

2E Challenging Conventions: The Chemistry Clinic, the Student Role in Knowledge Exchange

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It is clear that graduates who engage in industry-facing activity during their studies are better equipped to embark on their career (Mendez and Rona, 2010). The fourth year of the MChem programmes in the Department of Pure and Applied Chemistry at the University of Strathclyde contain a compulsory Industrial Training Placement. These placements fulfil the criteria required for accreditation by the Royal Society of Chemistry (Royal Society of Chemistry, 2013). It is clear, however, from previous discussion with students that there exists a cohort which has a desire to work in non-traditional, but chemistry-based businesses where marketing, business skills and commercial awareness are as important as chemical knowledge.

Additionally, the Department has strong industrial links with many SMEs, and larger companies. A number of these companies often approach the Department to request support in solving a chemical problem that has arisen in their business but, in many cases, academic staff do not have the time to devote to finding a solution. With Knowledge Exchange currently a topical issue for the Higher Education sector (HEFCE, 2013), we married these two facts together and the idea of the 'Chemistry Clinic' was created. This is offered as an alternative to the Industrial Placement and challenges the convention that knowledge exchange does not normally involve student input.

At the heart of the Chemistry Clinic is student engagement. Teams of staff and students become members of a 'firm'. Members of the firm work in partnership with businesses to provide solutions to their chemical problems. By adopting a multidisciplinary approach, Chemistry students also have the opportunity to engage with students from other Faculties, e.g. marketing. Additionally, the project features a vertically integrated aspect, allowing students from earlier years to gain exposure to the Chemical Industry.

References

Mendez, R & Rona, A, (2010) 'The Relationship Between Industrial Placements and Final Degree Results: a study of engineering placement students', *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, Issue 4-2

Royal Society of Chemistry, 2013, External Placements (all programmes), <http://www.rsc.org/Education/courses-and-careers/accredited-courses/external-placements.asp> (accessed on 21st October 2013)

HEFCE, 2013, Knowledge Exchange, <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/kes/> (accessed on 21st October 2013)