

Education Committee, 5 February 2019

## **EIS Action Research Grants: Final report on Year 1, Dec 2018**

This report sets out:

- what happened in the first year of the EIS Action Research Grants initiative; and
- learning from Year 1 and associated action points for Year 2.

### **Origins**

The Education Committee agreed at its meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2016 to take forward an initiative to award action research grants to members with a view to supporting professional enquiry and, in the longer term, to creating an online research 'hub'. A budget of £10K was allocated to the research grants initiative, with the aim of launching it within the 2016-17 session.

The February 2017 edition of the SEJ featured an [article](#) by EIS member Kevin Logan focused on the importance of research in challenging unhelpful orthodoxy and in shaping progressive and evidence-based educational policy. The article was accompanied by a short piece on the new initiative offering grants that were likely to be between £500 and £1000, which invited notes of interest.

### **Implementation plan**

The process of implementing the initiative was to be taken forward by the Education Committee, supported by the CPD Sub-Committee.

An application pack and communications strategy were to be developed, with a deadline for applications of 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017. This deadline was to enable successful grants applicants to incorporate the plans for research into PRD discussions which would be underway from the summer term.

A panel, comprised of key members of the Education Committee and an EIS-ULA member with research expertise, would assess applications and make decisions on which proposals would be funded on the basis of the broad criteria agreed.

Successful applicants would be invited to attend a research seminar on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2017, with the idea that each could be linked to a 'critical friend', possibly an EIS Learning Rep or a member of the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN), with pairings based on research topic, setting and location.

Research would be undertaken from August 2017 with reporting to be complete by May 2018; participants would receive appropriate EIS certification; and the EIS would retain the rights to the research findings and disseminate these in a variety of formats, with an online resource to be developed which would house the completed research.

Issues such as quality assurance, ethics and confidentiality, payment of grants and publication criteria were not considered at the outset, but ongoing dialogue

between members and officers meant that these were considered and addressed over time.

It was agreed by the Education Committee at its March 2017 meeting that grants would be awarded at a fixed amount of £500.

### **Criteria**

The following were the terms upon which grant applications were invited:

Action research in education is a disciplined process of inquiry conducted by and for practitioners. The primary reason for engaging in action research is to assist the researcher / teacher in improving professional efficacy. Accordingly, the following criteria will apply in considering requests for support:

- The proposed action research should focus on school/ educational establishment / classroom-related practice or aspects of education delivery which impact on teaching and learning
- There should be a clear objective, implicit or explicit, of the research enabling professional learning
- Applications for support should encompass a planned outcome from the research activity
- The scale of the research should be proportionate in terms of anticipated timelines
- Usefulness to EIS policy present or future.

### **Partners and supporters**

#### *GTCS*

The EIS met with Ellen Doherty of GTCS in March 2017 to discuss the potential for Professional Recognition or course accreditation linked to the research. A further meeting at GTCS took place in April.

Following discussions, it was agreed that researchers could seek professional recognition for their work if they wished to but that it would not be a pre-requisite of participation in the initiative. It was decided that the EIS is not in the position currently of being a GTCS-accredited course provider.

#### *Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change (ROC)*

Professor Chris Chapman from ROC attended HQ for a meeting in April 2017, with a view to its researchers supporting the seminar planned for the 2<sup>nd</sup> June. This was later agreed.

#### *Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN)*

Contact was made with CARN whose organisers were keen to support the initiative. CARN input to the Roundtable was subsequently agreed.

#### *EIS Learning Reps (LRs)*

LRs were notified of the initiative and signalled that their input as 'critical friends' may be sought. A few LR's volunteered for this. In the event, only 4 of the

applicants were in a position potentially to require such support and none have requested it. Nonetheless, LRs were extended an open invitation to the Roundtable. One Learning Rep, Wilma Pirie (Fife) attended and expressed willingness to support the researchers as required.

### **Advance publicity**

A webpage for the initiative with accompanying web banner, bulletin promotion and Twitter mentions, was available by mid-April 2017 with the application form and guidance notes included.

### **Applications**

Nineteen applications were received by the deadline of 5pm on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017. These were considered by the panel over lunchtime at Council on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017. All had received emailed applications that were available by the deadline ahead of the meeting, and that morning, hard-copy packs with the application forms and criteria. The majority of panel members had not had time to read these, so a further meeting was set for a few days hence on 16<sup>th</sup> May at which final decisions would be made.

In the interim two further applications were received, and although these were received marginally beyond the deadline, it was agreed to consider them given that the specific 5pm deadline, while appearing in the application form, had not been clearly marked on the guidance notes.

Ten applications of the 21 were accepted by a reduced panel of those who were available at the meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> May. Applications rejected either presented potential ethical issues, did not provide sufficient detail or did not sit well with current EIS policy.

