

Capacity-building for Refugee Academic Mentoring in the West of Scotland

Glasgow Caledonian University CARA (Council for Assisting Refugee Academics) Pathfinder Project

March 2008- September 2008

Project aim

The aim of the project is to build capacity within GCU, and other HEIs, to offer wider opportunities for refugee academic mentoring and work experience programmes through:

- Enhancing mentor support at GCU through linking the role to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and scholarly activity in relation to internationalisation strategy
- Collaborating with the wider university community in West of Scotland to develop good practice guidelines for refugee academic mentoring which builds on the Resource Pack developed through the GCU pathfinder project in 2007.

The project will build upon the outcomes of the first GCU Pathfinder project which centred on the development of an RPL profiling, guidance and work experience model for refugee academics. The project developed a Resource Pack for mentors to support a professional development and work shadowing programme for refugee academics.

In order to create wider opportunities for refugee academics to participate in such a programme within the HE sector in the West of Scotland, one of the key issues which emerged from this project was the need to create incentives for academic staff to act in the role of mentor. These incentives include recognition of this role in their academic workload and a link to their continuing professional development. Senior management support for mentoring programmes is clearly essential, but equally so is successful engagement of staff who can carry out the mentoring role itself.

Project activities

The project will focus on setting up the infrastructure which will engage and support academic staff in working with refugee academics from the beginning of academic session 08/09. This will be achieved through the following project activities:

1. A Refugee Academic Mentor Scheme linked to a Community of Practice for Internationalisation and CPD opportunities for staff

Within GCU a **refugee academic mentor scheme** will be developed which is integrated within the new Caledonian **Community of Practice for Internationalisation** which forms part of GCU's internationalisation strategy. The mentoring scheme itself will commence at the beginning of academic session 08/09. During the grant period CARA refugee academics will be invited to participate in the Community of Practice as well as GCU international scholars who will be encouraged to act as mentors. Academic staff interested in undertaking action research projects linked to the internationalisation of the curriculum will also form part of this community and may assume the role of mentor for an academic refugee. International students will also form part of this community.

A two-way exchange of experience between GCU academic staff, refugee academics and international students will support a greater understanding of the issues associated with cultural diversity in relation to learning & teaching within an international context.

From the refugee academic's perspective, this process will help them to gain understanding and experience of the UK HE context. The programme that was developed in the first GCU pathfinder project was highly valued in this respect by the participants. This process will also help to inform GCU developments in the internationalisation of the curriculum and in developing strategies to address the social and academic transition issues facing international students when they embark on programmes at GCU.

In terms of creating incentives for staff involvement, staff acting as mentors for refugee academics can link this role to supporting their own professional development. Opportunities for accreditation of the learning achieved through this role may be provided through GCU's CPD Masters programme at Diploma or Masters level. Collaboration with the Glasgow Mentoring Network, within which GCU is an active participant, will take place as part of the process of providing mentor support. The Glasgow Mentoring Network (GMN) is a best practice organisation, which aims to inform and advance the development, design and delivery of mentoring programmes in the city. Continued collaboration with the specialist work-shadowing refugee organisation the Bridges programme will form an essential component in developing the mentoring scheme.

2. Development of Good Practice Guidelines for Mentoring

The Resource Pack developed through the first project will be built on to produce **good practice guidelines for mentoring** which can be integrated within the Manual of Good Practice which will be developed by CARA. The wider local university community will be invited to participate in this process. The aim of this will be to encourage the development of wider university network of academic mentors. The transferability of the resource pack, developed through the first project, within other HEI contexts will be investigated. Greater collaboration between universities would enable a broader range of areas and opportunities for work shadowing experience to be made available for refugee academics. A mentor network would also facilitate peer support for mentors in terms of exchanging experiences and collective problems solving.

3. IT skills development programme for refugee academics

Supporting the IT skills development of refugee academics before embarking on the work-shadowing placement. This was identified as a clear development need by the pilot participants in the previous project. A tailored package of IT skills training, which centres on the use of technology-enhanced learning and VLES to support teaching & learning in GCU will be delivered during the summer period.

A Partnership Approach

The Widening Access & Community Engagement Unit will work in partnership with the Caledonian Academy; Organisational Development, the International office; Learner Support and Marketing and Communication as well as the seven schools as appropriate: Caledonian Business School, School of Built and Natural Environment, School of Engineering and Computing, School of Health and Social Care, School of Law & Social Sciences, School of Life Sciences, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Community Health.

The project is being undertaken in partnership with the Bridges Programme. This is a specialist agency that helps refugees and asylum seekers living in Glasgow to gain meaningful work experience within their field of expertise. The Bridges Programme also develops accreditation and up-skilling schemes to help refugee professionals to access sustainable jobs at the appropriate level. The project will also draw upon the expertise of the Glasgow Mentoring Network.

The university seeks to collaborate with the other universities in the West of Scotland- Glasgow University, Strathclyde University and the University of the West of Scotland, to develop good practice guidelines for mentoring and to encourage greater work-shadowing and professional development opportunities for refugee academics.

Project timescales

March 2008	Establishment of Community of Practice (COP) for Internationalisation. Identification of 5-10 refugee academics to participate in COP through CARA and Bridges programme
April 2008	COP to engage in virtual discussion through Wiki and face to face through university event. Aim- two-way exchange of experience to develop greater understanding of cultural and pedagogical similarities and differences in relation to learning & teaching in HE international context.
May 2008	Pairing of GCU international scholars and other GCU teaching staff with refugee academics for work shadowing placement (to commence September 2008).
May- August 2008	Building on Resource Pack, development of good practice guidelines on mentoring through collaboration with other local universities, Bridges programme, Glasgow Mentoring Network. GCU to act as hub in this process.
1 June 2008	Submission of brief progress report to CARA
June- July 2008	Refugee academics provided with IT skills training programme
August 2008	GCU staff provided with training and preparation for mentoring role
1 September 2008	Submission of final report to CARA

For further information about the project please contact:

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