

# The Collaborative Development of an Occupational Psychology Internship: Students and Employers as Partners



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## Summary of Poster:

1. Poster Purpose (two-fold)
2. Role of Students
3. Internal and External links needed
4. Win-Win-Win
5. Conclusion and Tips for academic colleagues

1.

## The two-fold purpose of this Poster Presentation is ...

i/ to detail the collaborative development of a new **Occupational Psychology Internship (OPI)** with University of Glasgow undergraduate psychology students and a local employer, by

- Explicating the role of the collaborating students who participated in a focus group early in the development of the model of the OPI
- Outlining the links to be established, internally within the University, and externally, both with the relevant professional accrediting body (in this case, the British Psychological Society, [www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk)) and a suitable local employer (in this case, a Glasgow-based employer with a global reach: McAdam King [www.mkbusinesspsychology.co.uk](http://www.mkbusinesspsychology.co.uk))

iii/ to highlight the win-win-win benefits for students, employers, and the university of the **OPI**, by

- Emphasizing the key winning elements from each perspective of student, employer and the university

2.

Engaging students as collaborators (see Cook-Sather, *et al*, 2014) was a crucial element in the development of the OPI. Why? Because it was only through meeting with students that it was discovered there was a keen demand for 'official' internships i.e. which students recognised as being facilitated by the University, and 'stamp-marked' by an professional accrediting body (in this case, the BPS). In a focus group, students (final year undergraduate Psychology students) reported that while there were many HR type and Big 4 type internships available, there were "virtually no proper Psychology internships" on offer at the University of Glasgow. Students also provided information about their expectations of an Occupational Psychology Internship, as well as the type of preparation needed and type of support required by filling out a short questionnaire. It is to be noted that although a small number of students responded (N=5) and participated (N=2), the data were sufficiently rich, by virtue of an hour-long recorded focus group discussion, along with completed questionnaires, as to provide the information needed to formulate the model to a stage of development required to make contact with a local employer and enter partnership discussions.

3.

There are internal and external links needed to develop a model such as the the OPI.

Internally, links are needed between relevant academics (often those with interest and expertise in the sub-discipline in question, in this case: Occupational Psychology, and links were already in place, between Psychology colleagues in the School of Psychology (Bushnell) and the School of Education (Bleau). Further crucial internal links, are between College Specialist Support, provided by Dr Dickon Copsey, CSS Employability Officer and his links to the University level, Internship Hub, who will provide support in admin for advertising and recruitment for the internship, as well as for legalities for the University of Glasgow students while in the workplace internship role.

Externally, the relevant link is a suitable local employer, in this case, an organisation who specialises in the supply of Business Psychology/ Occupational Psychology services, with the Managing Director taking on the mentoring role of the Intern to be recruited.

4.

## WIN-WIN-WIN

**STUDENT:** participating in the OPI will allow the intern to experience a high-quality year-long, part-time paid Internship with a reputable Occupational/Business Psychology employer and gain valuable insight to the role of an OP. This experience will stand the student in good stead for applying to an MSc in Occupational Psychology in the future, as well as leading to the possibility of conducting his/her empirical work for the final year project, in an applied context in the workplace.

**EMPLOYER:** participating in the OPI will allow the employer to recruit a keen student as an Intern, developing key UofG Graduate Attributes (<http://www.gla.ac.uk/students/attributes/>), able to engage in important work, as part of their team in a constantly expanding area of applied psychology.

**UNIVERSITY:** participating in the OPI will allow the university to develop important new links with a local employer in Psychology with global reach. It is anticipated that all universities will need to do more to deal with the concerns raised in the Nov 2015 Green Paper, *Fulfilling our potential: "While employers report strong demand for graduate talent, they continue to raise concerns about the skills and job readiness of too many in the graduate labour pool"*. Participating in the development of links with employers, through partnership internships such as OPI, is expected to be a step in the right direction.

Therefore, taking together these three perspectives, the OPI provides the potential of a Win-Win-Win outcome for all concerned.

**TIMELINE DEVELOPMENT OF OPI:** First discussions with CSS Employability Officer, Aug 2015. Focus group with students, Nov 2015. First contact with employer, Nov 2015. Partnership meetings Mar 2016, May 2016. Recruitment planned for Semester 1 of 2016-17. First Intern to be in place January 2017-December 2017.

NB: The **OPI** is quality-controlled by the BPS Division of Occupational Psychology (BPS DOP).



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5.

Colleagues are encouraged to develop their own applied Internship models in collaboration with relevant professional bodies and local employers. Important aspects are consulting with students as collaborators in the development of the model(s) as well as crucial internal support structures (such as Employability Officer and University Internship Hub facilities). Sustainability of the partnership model is also paramount, by ensuring succession planning of key academic staff as the essential hub people for 'leading', maintaining and evaluating the Internship, with a passion for the applied nature of their discipline, to uphold the role and evolution of the Internship into the future.

In this particular case, the **OPI is an archetype**, developed and inaugurated by Dr R Bleau (sponsor: Dr Gene Johnson, adviser: Dr Ian Bushnell) in partial completion of her work on the Leadership Development Programme of the BPS DOP, 2015-16 (see Bleau, 2015); the BPS DOP plan is to roll out the model throughout the UK.

Bleau, R., Bushnell, I.W.R., & Copsey, D. (2016) *The collaborative development of an Occupational Psychology Internship: Students and Employers as Partners*. Presented at the University of Glasgow 9th Learning and Teaching Conference, 12<sup>th</sup> April 2016.

## References:

- Bleau, R. (2015) Leadership Development Programme: a joint DOP and DCoP cadre 2015-16. *OP Matters*, 27, 3-4.
- Cook-Slater, A., Bovill, C. & Felten, P. (2014) *Engaging Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching: a Guide for Faculty*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Department for Business and Innovation Skills (2015) *Fulfilling our potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*. Cm 9141. London: Stationery Office.