and knowing when and how it is appropriate to employ them. This sort of knowledge is not deep and insightful, nor is it critical in form, but it is what you need to master if you are going to be part of the philosophical community, and it is the sort of material which, once it has been fully understood, can be taken for granted.

Acquiring this knowledge, having the confidence to recognise that you have acquired it, and putting it to appropriate use, are immense tasks that confront beginning students, and if they fail at any of these points they may never

recover. So, it is very important to provide support at that level to ensure that students do not fall at these initial hurdles. Ideally there would be enough time for a sympathetic tutor to take students through a catalogue of relatively simple quiz questions, designed to elicit the 'standard misunderstandings' that can arise, to provide corrections, and references for further reading. However, this is a labour-intensive method of low-level teaching, and very slow for those in a tutorial or seminar group who want to move on to more demanding concerns.

One way to resolve this was to provide self-assessment tests for each of the courses being taught, and to make them available to all students registered in the classes. To do this I used an assessment engine – an authoring tool in which to write quiz-type exercises, have the student responses marked, give feedback on errors, and provide a commentary that indicates how a correct answer might be pursued and developed.

Lecturers delivering the early level courses, where baseline knowledge is established, wrote questions aimed at exposing common misconceptions and these were written as individual tests using a tool called Test Wizard.[5] The students were then pointed towards the tests so that they could measure their progress and reassure themselves that they were on the right track. The tests were available from the departmental homepage, and carried the 'health warning' that they did not provide a substitute for reading the set texts, attending lectures and seminars, and discussing ideas with their peer group.

The outcome was very positive for the students who participated in the tests. Since the login was by matriculation number, the tests were fairly anonymous; however, if a particular number appeared as doing consistently

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[5] Test Wizard was developed by David McNicol as part of a project called Clyde Virtual University, set up by Strathclyde University, Glasgow, and funded by SHEFC (Scottish Higher Education Funding Council).

poorly on a range of tests or showed evidence of guessing and not improving, it was possible to locate the student and offer direct help. But, by and large, the students were able to discover that there is baseline knowledge that they need to understand if they are going to take the subject further, and as a result of this their confidence as learners developed. They were also able to work at the exercises outside the usual teaching hours, and go at their own pace without feeling that they might be wasting someone's time with 'trivial' questions. Lastly, tutorial time was freed up so that questions could be examined in more depth.

The only possible drawback seemed to be that some students might fail to realise that doing philosophy was very much harder than answering multiple response- or multiple choice-type questions. But since the role of the exercises was formative, not summative, assessment and progress to Honours is based on the results from summative assessment, the drawback was deemed negligible.

In 2000/2001 I was encouraged by a colleague, Dr Steve Draper in the Psychology Department, to use handsets – otherwise known as Electronic Voting System (EVS) or Personal Response System (PRS) – in my logic lectures (Stuart 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2000d).

Logic lectures can provide quite a formidable challenge for many students. So, the rationale for introducing handsets was threefold: (i) to get the students thinking and talking about the subject in a public environment; (ii) to make them feel secure enough to answer questions in the lectures because the system enabled them to do this anonymously; and (iii) to build their confidence about their learning by their being able to see how they were progressing in relation to the rest of the students in the class. All of these, and more, were achieved. The use of handsets encouraged a more dynamic form

of student interaction in an environment – the lecture – that can, in the wrong hands, be utterly enervating, but they also provided an opportunity for me to respond to student difficulties at the time when they really mattered.

Although this was a case of using a technology that was available rather than determining a need and finding the most suitable technology for the job, I knew the handsets were being used very successfully in other disciplines like Statistics and Engineering; I had been thinking about how I might get all students in the class (approximately 140 students) to participate, so, it seemed worth trying.

There was limited demand on adapting to the introduction of the handsets to class because they are just like television remote control devices, and it would be the very rare student who had not met one before.

