Case Study

Newcastle University 2008

Embedding a culture of learning and teaching excellence

Team leader - Kathy Wiles (Head, Quality, Learning and Teaching)

Team members - Alan Adams (Senior Lecturer - Electrical, Electronic and Computer Engineering); Matthew Armstrong (Lecturer - Electrical, Electronic and Computer Engineering); Bryn Jones (Postgraduate Dean Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering); Ella Ritchie (PVC Learning and Teaching); Bayan Sharif (Head of School - Electrical, Electronic and Computer Engineering); Mark Speake (Student)

Newcastle University’s project focuses on how academic staff and Heads of School deal with the competing demands of research, teaching and other activities. In this complex environment it can be difficult for staff to focus on the student experience and their role in implementing it.

A project team from the Senior Management and the School of Electrical, Electronic and Computer Engineering is working on how to strengthen the culture of learning and teaching informed by research.

Professor Ella Ritchie, Newcastle University’s Pro Vice Chancellor of learning and teaching, said: “Before this week those of us at Newcastle taking parting the Change Academy programme didn’t know each other as a group, but we’ve all felt the real benefit of being here together. The structure of the event has been extremely valuable and has helped us tease out the issues and, because we’re away from our usual environment, it’s helped us to talk more openly. We’ve really seen the strengths in our diverse group.

“This is a complex and lengthy project which focuses on changing culture, and a key test for us will be maintaining our drive and commitment once we get back to our day to day roles.”

Kathy Wiles, Head of Quality, Learning and Teaching, is leading Newcastle University’s Change Academy team, said of the week’s residential event: “It’s really given us an opportunity to focus on the project in a way we couldn’t have done if we’d stayed on campus. And on a personal level Change Academy has been a great development opportunity for me as I don’t often get the chance to work so closely with a School and understand things from their point of view. These experiences can be used to help us support the needs of academic departments much better.”

Newcastle University’s Change Academy team includes an electrical engineering student, Mark Speake, who is returning to the third of his four year combined Masters course. He said: “It’s really been a team of equals and I know that my opinion has been heard and valued. One of my roles will be to gather input from my fellow students so the team can make sure that it delivers to the highest level, to benefit us, the student body. I’m sure that over the year I will be able to build
my experience and skill levels which will be of great benefit to the university, and to me in the future.”