A significant number of the successful applicants were already midway through, or about to start, a Masters or PhD course of study. The criteria had not precluded applications of this nature and five of the ten successful candidates had disclosed ongoing study, with the research grant intended for use towards fees.

One initially successful candidate was later excluded from the initiative as their Diploma in Education would not be ready to report in time to meet the EIS reporting deadline. This person, along with one other who had disclosed that their research would not be complete by May 2018 at the outset, was encouraged to re-apply next year. It was agreed these two should receive priority in the event they re-apply. (See Appendix 1 for successful applications.)

Letters from Assistant General Secretary Bradley, some individualised to reflect the above, were sent out to inform applicants of the outcome of their applications on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2017. An invitation to the research seminar, now renamed a 'roundtable' to reflect the small numbers, was included along with an updated, still-provisional programme. A decision was taken not to include GTCS because of the smaller numbers attending than had been envisaged - to the extent that researchers would have been heavily outnumbered by EIS staff and

guest speakers. Whether to apply for professional recognition, or not, would be the researcher's choice.

A news item on the initiative was prepared for the May 2017 SEJ but was not used.

### **Initial researchers' meeting (Research roundtable)**

This took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2017. The final programme, structure and 'feel' for the morning was based upon the successful applicants' proposals, numbers committed to attend (six of the nine successful applicants) and the level of accomplishment in research of those attending. The CPD Sub-Committee Convener, Sonia Kordiak, chaired the event, which comprised a mix of presentations and discussion, with opportunities to raise and answer questions. The main speakers were Chris Chapman, Centre Director at ROC, with Senior Researchers Kevin Lowden and Stuart Hall, and Karen McArdle, Professor (Emerita) in Education at the University of Aberdeen and of CARN.

It was established that all those involved in formal study would be able to meet the requirement to report findings by May 2018.

### **Payment of grants**

An initial £250 was disbursed to each researcher at the end of June 2017. The balance of a further £250 would be paid upon the timely submission of a satisfactory research report at the end of May 2018. Researchers were given the option to provide an alternative bank account than that used for the payment of their EIS subscription. None requested this.

### **Further researchers' meetings**

*30<sup>th</sup> September 2017*

This meeting took place immediately following the Professional Learning Conference in Glasgow, with lunch provided. Sonia Kordiak chaired the meeting, which provided an opportunity for loosely facilitated discussion, networking, and the opportunity to ask questions. All researchers were encouraged to attend and five of the nine did. Kevin Lowden, Senior Researcher at ROC and Khadija Mohammed of the EIS were in attendance to answer questions. Lesley Walker and Andrea Bradley were also present. Written guidance notes on reporting research were provided to the researchers and the October 2017 edition of the SEJ featured a photo of the researchers at this meeting.

*20<sup>th</sup> February 2018*

A further meeting took place at EIS HQ, again chaired by Sonia Kordiak and with support from Kevin Lowden and Karen McArdle (CARN) who listened to reports from each researcher (three attended) and then engaged in discussion about next steps, reporting advice, ethics, etc. Each researcher had a 'one-to-one' meeting with either Karen or Kevin to discuss any specific points about their research. Those unable to attend had sent updates on their progress by email, with the exception of Ciara Scott, who by that time was on maternity leave. Ciara later conceded she would be unable to complete the research, after initially

having hoped to complete it. She submitted an earlier piece of research on a similar topic instead.

Following this meeting a request was made for researchers to send in their feedback on the process of being involved in the initiative.

### **Final reports**

The deadline for receiving reports was Friday 25<sup>th</sup> May. Five reports were received by then. Two researchers requested a short-term extension until the final meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2018 and both submitted within this timeframe. The final researcher submitted a request to the Education Committee for a longer-term extension until May 2019, which was granted in light of extenuating circumstances. Final payments were then made to the seven finishing researchers. A request was made to researchers to provide an abstract summary of their work to accompany the full report.

### **Final meeting and lunch**

A final celebratory lunch was held for the finishing researchers and academic supporters on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2018. They were invited to bring a supporter, friend or partner along. This was combined with the initial meeting of the 2018-19 cohort of researchers, who met in the morning and were then invited to the lunch. In all there were 23 guests at the lunch including EIS officers and officials. It was held in the training room which had been specially set up for the occasion.

Three of the 2017-18 researchers, Pam Currie, Gillian Wilson and Laura Kidger received a framed certificate in a short award ceremony conducted by Nicola Fisher and Susan Quinn. The remaining four researchers who completed their projects were regrettably unable to attend, and their certificates were sent out in the post.

The General Secretary closed the event by wishing the guests well for the summer and for their future research endeavours.

### **Feedback from researchers**

Please see Appendix 2 for responses to a request for feedback from the researcher group. Four responses were received.

### **Publication**

The seven research reports were published in September 2018 on the EIS website to coincide with delivery of a seminar at the SLF (see below). Conditions of publication were clarified by all those whose reports were based on Masters theses. All but one were able to be published in full.