The advantages were numerous and immediate. That the responses were anonymous meant that there a 100% reaction which meant that there was greater engagement and attention; but it also meant that the responses were honest. Since no-one could see how you voted, there was no point in being dishonest. However, it did not rule out guessing, but on those occasions I let the students have two minutes after they had voted to think about their answer and talk it over with their neighbour. Invariably the number of correct responses would increase because the students who knew the right answer would convince those who did not. It produced a very positive kind of peer-assisted learning. One of the most positive things was the immediate formative feedback – for both student and lecturer – that permitted students to see how well they were doing, to acknowledge difficulties and to realise that they were rarely alone with their difficulties. So, not only did the

handset-use initiate discussion, it also built up considerable fellow-feeling, and not of the 'we are all doomed' variety.

However, my use of handsets was not an unmitigated success. I tried to introduce them in a first year Philosophy of Mind class without having put enough thought into what exactly it was that I was trying to facilitate. This was a mistake. In logic the answers and their justification are clear; in philosophy of mind it is not that straightforward. Yes, there is baseline knowledge, but I would have had to draw up specific questions and possible responses before I got to the class; trying to do it on the spot was not very sensible. With hindsight I should have spent a great deal more time preparing the questions and making them fit with the structure of the lecture. I should also have prepared the students for what I was going to do. But perhaps the simplest thing to do was direct them towards the self-assessment exercises, and this is what I did.

In 2002/03 I designed and delivered two Level 3 non-Honours courses for the three year MA degree: Consciousness and Cognition, and Space, Cyberspace and the Self. The courses are lively and the students seem to enjoy them even if there are four separate pieces of summative assessment: an essay, a seminar presentation, an examination, and designing a webpage. The first three are fairly traditional, but the fourth is a little different and demands that they work in groups of two or three and learn how to use basic Hypertext Mark-up Language (HTML) skills and Dreamweaver™. My intention had been to use a different presentation medium to stretch the students' abilities, while continuing to let the content stretch their minds; by being different from an essay, webpage design forces the students to reflect on the process of exposition, and on the rhetorical strategies they have available in these media, as well as in the traditional essay, when they want to get their message across. I do not subscribe to the claim that the medium is

the message (McLuhan 1964), but a number of students, who had been dogged by poor grades but performed well in class discussions, claimed that creating a web page of their own had made them think much more carefully about what they wanted to say and how they wanted to say it. They had thought about the issue at stake, they had read about it and talked about it in seminars, and they had even talked about it in their groups. They had thought about how the main claims or theories should be represented and how their response to them could be structured to best effect, and they had thought about what graphics they could use and whether they augmented their claim or got in its way. Finally, as if to drive home their point, they said that if they had had this method of thinking earlier, that is, thinking about how their thoughts about something would look – how they would visualize them – they would have known better how to plan their essays.

Since the first year of running these classes the webpages that the students develop have become much more competent and now it seems almost commonplace to produce webpages. So, over the last academic year, I have moved into the creation of video podcasts with the Space, Cyberspace and the Self class. It is a little too early to judge the success of this project, but the students did seem to enjoy making the podcasts and one student who did both Level 3 courses reported that:

> I have really enjoyed this course especially the opportunity to create a web-page and a podcast which is invaluable knowledge I can take into any job I may have in the future.

In 2005/06, and again encouraged by Steve Draper and a student, Joe Maguire, from Computing Science I began to record my (and my colleague Stephen Bostock's) Consciousness lectures for a Senior Honours class of both Philosophy and Psychology students. Steve and Joe were keen to examine the benefits of mobile learning and needed a 'guinea pig'. I am always keen to try new techniques for communication with my students but this time I

had an explicit agreement with Steve and Joe that if it was not working, we would not force it. The student feedback from this course was so positive that we decided to continue the experiment with my Senior Honours Kant class.

The technical side of things was actually very straightforward[6] and there was no technology to embed. However, we did need access to some spare networked disk space where we could put up audio (MP3s) and video (MPGs) files for students. In the first year Joe lent me his iPod. I recorded my lectures. At the end of the week he retrieved the iPod, downloaded the files and made them available on a University website. The students were given the URL for the site and a password, and they could access and download the recordings from anywhere at all. Joe also produced the RSS feed that made the MP3s into podcasts. For the Consciousness class we also recorded the Seminars in Term 1, and for the Kant class we recorded a short introductory video about the philosophical background in which Kant was writing. These were made available in the same way.

