the study of ethics, Indiana University, USA. http://poynter.indiana.edu/sas/res/ic.pdf

Punch, K. F. 1998. *Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches.* London: SAGE.

Robinson, E. H., and Curry J. R. 2008. Institutional Review Boards and professional counselling research. *Counselling & Values* 53: 39-52.

Scott, J. 1990. A matter of Record. Cambridge: Polity Press, cited in Bryman A 2004 *Social Research Methods*. 2nd Ed. New York: Oxford University Press

Shi, L. 2006. Students as research participants or as learners? *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 4: 205-220

Sikes, P, and Piper H. 2010. Ethical research, academic freedom and the role of ethics committees and review procedures in educational research. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education* 33: 205-213. doi: 10.1080/1743727X.2010.511838

Stierer, B. and Antoniou, M. 2004. *Are there distinctive methodologies for pedagogic research in higher education? Teaching in Higher Education*, 9: 275-285

Tilley, S. A. 2008. A troubled dance: Doing the work of research ethics review. *Journal of Academic Ethics* 6: 91-104. doi: 10.1007/s10805-008-9058-8

Tracy, F., and Carmichael P. 2010. Research ethics and participatory research in an interdisciplinary technology-enhanced learning project. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education* 33: 245-257. doi: 10.1080/1743727X.2010.511716

White, J., and T. Fitzgerald. 2010. Researcher tales and research ethics: The spaces in which we find ourselves. International Journal of Research & Method in Education, 33(3), 273-285. doi: 10.1080/1743727X.2010.511711

*Moyra is now a Senior Lecturer in Oncology at The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre.

Transition Trauma

David Brake, Journalism & Communications, University of Bedfordshire

If you have been at the same university for a number of years you may find it hard to remember how it felt when you started teaching there. If you were lucky, after being told where the expenses forms are, how many library books you could sign out and the like, a colleague who had taught the courses you were going to teach in the coming year would take you aside, sit you down with the existing teaching materials, explain how the lectures that have been prepared before relate to the syllabus and how the coming year was likely to unfold.

Unfortunately, this kind of easing-in process does not always occur. If there is a core of experienced staff who have taught across a variety of units in a programme and have the leisure and motivation to pass their knowledge onwards to new staff, continuity can be assured informally but this can go awry where a single member of staff is responsible for teaching a particular set of units for a number of years and then leaves or retires, or if a number of staff leave from a small team. The purpose of this piece is to outline (based in part on my own experience) some scenarios where as a result newly-arrived lecturers' experiences can be more difficult than they need to be, the student experience can be compromised by confusing inconsistencies in how they are taught, and a great deal of accumulated knowledge from lecturers who were long-serving in a department can fall between the cracks and be lost. Having identified some of these problem areas, I have some suggestions for how they can be addressed.

To be clear, I'm not concerned here about general problems of subject knowledge or pedagogical understanding – rather, I'm suggesting that without proper attention to the preservation of institutional memory, even skilled, experienced lecturers can come unstuck when arriving in a new institution.

The key to preventing this I would argue is to ensure that as much as possible of the most valuable tacit organisational knowledge in any department is documented, archived, and passed on – staff handbooks contain some valuable information of course but as they tend to be produced university-wide they are necessarily general. I am suggesting departmental level and unit level handbooks should also be compiled and updated periodically. So what might such handbooks contain?

One key element might be an informal assessment of the nature of the student body and of the department's customary solutions to particular concerns that they raise. Of course, no two student cohorts are the same and incoming lecturers can glean some idea of what their students may be like from the reputation of their institution but there are bound to be some year-on-year consistencies in students. Are the students who come to the department typically drawn from the local area, across the country or internationally? Are there particular recurrent teaching challenges – for example around in class discipline – and in practice what approaches to tackling these issues have proven most effective? Of course, universities should all have codes of practice governing discipline issues for example but how

rigorously they tend to be enforced in practice is not always clear, and a lack of consistency of approach between existing and new staff can cause confusion among students.

