

The 4th HKUST Teaching & Learning Symposium 2011 Notes of Group Discussion Session

Group : UROP
Session : PM (2:30 pm – 3:15 pm)
Chairperson : Prof Michelle YIK (HKUST)
Note-taker : Miss Dawn LO (HKUST)

Undergraduate Research (UROP) in Hong Kong

The session started with gathering more about undergraduate research in different universities in Hong Kong.

- a. HKUST: the research topics were given out by the faculty or the university. Students needed to take the initiative to approach Faculty so as to participate in UROP.
- b. HKU: Students approached the faculty and submitted a proposal of their research project.
- c. CityU: Undergraduate research was a bit like internship. The department would ask faculty if they needed any students to help on their research. If yes, Internship coordinator would arrange students to teachers. The format/tasks assigned to students would be varied across teachers, programs, and/or departments.

Challenges identified

Participants then went on to recap and further discuss the challenges identified in the AM session. Below are the challenges discussed in the PM session:

- a. Due to limited resources and stringent selection criteria, not many students could participate in undergraduate research programs.
- b. Not so many faculty members had made use of the opportunities to hold UROP because of the reasons below:
 - It was sometimes difficult to manage so many students at a time.
 - There are not so much incentive for faculty to do so
 - There are not enough supports to faculty
- c. There was gap between students' and faculty's expectation. Faculty expected students to do some high-level tasks, like literature review. However, students expected some low-level ones, like borrowing books from the library.

- d. Students did not possess enough research skills. It was suggested that more training might be provided to students on literature-searching skills and ethics in research. Library might help to provide students training on literature search skills.

Future Actions

Despite the challenges identified about, participants generally agreed that UROP was something good to students and worthwhile to be scaled up. To enlarge the pool, it is essential to engage more committed faculty and committed students in participating in UROP. Below are some possible ways discussed in the session:

- a. Ways to engage committed faculty

- i. Motivate faculty to hold more UROP project

- More incentives might be given to faculty. Incentives that might motivate faculty to hold UROP projects would be (1) sense of satisfaction in supervising/teaching students, and (2) more supports to faculty.

- Recognize faculty's participation in UROP by including it as a criterion for tenure application.

- ii. Encourage research-embedded teaching

- In ordinary UG courses, faculty might identify some topics related to their own research interests and ask students to do literature review/research/projects on those topics. Faculty might feel more ease to supervise/guide students to complete the course projects which were related to their own research interest. Moreover, students might know more what a research was about upon completion of course. This might serve as a feeder school for graduate school. If students are interested in research, they might apply for post-graduate study.

- b. Ways to engage committed students

- i. Recognize students' participation in UROP by

- 1. Stating students' participation in UROP in their transcripts.

- 2. Providing more channels for students to publicize their research output. For example, organizing poster presentation and/or conferences for undergraduate research, publishing research findings/result in journal articles.

- ii. Promoting UROP as a big thing to students by

- 1. Organizing briefing and sharing sessions;

- 2. Setting up more informative websites; and

- 3. Arranging peer interview.