The evaluation has, so far, only been done informally. The students reported enthusiastic use of the recordings, and the number of times accessed and downloaded was recorded. The students enjoyed being able to replay the lectures and seminars to catch bits they had missed or felt they had not understood the first time. Almost all of the students said that they had used the podcasts when preparing and writing their essays, and for revision for their examinations. The only complaint we experienced was when there was a delay putting some recordings on the web, but this was over the Christmas

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[6] The only training necessary would be in turning odd audio file formats like AIFF into usable MP3s. But as there is more take up of the technology in Universities this technical problem might be carried out by a technician employed to support teaching. However, this problem arises if you use an Apple iPod; I also used a Sanyo voice-recorder (ICR–S250RM) which had an MP3 recording format.

period and I promised the student that I would not be interrupting Joe's Christmas holiday to insist that he speed things along.

When I began to make podcasts available there was a suspicion from colleagues that numbers in lectures would fall as students began to assume that it was not necessary to attend the class if a recording would be available promptly. This turned out not to be the case. The courses are for final year students who are, for the most part, extremely motivated and hungry for any learning support or additional resources. Even around essay time attendance was high, and seminars, especially in the Consciousness class, were energetic. One of the benefits that I had not anticipated was that the recordings were also there for colleagues who were preparing for a seminar on my material, and for me when I was preparing on theirs.

Both final year classes work very hard, and repay the effort taken on their behalf which is why I have also embraced the use of Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) and not just as a repository for handouts but also as a dynamic space for debate. The Moodle was used enthusiastically, even high-spiritedly, by the Consciousness students, but much less so with Kant. There is a very steep learning curve with Kant that just is not there – or at least is not perceived to be there – by the Consciousness students. What they do not know with Kant is evident from the start; what they do not know with Consciousness might never be clear to them.

It is interesting to note that in 1997/1998 I attempted to get my Kant students talking online using conferencing software called First Class™. I failed and ended up frustrating myself and them. There were a number of reasons: the interface was unappealing; there were not enough computers; the computers there were, were in the same room, so the students felt they

could just talk to one another (and I thought this was a lot more sensible too); and Kant's vocabulary is difficult enough to make inexperienced students unwilling to commit themselves to written, public comments which they would have to defend and which might reveal gaps in their knowledge. In retrospect it was simply a case of too early and not enough technical support.

In 2006/2007 I introduced Moodle for my Level 3 classes, but there they are much less dynamic. Discussion has not really taken off and many students prefer to send me email messages when they are puzzled. Often I maintain their anonymity but make my response public on Moodle, but rarely does this produce more debate. I do meet the Level 3 students frequently and we do have lively lectures and seminars, so, it might just be that they feel they have sufficient access to me in other ways. Alternatively, the material might not be so deep and mysterious that they need to have an open debate, or their level of confidence and motivation might not be as great as the Honours students. The answer is probably going to be some combination of these aspects and far from simple.

I have no formal training in learning pedagogy and design. I think a great deal of my success with students is a result of watching their reactions and responding to them in real time; my teaching is tempered by their responses and their responses are tempered by my teaching. It is a dynamic, enactive and reciprocal interaction that lends itself to a rapid contingency in my teaching and the student learning. However, as I said at the beginning there is quite a lot of dialogue in my lectures and a great deal more in my seminars. I urge the students to think, to puzzle, and to ask questions in the lecture, and I do not mind if I do not have the answer off pat but have to admit that I need to think about it during and after the lecture, and even to add additional comments on the Moodle for us all to think about afterwards. It is

good for the students to see that answers are not always that easily forthcoming and that sometimes you need to give things a little more thought before you speak. It also works to make the lecturer appear a little less magisterial and intimidating.

In conclusion, if I go back for a moment to the Einstein quotation from the beginning of this paper, I cannot say that my use of technologies in my teaching practice has always saved me time or made my life easier, but I can say that I am learning little by little to make more sensible use of them and they do bring me a great deal of satisfaction and, sometimes, happiness.

