

Guest Speakers in the Department of Civil and Building Engineering

Jacqui Glass, Senior Lecturer in Architecture and Sustainable Construction, Department of Civil and Building Engineering, December 2008

Inviting someone from industry to deliver a lecture is often where most academics will start the process of involving industrialists in their teaching.

Reasons

The value of guest speakers is that they provide you and your students with up-to-date information, an industry insight and company information. The lecture should be discursive, interesting for students and can be provocative. Companies can also make students aware of future employment opportunities.

The Tutor can talk to the industrialist over coffee/lunch and find out more about how things happen and what things they can do together to collaborate e.g. research.

It is important to sustain their involvement, think what the speaker can get out of it and make sure they do get something out of it.

Benefits

Guest speakers are a low risk way of starting industry involvement.

Guaranteed up-to-date and relevant content.

Sets academic lectures in context and presents the application of theory.

All round positive experience.

Academic perspective

Need to have the right contact/company to help you find someone.

The academic needs to be there during the lecture and play an active part during the session - it is not an escape route for the academic.

Sometimes classroom/crowd management is required.

Handouts – students like to have these, copies of PowerPoint slides – try and obtain these from the industrialist before the lecture and produce copy for each student.

It is important to explain what the speaker needs to do beforehand.

Often because talks are provocative sessions will probably over run and this needs to be built in to the timetable; a 1 hour slot needs to have time for questions after the session.

Organising – which lecture theatre room they are in and what audio visual requirements they have.

Industrialist perspective

Industry contact through goodwill, often people are only paid travel expenses.

Problems with people who are self-employed or where an employer wants to charge for their time.

Some self-employed people can have a day rate of up to £1,000 (Faculty will not pay).

Pay by the hour for teaching rate (no pay for travel time or preparation).

Could be £2,000 for a 1 hour lecture (no way Faculty would pay this).

Jacqui has feedback from various speakers saying they really enjoyed delivering the lecture.

“I always enjoy giving guest lectures. The course is always well organised, and the students are usually bright and engaging.”

Guest Lecturer.

Student perspective

Students like to hear about real projects; e.g. how we did this technical procedure on the Gherkin.

Students enjoy the lectures and really buzz after the session.

Students have sometimes visited industrialists at their offices.

Issues

Pitfalls; person is scheduled in module and says ‘somethings come up, I can’t make it.’

People not turning up could and probably will happen.

Speaker needs to let you know in advance.

You need flexibility in programme to swap one of your lectures with the industry lecture.

Tendency from industrialist is to say too much – try and limit the content?

Need right pitch, need to be aware of what the students know and don’t know.

Maximum of £250 for a 1 hour lecture – for some people this is unacceptable and an insult.

Field day can cost around £800 so around the same cost.

If we want to have the ‘leading lights’ in the industry that will cost us and would be difficult to justify not paying them.

Reflections

On one undergraduate module the lecturer invites industrialists from Taylor Woodrow to lecture about design management. The senior manager comes with a recent graduate recruit who talks about their experience with the company. Good for the students to see a recent graduate and a future career path.

Companies who sponsor students want to attract students to their company and they like to show that they are interested in the students.

“Sponsored students hate it when someone from their company does not turn up to an event.”

Try to invite guest speakers who the students will relate to e.g. for these students consulting engineers and contractors are invited

Context

Jacqui Glass is a Senior Lecturer in Architecture and Sustainable Construction in the Department of Civil and Building Engineering at Loughborough University. Having studied Architecture at Oxford Brookes University and obtained RIBA Part II in 1994, Jacqui then undertook an EPSRC sponsored PhD on tilt-up concrete construction. She is currently supervising 12 PhD and EngD students many of whom are sponsored by building materials organisations to carry out research on environmental or sustainability topics.