

STAFF TESTIMONIALS

"I was lucky enough to be given a 6 Week Secondment at the Brussels Campus, supporting the Postgraduate Programmes. The cultural and work experience I gained was invaluable. I would strongly recommend to colleagues that working in different departments at the different campuses and different departments provides fantastic opportunities to expand your skill set and challenge and increase your abilities whilst meeting a great variety of people."

Simon Hicks, Programme Coordinator, SECL

"I have been on several secondments in the last year and found it to be a great opportunity to learn more and understand how other departments and schools within the university work. I would definitely recommend participating in a secondment as it also gives you the chance to meet new people and create a network of support."

Nicholle Mackenzie, Divisional Administrator, Academic Division

"Having worked in an undergraduate role for some years, I recognised the need to develop my skillset further in different areas and when a 2-month secondment working as a postgraduate coordinator in the Kent School of Architecture came up, I was therefore very happy to accept. I found the move challenging at first – working in a new environment with a different team in an administrative area that was new to me. This secondment has allowed me to expand my professional network, improve my administrative abilities, both undergraduate and postgraduate, and has also increased my awareness of the part we play at the University of Kent."

Paul Sharp, Undergraduate Co-ordinator, Arts

"I had a three month period of secondment in the Faculties Support Office from January to March 2014 and found this to be a very positive experience. I gained valuable knowledge and experience of working in a central academic department which led to a greater understanding of how the work of a central department and our School enhance each other. A secondment is an ideal way to gain more knowledge about University procedures from a different perspective and use this knowledge to further develop your own role."

Angela Whiffen, Postgraduate Coordinator, School of Arts

"For the past year I have covered a post in the School of Anthropology and Conservation for a member of staff on maternity leave. A Secondment is a great way to experience a different role, secure in the knowledge that you have your own post to return to at the end of the cover period. I have learnt a lot, increased my skills and challenged myself to make a difference in a short timeframe; it has been very rewarding."

Laura Withers, Divisional Administrator, Academic Division

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING?

If you are interested in participating in this scheme, please complete the expression of interest form and then discuss this with your line-manager to let them know what kind of arrangement you think may be most beneficial for you. If you already have a specific colleague in mind, your line-manager will endeavour to make the visit possible. If not, s/he will try and find the best available "match" for your need.

THE FRESH EYES SCHEME

*Secondments / role shadowing /
staff exchange opportunities – part of the
Excellence Through Partnerships Initiative*



INTRODUCTION

The University encourages choices for staff to sample or choose a different career path and supports secondments to other organisations or across the University. University secondments are typically advertised and all staff have the option to apply for roles on this basis although it is requested that they consult with their line manager in the first.

Building upon these existing career development opportunities, the Heads of Administration for the three Faculties are keen to encourage and promote a range of opportunities for administration staff to undertake work outside of their primary post and School/Centre.

The intention of Fresh Eyes scheme is to broaden out these opportunities by helping staff, based within the three faculties of Humanities, Sciences and Social Sciences, who would like to try other roles, move more freely and frequently within the University and to do so as part of a recognised and supported scheme.

This scheme is part of the "Excellence initiative" which has been running since 2012. The Initiative is for all administrative staff in the University's Academic Schools and Centres and the Faculties Support Office and is aimed at encouraging the sharing of good practice across the different Schools and Faculties, enhancing and celebrating the service delivered by administrative staff to students and academics as well as to other professional colleagues.

"Service Excellence" was chosen as the first enhancement theme for this Initiative and a series of events were organised during 2012 which encouraged units to identify projects which would best meet the specific needs of their own student and staff population. This successful stage of the Initiative was shortlisted for the Times Higher Education Leadership and Management Awards 2013 in the Outstanding Departmental Administrative Team category.

The current enhancement theme of the Initiative is titled "Excellence through Partnerships" and it aims to strengthen relationships and build new partnerships between administrative, student and academic communities across Schools, Faculties and central Professional Services. We believe that the fresh eyes scheme is an excellent example of one of the ways that this can be realised.

Why this scheme?

As units, we too often operate in silos, and do not often know enough how similar or complementary units operate outside our own. This scheme provides opportunities for members of staff to join new teams to see their work through a "different lens", have a "change of scene" as well as provide a welcome "pair of fresh eyes".

This scheme is intended to complement the knowledge exchange, problem solving, sharing best practice and networking opportunities provided by the Faculties Special Interest Groups. It is open to all administration staff within the three faculties and is intended to enable staff who wish to enhance their skills and experience across a broader range of areas or functions within the University or those who wish to sample working in a different role, to fulfil this ambition as part of our commitment to professional development.

The scheme operates on the principle that one of the most effective ways to transfer knowledge is to transfer people, through secondment into other Schools or departments within the University.

A pair of fresh eyes will enable staff to acquire new skills, build new working relationships and broaden experience, which can be hugely beneficial.

What is the scheme about?

The scheme aims to help staff to spend some time in another team. This can be done in a number of ways:

- **Shadowing:** A member of staff work alongside a colleague in a similar or complementary role to their own, or in a role to which they aspire to move, in order to gain some direct experience of exactly what that person does.
- **Swap:** a two way swap involving people who agree to do each other's job for a set period of time in different schools. It is envisaged that role swaps would be facilitated through the faculties Special Interest Groups.
- **Learning visit:** A new system/technique/skill is demonstrated
- **Critical friend visit:** Someone is called in to cast a critical eye on an old or new process and offers comments and suggestions
The learning or critical friend visits do not have to be for a long period of time as a morning's visit or two has proved to be extremely enlightening and rewarding.

- **Secondment:** considering offering temporary responsibilities or secondment opportunities to staff within the University as the need for cover arises. This involves a transfer to another part of the University for a pre-agreed, set period of time following which staff return to the same job at the end of the secondment.
- **Visits to other Universities in the UK and elsewhere:** visits to other Universities are a good way to engage with colleagues from the sector and learn from the Higher Education Community more broadly. These short term visits allow for the sharing of knowledge and further development understanding of Higher Education policy and practice.

Please note that this scheme is designed to complement the existing University policies and opportunities. All staff can apply for advertised posts on a secondment basis or apply to undertake short term European opportunities via Erasmus+ etc. We ask staff, out of courtesy, to inform their current line manager, prior to applying.

What would the main advantages be?

- The Institution as a whole will benefit in that the sharing of good practice and the circulation of good ideas will be improved, and duplication of effort should decrease.
- The visitors will be introduced to different tried and tested processes, which they may then want to adopt/adapt.
- The visitors will get a better understanding of how the University works, of how their own work fits into the whole, and of what new skills they may need to acquire in order to move into a new role.
- The hosts will benefit from their "critical friends" observations.
- The hosts will benefit from having to think through their processes in order to explain them
- Both parties will benefit from forging working relationships across the university.
- The scheme will help participants augment their skills set, build on their experience and enhance their CVs and support career development and progression aspirations.