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# An Academic Career?

Jeremy J. Smith

## The Three Tasks of an Academic

Postgraduate students spend most of their time undertaking research, engaging with primary and secondary materials, and enhancing their research skills through appropriate training. This is as it should be: postgraduates are primarily researchers.

But many postgraduates spend a certain amount of time doing other things as well. Many spend a certain amount of time teaching, as Graduate Teaching Assistants; some carry out other duties, such as marking and invigilation; a few are involved in activities such as conference organisation. When they do so, they are engaging with the other kinds of thing academics do, and my task in this paper is to set out what an academic career entails.

First though: a caveat. An academic career twenty or thirty years ago was very different from an academic career now; and it is likely that an academic career twenty or thirty years hence will again be very different. An academic career is no longer – if it ever was – an ivory-tower existence. The only certainty about the profession is that it will change, and that the biggest challenges to be faced will be to do with managing change.

However, even with this caveat, the three main components of an academic career seem likely to remain, even if the manner of their delivery will change. These components are research, teaching and administration (or service, as this last is sometimes described).

In the UK, almost all universities are funded by government, and the biggest difference between academic life now and academic life in the early 1980s has resulted from one government initiative: the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). The RAE has changed the research landscape of UK universities radically over the last two decades. Whether that change has been for better or for worse is hard to say. There is a positive side to the process; in the UK, research draws primarily – still – upon public money and the public really need to see where their money is going. Research is supposed to be a distinctive feature of universities, and it is therefore right that universities undertake it. However, those of us who have been in higher education since before the beginning of the RAE process can recall that there were parts of most institutions which did not meet this requirement. Pockets of inertness, research-wise, existed in many places. A friend at another institution – now a member of the Russell Group of leading research-intensive universities – has recalled that he was told, when he got his first academic post in the early 1980s, that research was something professors did; his task was to support the professor. The attitude expressed was a left-over from the days when junior academics were 'assistants' or 'amanuenses'; such a comment would be pretty unthinkable, except in jest, nowadays, but it is interesting historically as an illustration of how far we have come as a profession.

The bad side of RAE is of course to do with the bureaucracy and game-playing that has gone with it, with the emergence of a transfer market in so-called 'academic stars' and an emphasis on short-term goals linked to the RAE cycle. Institutions compete – cross-institutional collaboration in research is increasingly difficult to sustain – and collegiality, a fragile but necessary part of any really good university, can be threatened by a culture which can reward 'stars' at the expense of 'workers'. The dominance of RAE on most academic horizons has tended to make 'research' the god,

leading to personal advancement, and anything else becomes an interruption. Universities do not help themselves by referring to 'research leave' or 'sabbaticals', time when colleagues are 'free' from teaching and administration to pursue their true vocation. The implication is that teaching and administration get in the way of all the fun.

Research is, quite rightly, crucial for a successful university: it is the distinctive feature of what universities do. And yet a well-rounded academic career is not entirely research-focused. To make the point, here is a job-description, based on a generic model for the post of lecturer at Glasgow University. It is written in admin-speak, for which I apologise (I wrote it!), but it nevertheless does give some idea of what an academic job entails.

1. To develop and maintain individual/joint research projects in the subject area and, where appropriate, to secure the funding required for the projects.
2. To contribute to developing and enhancing the research profile of the Department through a track record of high-quality publications.
3. To attend and participate in appropriate research seminars/conferences within subject related area insofar as funding allows.
4. Where appropriate, to be responsible for the supervision and training of postgraduate research students to ensure their effective development.
5. To contribute to the planning, organisation and delivery of undergraduate & postgraduate teaching within the subject area as appropriate to expertise.
6. To supervise individual student projects and assist with difficulties e.g. learning support/problems.

7. To contribute to the ongoing development and design of the curriculum, in a manner that supports a research-led approach to student learning.

8. To engage in professional development as appropriate.

9. To participate fully in the assessment process (using a variety of methods and techniques) and provide effective, timely and appropriate feedback to students that support their learning.

