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# **Widening the Nexus: From T-R to T-T-R**

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## **Introduction**

Teaching and research are often considered to be the core activities of a university, however there are demands for institutions to become increasingly accountable, and to help solve economic and social problems, all with a reduction in real terms of the unit of funding provided by the state (Clark, 1998, pp. 129-131). The reduction in state funding has driven (reluctantly in some cases) universities to seek non-state sources of funding. These activities bring new demands and may contribute to the fragmentation of academic life described by Rowland (2002).

The integration of university teaching and research strategies has been advocated by Lapworth (2004), however I will suggest in this short paper that a framework is required that will integrate teaching, research and third stream activities. An aspect of this approach can be seen in the implementation of the Advanced Scholarship Strategy at Southampton Solent University (SSU, 2004b).

## **Teaching, Research and the Third Stream**

UK government policies for teaching and research have been very different and 'could lead to considerable changes in the current pattern of institutions' (Brown, 2004, p. 93). The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) has led to greater selectivity in research funding, concentrating research in a smaller number of institutions, and hence increasing differentiation between institutions. At the same time, teaching has been opened to the forces of the market, with increased competition intended to drive up teaching quality.

There are concerns that external pressures (for example the RAE) may be driving research and teaching further apart within institutions (Coate, Barnett and Williams, 2001), and that the 'commodification' of higher education may have a detrimental impact on the quality of both teaching and research (Naidoo, 2005).

A study of the relationship between teaching and research by (Coate, Barnett and Williams, 2001) found that 'synergy seems to be understood on an intellectual level but not from a managerial perspective' (p. 172). The teaching-research relationship may

therefore be enhanced, it is suggested, if management strategies are adopted that bring these two activities together. Lapworth (2004) develops this approach further, calling for the integration of teaching and research strategies at both institutional and subject level, an approach intended to accommodate the particular cultures of subject disciplines.

In the UK the reduction in the unit of funding from the state has been well documented and this has encouraged a number of universities to seek additional non-state sources of income (Shattock, 2003, p. 46). Etzkowitz (2003) claims that 'the entrepreneurial university, combining a 'third mission' of economic and social development with teaching and research, is a growing contemporary phenomenon, with academia taking a leading role in an increasingly knowledge-based society' (p. 325).

Wedgwood (2006, pp. 134-157) contends that engagement with economy and society (a third stream of activity alongside teaching and research) should become a mainstream activity in a mass system of higher education. The 'optimisation model' (Wedgwood, 2006, pp. 137-141) recognises that the institution can contribute to economic, social and cultural developments, and demonstrates that such engagement is meaningful for all academic disciplines, not just science, technology and business.

The teaching-research (T-R) nexus can therefore be extended; hence third stream-teaching-research (T-T-R) and I will now describe how these activities can be supported and recognised within a coherent academic framework.

### **Advanced Scholarship**

Southampton Solent University is a teaching-led institution, with key strategic priorities related to learning and teaching, knowledge transfer, community engagement and advanced scholarship. The definition of 'Advanced Scholarship' adopted by the University is deliberately inclusive, embracing subject-based research and other areas of high-level intellectual, creative and professional endeavour (SSU, 2004b).

[Advanced Scholarship] is most simply and broadly defined as the creation of new knowledge, or the critical reinterpretation, application and transfer of existing knowledge. In established usage within higher education, advanced scholarship is university-level activity informed by, at, or extending the forefront of the academic discipline or area of professional practice. It is characterised by disciplined inquiry, which addresses and seeks to resolve significant theoretical and practical problems. (SSU, 2004a)

Advanced Scholarship is also expected to enhance the quality of the student learning experience. 'It must have demonstrated links with student learning, teaching, or the furtherance of higher education practice if it is to be properly valued' (SSU, 2004a).

To illustrate policy in practice, the 2005/ 06 Advanced Scholarship activities for full-time academic staff in the Faculty of Technology will be presented and briefly discussed. These data were collected through a process of peer review as part of a university-wide exercise. To be considered as Advanced Scholarship an activity must meet the following criteria:

- i. results in a visible output in the public domain;
- ii. carries peer esteem; and
- iii. contains an aspect of innovation/ originality (SSU, 2004a).

Data were collected for all 66 full-time Faculty of Technology academic staff employed during the reporting period. 53 staff (78.8%) recorded one or more Advanced Scholarship endeavours (Table 1). Advanced Scholarship embraces subject and pedagogic research, creative production, knowledge transfer, community engagement, HE activities (for example research degree supervisor or examiner) and active involvement with a professional body (Fig. 1).

|   | School                     |        |                                      |
|---|----------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|
|   | Computing & Communications | Design | Engineering, Construction & Maritime |
| Number of full-time academic staff                  | 23                         | 16     | 27                                   |
| Number of staff reporting one or more AS endeavours | 17                         | 15     | 21                                   |
| Total number of AS endeavours                       | 61                         | 41     | 71                                   |
| Average number of AS endeavours/ member of staff    | 2.65                       | 2.56   | 2.63                                 |

Table 1: Total number of staff and AS endeavours by School, 2005/ 06

Each School has a distinctive 'profile' of Advanced Scholarship, reflecting disciplinary differences and the particular interests and expertise of each staff group. It is apparent, however, that a rich and diverse range of endeavours are contributing to the cultural and economic development of the region, and to wider academic and professional communities. Information has also been collected about the relationship of each activity to academic practice and the student experience. The majority of records confirm a link

with teaching or the curriculum, with fewer activities relevant to assessment or higher education practice.

