

## **BMTO Teaching Network-19.09.2018-**

### **'The BMS Student-Staff community: Are you in?' by Celine Caquineau (BMTO)**

CC welcomed everyone and introduced her project on student staff academic community. BMS provides numerous community building initiatives such as peer support scheme, group work and social events. However, only 54% UG students feel part of a community (NSS 2018; versus 61% UoE average). This result is supported by the recent TPR which reported that the student community and the academic community are perceived by UG students to be 2 separate entities with both entities lacking a clear understanding of the expectations of the other. The project aim to explore ways to develop and foster a joint academic community within BMS, a community of scholars where both staff and students are active partners. The first phase of the project is to collect insights from BMS students and staff.

CC provided 3 questions for each group to discuss:

Q1. How would you define 'Student- Staff academic community'? How do you think students would define it?

Q2. Which factors facilitate/ impair a 'Student- staff academic community'?

Q3. What do you think we should start/ stop doing to enhance our community?

Points discussed included:

- Difficulty to define "academic community" in the varied BMS context. It might mean something different for different persons (staff, UG, PG, online, on campus).
- Definition of student staff community should encompass the themes of shared values and valued contributions.
- BMS widespread across numerous locations. Not having one common space/ "Home" impairs a sense of community.
- Not enough opportunities and time for UG students to get know academics leading to difficulty in building relationship. Courses should favour small group teaching, and/or number of staff teaching on courses should be reduced, so students get opportunity to know some staff better.
- UG students tend to think that the staff priority is research.
- UG students intimidated by staff.
- The introduction of a new learning activity in year 1 where students in groups would interview BMS staff to learn about labs, research and individuals.
- Encourage students and staff to share educational materials through online forum.
- Notion of a critical mass over which sense of belonging to a community is not possible/ difficult

- Course communication issues: Some staff felt there is a lack of understanding of the ethos of some courses or not enough info provided on courses they are involved with. Misunderstanding of a course might lead to inconsistencies in what is being said to students.
- Staff community not always inclusive: Some staff felt they are not part of a BMS staff community.

**Upcoming initiatives:** (if interested to contribute, please email [c.caquineau@ed.ac.uk](mailto:c.caquineau@ed.ac.uk))

**BMS Student Staff community Workshop:** 30.01.19

Staff and students will contribute to a collaborative session on academic community building to identify shared values, common purpose and explore ways to nurture an effective student staff community in the BMS context.

**BMS Coffee and Cake Conversations:** January- February 2019

BMS will participate to the scheme which was very successful in many schools across UoE last year. The concept is to match up one staff member and up to three students to go for free coffee and cake. Some questions will be provided to get the conversation started.

**Network you might find interesting:**

The Engage network:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/learning-teaching/connect/engage>

**Sources of funding to enhance student experience:**

Do you have an idea to improve the Edinburgh student experience or other teaching and learning related ideas?

See <https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-experience-grants>

See <https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/funding/action-fund/aims>