10. To undertake departmental/faculty level administration as reasonably requested and supported by the Head of Department and in accordance with a fair distribution of workload.

Research is there, but also other things: teaching and (much despised) administration (including money). All three things matter.

In the humanities at least, folk who put research first and other things (if at all) afterwards are not necessarily producers of the best research. Without teaching, for instance, there are no people (eventually) to read or benefit from all that research; to undertake humanities research is to take part in an academic conversation. Not only are students the next generation of researchers – they are, as taxpayers or benefactors, also the future funders of research, and it is appropriate that they have the opportunity to engage with the cultural capital which researchers produce. Moreover, teaching is 'grounding': explaining a complex matter to a first-year student forces the researcher to examine problems and issues from first principles; no bad thing.

And even administration – the boring nuts and bolts which hold the operation together – is almost universally despised, but everyone shouts when it goes wrong. Where is the money to support me? Why has A got more 'research leave' than me? Why has X got a bigger room than me? Where's my phone? Why is Y, who has been promoted, doing less boring

work than me? Why aren't you looking after my career? Why has the photocopier not been replaced? Why are we spending all this time sending handwritten letters to students? Why wasn't I consulted? Why haven't you responded to my e-mail? Why haven't you read my latest chapter? Why was Z rude to me in the departmental meeting? Why has B given this essay A1 when in my opinion it is only worth D3? Why do I have to spend so much time climbing stairs, walking along corridors and knocking on doors, to find that no-one is there? Why can I never talk to my line manager? Why do I feel uninvolved in policy decisions and detached from everyone else? You treat me like a baby – watch me throw the toys out of my pram! If these questions, or final statements like that last one, are asked too often, then there is something wrong with the administration of an institution. Administration is an essential part of academic activity, and boring things such as transparent workload models or budgetary competence are crucial parts of institutional management. Moreover, given that the primary function of a university is academic, these things cannot be shuffled off onto a special class of administrators; academics would be the first to complain if this were the case!

Probably the biggest mental jump is to see the three tasks as not competing, but complementary. It is easily said, hard to achieve, and always 'work in progress'. But it is something to strive for.

## Developing a Portfolio

Many – though by no means all – postgraduates have conceived the ambition of developing an academic career. The first part of this paper was designed to help ensure that such folk went into the profession with their eyes open: it is essential that they grasp that, although a career in a university can be deeply rewarding it is nevertheless, when the chips are down, a job, with all the 'boring' bits that go with it. Trying to see the three aspects of the

academic career as complementary can help you come to terms with those boring bits; it can also help you develop a portfolio of professional expertise – with an emphasis on the word 'professional' which will serve you in good stead in the job market.

We might start with research. Can we tie research to teaching and administration? Is your research going to be of interest to your students? Your PhD, on (say) the use of the apostrophe in Shakespeare, sounds numbingly dull. But let's begin by posing a question which a very distinguished former professor asked me when I began my career:

'Can you legitimately receive money for what you are doing?'

This formulation is, of course, a challenging one as phrased, but I think it can be reformulated as follows: does your research deal with issues of wider significance? Research should always be, ultimately, about asking big questions, and research-informed teaching – the distinctive feature of a university education – means putting those big questions back to students.

A first-year undergraduate audience is one of the trickiest challenges, but let's see how that little topic, on apostrophes in Shakespeare, can connect with them.

One of the things which annoys me in undergraduate essays is the persistent habit of ignoring the difference in meaning between *its* (= 'of it') and *it's* (= 'it is'); I generally correct errors in the use of these forms with some vehemence. My annoyance, though, is in historical terms unjustified. The word *its*, in fact, is an innovation dating from the late sixteenth century and regarded at the time as a vulgarism. *Its* is rare in Shakespeare's works, for instance, and does not appear in the King James version of the Bible. Earlier

in the history of English, *his* was used as the possessive pronoun in both masculine and neuter genders. However, this failure to distinguish genders for this item seems for various reasons to have become dysfunctional, and the neuter form was replaced, first by the use of a periphrasis (*thereof*, as in *the fall thereof*) and subsequently by the new form *its*, created analogously on the model of possessive nouns.