Incoming lecturers can and should 'put their stamp' on existing units but they would undoubtedly be grateful for a base of existing teaching material from which to develop. Syllabi and reading lists are, of course, normally available but the detailed work done by former lecturers in the form of lectures, workshop plans and other resources can be invaluable. Sometimes when a lecturer departs this material can disappear altogether and even when the documents themselves remain, the logic underlying them which gives them meaning can be easily lost. For example it is not uncommon (and may be pedagogically desirable) that many PowerPoint slides are simply images that the lecturer brings to life with their own commentary– if that commentary is not summarised in the notes section of the slides then they lose their meaning. An analogy can profitably be drawn with the way that the software industry operates. If one thinks of lectures as sections of programming code designed to perform a particular function, we should be taking a leaf from long-established industry best practice. It is not sufficient to deliver code that works– a programmer must adequately document the thinking that goes into each part of their work and how it integrates with other bits of code so that future programmers can effectively modify and reuse what has been built before.

Often these days, it is assumed that the virtual learning environment that students use can act as a repository of the relevant teaching material for future years but– again, for sound pedagogical reasons– what students receive may not be as richly detailed as what the lecturers themselves use behind-the-scenes when preparing to present that material. Moreover, virtual learning environments may not be designed with archive in mind. When, as often happens, the software is updated or even replaced, the accumulated text and files may disappear. Certainly, while the work of one's immediate predecessor is often there, the work of 'grandparent' lecturers is often removed to prevent confusion and being able to see a number of perspectives on the same subject through time can be of value. It is important that key teaching materials should be archived and backed up independently of the vagaries of the virtual learning environment provided at any university.

The relationships between the department and external bodies also need to be mapped out. Departments are not (or should not be) autonomous islands within a university– there are numerous support structures (ICT, student counselling, language skills) and there may be other departments with whom teaching and other responsibilities may be shared. There may also be a web of connections with industry, government, research partners etc. Some of these relationships may be tied to particular members of the department and may inevitably dissolve when they depart but in many cases they could be retained and managed as long as there is a record of who the key people are within these partner organisations and broadly what each side can and does expect from the other. The importance of these relationships is not, of course, solely pedagogical but there can certainly be pedagogical implications, for example which individuals within which companies can be relied upon to provide students with internships and other opportunities. Also useful would be the names of lecturers from 'neighbouring' departments who could be called upon to deliver guest lecturers on their areas of expertise.

Lastly, the processes and rhythms of each year can and should be broadly outlined to new arrivals. Some of these are common to most university teaching– course delivery in winter and spring, marking and administration followed by (with luck!) research in the summer. Even here, those new to lecturing or coming in from industry may not be familiar with this rhythm and it would help their planning and provide them with a feeling of control if they could have the key phases plotted out for them and have the nature of the various demands likely to be placed on them at different times spelled out. Every institution also has its own internal processes and structures which add complexity to this picture, and may have different expectations about the responsibilities of academics for taking on various administrative tasks. Does your institution expect lecturers to organise their timetabling, to invigilate exams, to attend open days? Some do, some don't. Academic calendars may have key events written into them but the meaning of those events– how much advance preparation is normally required, how detailed documentation needs to be etc– is not always clear.

In an ideal world, existing staff inspired by this piece would start doing some of this self-descriptive work right away. The difficulty with this is that for people who are already embedded in a system, it is often difficult to identify or recall what it is that a newcomer would not already know. An alternative, more gradual approach could be to address some of the more urgent issues (for example documenting external relationships which may not be written up anywhere) and ask new academics to start compiling the rest of the information I have described above as they themselves collect it. They are the ones who are most likely to notice where gaps exist

and of course they have a strong interest in gathering the missing data. All that more senior staff needs to do is to ensure that what these newcomers learn they document, and that as they add to the department's store of knowledge they remember to preserve it for those who come after. Of course, this is all extra work but once a system has been put in place and the initial work of data collection has been done, the ongoing work of maintenance should not be onerous. The cost of not doing this in duplicated effort or lost momentum should key staff leave can be, unfortunately, much greater.

Writing Retreat 2013
April 3-5, Hitchin Priory

There are still places left on our annual writing retreat. If you are interested, please send the first draft of your paper to David Mathew and to Andrea Raiker by 30 December 2012.