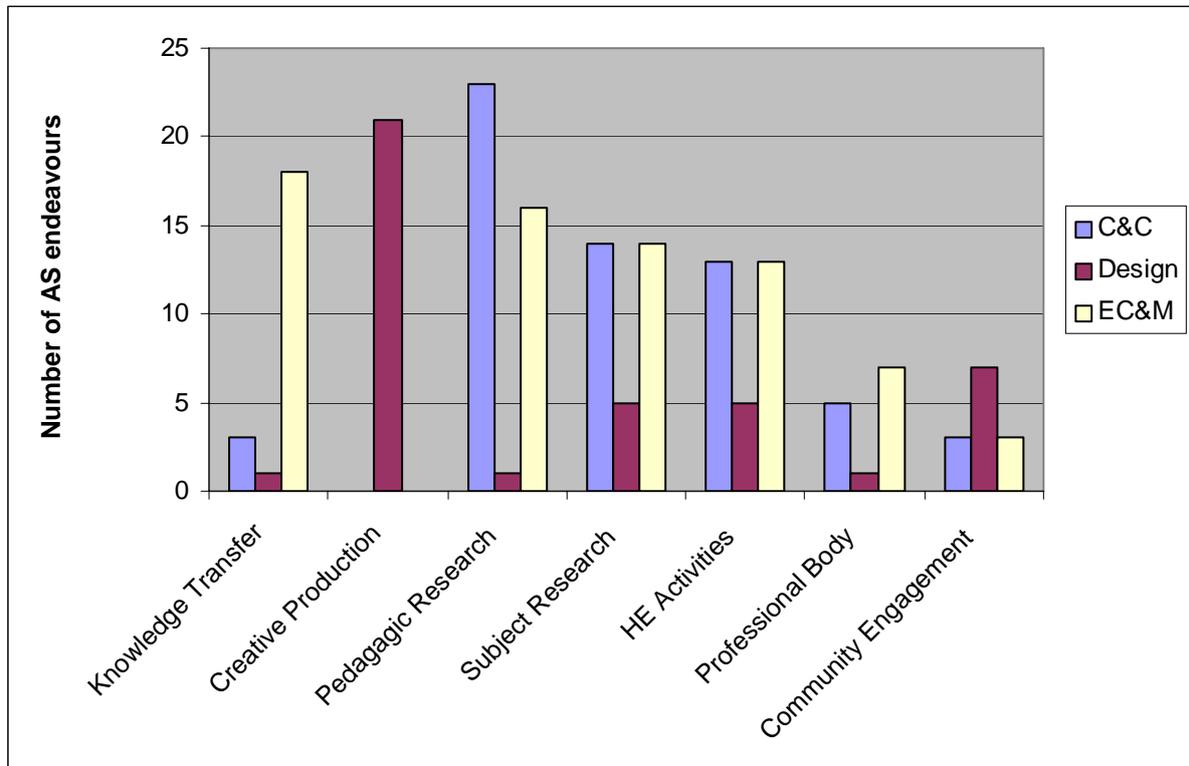


Fig. 1: Number of Advanced Scholarship endeavours by type and School, 2005/ 06

Advanced Scholarship can be modelled by extending the optimisation model of third stream engagement (Wedgwood, 2006, pp. 137-141) as shown in Fig. 2. Engagement with business (wealth creation) and communities (quality of life), subject and pedagogic research can all be harnessed to enhance the student experience of learning and employability.

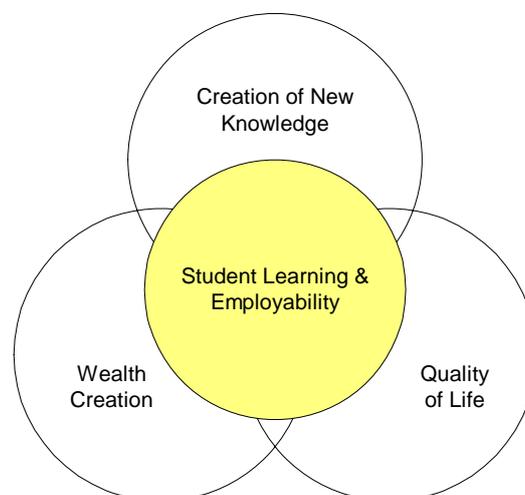


Fig. 2: Integrated Advanced Scholarship Framework

## Conclusions

Higher education institutions are operating with scarce resources in a complex environment, and subject to various, often competing or changing demands. The integration of teaching, research and third stream activities within a coherent academic framework provides an opportunity to manage and exploit the positive relationships between these activities. This approach may also help to ease some of the tensions and 'fault lines' that currently beset academic life.

At Southampton Solent University the inclusive concept of Advanced Scholarship is used to recognise and support high-level academic endeavour, including research, and third stream (engagement with business and communities). The utility of this approach has been demonstrated for a wide range of activities and subject disciplines. A key feature is that Advanced Scholarship activities are expected to enhance the student experience, hence a third stream-teaching-research (T-T-R) nexus.

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