What is intriguing is that, when *its* first appears it is frequently spelt with an apostrophe, viz. *it's*, i.e. 'wrongly' from a modern perspective. Moreover, there are other words which, in old-spelling texts (as opposed to modernised versions) of Shakespeare's plays, also contain apostrophes where we would not use them; the Second Plebian in *Julius Caesar*, for instance, is given the following line in the First Folio of 1623:

>    *Caesar ha's had great wrong*

This example is indicative: apostrophes were used, in Shakespeare's day, as a marker of 'absence' or 'injury'. In *Julius Caesar*, patricians such as Mark Antony or Brutus or Cassius use *hath*; only the lower-class plebians use *has*. The apostrophe is a class-indicator.

That little explanation has historical interest: how can you use it in teaching? Well, one of the great tricks of teaching is to engage students in such a way that they reflect on their own practice: by telling them the history of this little symbol you have 'raised their consciousness' in an interesting way. Next time they have to decide between the spellings *it's* and *its* they will pause and think. They may still get the form 'wrong', but they will have − in a very small way − engaged in that reflection on their own practice which is the core of what is known as active learning. And you have gained as well; you have experience in formulating your ideas in a simple way − no bad thing,

for easy reading is hard writing. Research and teaching have complemented each other.

What about research and administration? Here it is worth reflecting on your own practice to see how research skills are also administrative ones, for undertaking a substantial research project such as a PhD requires a lot of skills which are easily transferred to an administrative environment. Again, take the example of your project on apostrophes: to undertake this project you will need to have amassed a huge amount of information about this item, perhaps culled from a corpus of texts, and sorted it out so that you can access it easily, perhaps using a database (developing IT skills). You will need to have engaged with primary materials, perhaps in distant research libraries where you will have had to persuade librarians of your fitness to look at the material (developing 'people' skills). You will need to have set yourself deadlines for completion of components of your research; you will need to have met these deadlines. You will need to have developed the ability to take criticism without taking it personally; you may have found that you need to negotiate your relationship with your supervisor or supervisors (more 'people' skills). Unless you are exceptionally fortunate, you will need to have managed your finances – with all the juggling that entails – to pursue your research; you will have had to persuade people of your abilities through demonstrating them (yet more 'people' skills), and thus persuading them to part with money. These are all administrative skills, and you will find that they are all relevant for your future career.

And, of course, all this material can appear on a curriculum vitae ('C.V.'). I imagine that many of you are already constructing a C.V., and it is worth thinking for minute on how such a C.V. will appear to an appointing panel. In the good old bad old days, appointing panels were curious beasts, where judgements were made on sometimes very curious grounds: what school did

X go to? What sports does Y play? Do I like the cut of Z's jib? Professionalising appointments – given that staff-costs are by far the largest item of expenditure in a university – has become essential, and amidst the management-speak guff there is a kernel of good sense which has emerged over recent years: appointing panels these days look for what are called 'demonstrables'. Can X *demonstrate, from their experience*, their research skills (maybe through publication or delivery of conference papers)? Can Y *demonstrate, from their experience,* their teaching ability (as a GTA, for instance, across a range of subjects and modes)? Can Z *demonstrate, from their experience*, their administrative skills? A wise appointing committee may spot potential in an applicant, but appointments are not made on potential alone: the key issue is to do with demonstration. As you reflect on your own practice, think how you have developed demonstrable skills.

## Conversation and Collegiality

One of these demonstrable skills – which of course you will be able to demonstrate in a modern academic interview, which typically requires you to make a presentation to a department followed by a more formal, structured interview – is the ability to engage in a conversation. You need to be able to listen as well as speak; the person who can only speak but cannot listen is not the kind of person wanted as a colleague and will, in any case, have a tough time in the classroom. A wise appointing committee will be thinking not just about you: they will also be thinking about how you relate to the rest of the team. An academic career is above all other things collegial; academics talk, converse in print, engage with others at every level. Academic research is a kind of extended conversation (expressed through publication or conference-papers) with other members of the community; academic teaching is about engaging with students, not just talking at them; and good academic administration requires a huge amount of patient confabulation. In such a context, leadership does not mean 'giving orders'. It

is often said that leading academics – whether colleagues or students – is like herding cats, and that is certainly true from my own experience.

But it is important not to overstate the exceptionalism of the academic life; I've heard similar comments from people who work in environments where an uninformed outsider might consider ordering people the norm, e.g. in the armed forces. Collegiality – sometimes dignified as 'team-building' – is a characteristic of all successful, sustainable enterprises, and universities, with all their faults, have been around a long time. The big transferable skill which you will have gained from your postgraduate degree is (or maybe should be) not only that you have honed your persuasive arts but also that you have enhanced your capacity to listen: in other words, you have developed skills of collegiality. In whatever career you follow – in or outside academia – you will find these arts and capacities invaluable.

# Scholarship and Research: Is There A Difference?

## Graham D. Caie

Is there a difference between scholarship and research and, if so, does it matter? Scholarship is often considered the poor cousin to research and covers fields such as reading the research of others, writing reviews, non-refereed articles, encyclopaedia entries, and teaching material. Research, however, is thought of as existing on a higher plain − investigating original ideas and writing innovative articles and books in refereed journals or 'good' publishers. And, yes, it does matter when it comes to research assessment, promotion and academic reputation.

Should it bother you as postgraduates? I have had a number of queries from my own research postgraduate students about the all-important task of prioritising one's work and the problem is as great for postgraduates as it is for lecturers. A lecturer's life is a constant juggling-act between dozens of very different activities, roughly divided into research, teaching and administration; for postgraduates there is pressure to concentrate on the thesis, but also to prepare research and conference papers, write reviews or brief notes. So, what activities should occupy your precious time?

Your supervisors and all academic staff spent much time last year (2008) agonising about which four of their publications since 2000 they would select for the RAE (Research Assessment Exercise), although for some there were only four, so no problem! Some had written long monographs which were textbooks, or edited large collections of essays and wondered if these would be less prestigious in the eyes of the assessors than a briefer article in a refereed journal. As I am on a panel for RAE, a number of colleagues asked

me what exactly constitutes research as opposed to scholarship and why the latter is considered inferior. On the same subject I recently attended an English Subject Centre workshop at which the status of the textbook was discussed. Both publishers and the academics who write textbooks are dismayed at the attitude of those responsible for research in their institutions to discourage this type of scholarship and encourage what is deemed 'pure' research. I stress that this is often an institutional decision, as both RAE and research councils welcome textbooks that include a research component. The RAE accepts 'teaching materials where these contain a significant research element' and the AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) states that 'teaching materials may also be an appropriate outcome from a research project provided that it fulfils the definition [of research]'.

So should you stop your thesis for a week to write, say, an encyclopaedia article or a review? The reality is that you have not much chance of getting 'that job' as an academic without a PhD; that said, the vast majority of applicants will have a completed PhD and so the selectors are looking for more, namely a few publications, to show that you are a serious researcher who publishes. The answer, then, is to do both: complete the thesis *and* publish. The simplest solution is to make your thesis chapters or conference papers into articles and papers along the way.

When it comes to decisions between research articles and 'scholarship' papers, the same hierarchical criteria exist for lecturers as well. Personally, I feel that it ought not to matter, as all these tasks are part of our job and in my eyes of equal importance, but the blunt reality is that good research articles and monographs still take precedence.

Here are the official definitions of research and scholarship, at least according to two of the bodies which play a major part in the Humanities: the AHRC and the RAE. According to the RAE English panel – the one I know best:

> Research for the purpose of the RAE is to be understood as original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artifacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights (RAE 2001: 2.12).

There is a list of examples of research, such as books, refereed articles, etc. and then later in the list the following categories appear:

> f) Other published outputs including poems, short stories, plays, shorter translations, inaugural lectures, conference contributions, pamphlets, and review articles
> g) Teaching materials where these contain a significant research element
> h) Other forms of output where appropriate to applied, practice-based, or pedagogic research (RAE 2006: 87).

The criteria state, however, that the definition of research "excludes the development of teaching materials that do not embody original research" (RAE 2001: 2.12).

It is interesting to see that 'scholarship' is included above as a sub-category of research. However, the criteria then give a specific definition of Scholarship:

> Scholarship for the RAE is defined as the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and E-contributions to major research databases (RAE 2000: 2).

The stress here is on *infrastructure*: tools which help research. Applied research is different and defined in this way:

> Applied research […] is informed by the intellectual infrastructure of scholarly research in the field; it applies and/or transfers enhanced knowledge, methods, tools and resources from basic and strategic research; it also contributes to scholarship in the field through systematic dissemination of the results (RAE 2006: 25).

So the RAE has a broad view of research which embraces all our work which has a research component in it. The AHRC has a slightly narrower definition of research:

> Research must define a series of **research questions**, issues or problems that will be addressed in the course of the research. It must specify a research **context** for the questions, issues or problems to be addressed. It must specify the research **methods** for addressing and answering the research questions, issues or problems. This definition of research provides a distinction between research and practice per se (AHRC 2009:1. Emphasis AHRC).

Creative output can be produced, or practice undertaken, as an integral part of a research process as defined above. The Council would expect, however, this practice to be accompanied by some form of documentation of the research process, as well as some form of textual analysis or explanation to support its position and to demonstrate critical reflection.

The outputs of the research may include, for example, monographs, editions or articles; electronic data, including sound or images; performances, films or broadcasts; or exhibitions. **Teaching materials may also be an appropriate outcome from a research project provided that it fulfils the definition above.** (AHRC 2009:2. Emphasis mine).

So we now know the priorities of two or our major masters. But wait! There is another master, *society*, reflected in the voice of the ministries and

government: for it, the major buzzword is *Knowledge Transfer.* The AHRC has been promoting this in recent years and has made separate funding available. The arts and humanities have a huge contribution to make to the economic, social and cultural benefit of the UK. Ensuring that the knowledge and understanding generated by arts and humanities research is widely disseminated is a key element of the AHRC's mission. The AHRC's definition of knowledge transfer recognises a broad range of knowledge transfer routes, including business interaction, engagement with the heritage and cultural sectors, production of content for film, broadcasting and other media and informing public policy. This is what AHRC states about Knowledge Transfer (KT).

This sounds very much like the earlier definition of scholarship, namely the dissemination of our (or others) research for the good of the community at large. All AHRC major grant applications now require the applicant to state the specific nature of KT in the project proposed. One of the main areas of scholarship is the transference of research to under- and post-graduate teaching; not breaking new ground, but disseminating, transferring knowledge to our students.

So, we have to do original research AND make it accessible and understandable to the wider community. To be honest, the majority of scholars do this in any case, by giving interviews, being in the media, podcasting, etc., but now there are research council grants to help us.

Not wanting to put any of you off the academic life, I have to say that the modern academic has to master a number of skills – to be excellent at lecturing; know a fair bit of IT to work Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) and PowerPoint; research and publish; give papers at conferences; contribute articles to edited collections of books; edit

other peoples' articles either as a journal assessor or editor of a book; write a column in the papers; podcast; publicise the university and one's subject in the media; sit on journal editorial boards; examine undergraduate and postgraduate work internally and externally; sit on innumerable committees and do one's share of administration – plus try to have a social and family life!

I would put the following activities for the PhD student in this order of priority:

1. Complete a good, research thesis
2. Write up some of your chapters as articles or write c. two articles in the course of the PhD period, but take care not to spend too much time completing them
3. Prepare a few, brief publications such as encyclopaedia entries or a book review
4. Present some of your ideas in the media – podcast, 'popular' article, etc.

Not all are necessary, but nothing should take you away from the thesis for long. I have not touched on other activities, such as teaching and helping with administrative duties, but again these should not be too time-consuming.

Finally, I can say that it is all well worth it in the end and the academic life is fantastic. Best wishes in your careers.

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