Researchers are not discouraged from publishing elsewhere but are asked to inform the EIS if their work is to be reproduced.

### **Scottish Learning Festival 2018**

On Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> September Sonia Kordiak and Lesley Walker delivered a seminar at the SLF with support from one of the researchers Gillian Wilson. The

seminar was fully subscribed at 55 people prior to the day, though in the event approximately 25 people attended, who each received a pack containing information about researcher topics in 2017-18, current topics, guidance notes for applications and flyers for the initiative and for EIS Learning Reps.

### **Action points for year 2 agreed by Education Committee**

The Education Committee discussed the initiative at meetings throughout the 2017-18 session and addressed points as they arose. At its meetings in August and October 2017 the Committee agreed the following:

- Publicity to be slightly earlier via the January reps and e-bulletin, followed up with SEJ and ongoing web and Twitter promotion.
- Future publicity will stress that the initiative is intended to support practitioner research that would otherwise be unlikely to be undertaken. It will state that research being undertaken as part of a Masters' or PhD study would not be ruled out.
- New criteria will highlight particular themes, e.g. based around AGM/ Council Resolutions or to fill gaps in the evidence that would support EIS policy, rather than invite solely open-ended proposals. This may facilitate closer collaboration and networking among researchers.
- Applications submitted after the deadline, which will be clearly stipulated, will not be accepted other than in the case of extenuating circumstances.
- Completed applications, together with a proforma for panel members to make individual assessments of the applications, will be issued a week in advance of the panel meeting at which grants awards will be agreed.
- GTCS will be considered for contribution to next session's Research Roundtable/ Seminar event to give early indication of the requirements of Professional Recognition.
- EIS to take up membership of CARN (Annual subscription fee: £50).
- Final payment to researchers will be made upon submission of a report in line with the published Guidance Notes. Thereafter the EIS will retain the right to publish, disseminate and archive the research.

### **Further action points for year 3**

- The application and writing up guidance documents should make reference to the need for both a research title and an abstract summary to be included as part of the reporting process.
- Applicants should state on the application form if their research is part of a programme of study, e.g., Masters or PhD. The form will be updated to reflect this.

## Appendix 1: Successful proposals 2017-18

Last name	First name	Est.	Proposal	Course of study
Currie	Pam	Glasgow Kelvin College	How do new FE lecturers form a professional identity; how do they perceive the role of trade unions; and to what extent is engagement with the EIS influenced by professional identity?	
Graham	Fiona	Linburn Academy Glasgow	What are the barriers and motivators to parental involvement / engagement in CLN specialist provision?	Masters Inclusive Education
Heath	Jean	Braidburn School Edinburgh	What is the impact of outdoor education on the lives of pupils with complex needs?	Masters
Kidger	Laura	Glasgow Clyde College	What is the effectiveness of support strategies for nursing students during transition from college to university?	MSc Health & Social Care
McAvoy	Susan	Dundee and Angus College	What is the impact of a 6-week mindfulness training course on mental wellbeing and retention rates of FE students?	
McGinness	Claire	St Anne's Primary Glasgow	What are the benefits to P1 pupils' reading attainment of delaying formal phonics and teaching phonological awareness?	Masters
Wilson	Gillian	Beckford Primary Hamilton	How can literacy/inferential skills be assessed more effectively through media?	
Murphy	Alison	Firrhill High Edinburgh	<i>What is the experience of being a Scottish secondary school-based union representative?</i>	<i>PhD - Deferred until 2019</i>
Scott	Ciara	St Michael's Primary Dumfries	<i>What are the barriers to teaching upper primary Spanish?</i>	<i>Maternity leave</i>

## **Appendix 2: Collated researcher feedback**

### **The application process, correspondence and communications**

- Very straightforward.
- Excellent.
- Clear and regular through the year.
- Easily done, however I downloaded the information as a pdf and couldn't find how to change it to a Word document.
- Kept up-to-date with deadlines and the process. Always made me feel that I could contact EIS at any time.

### **Meetings and support**

- Good opportunity to meet other researchers.
- Very good; all questions answered.
- I had university support.
- Unfortunately I wasn't able to make very many of the meetings (in fact I think only the very last one) which was a shame as the other projects sounded interesting! I knew who to contact for support and this was forthcoming when required.
- I was able to attend all and there was plenty of notice given regarding future dates. All meetings were structured and informative and well worthwhile.
- Everyone from EIS as well as externally gave advice which was very helpful.

### **Carrying out the research**

- Perhaps should differentiate between original research and Masters/PhDs.
- No problems.
- I thoroughly enjoyed doing the research, particularly getting out to other colleges to conduct semi-structured interviews with my colleagues about lecturer professionalism. The questionnaire responses were also fascinating.
- I started on GTC site because it had evidence of other teachers submissions to them as well as evidence from journals and other educational research sites. I could probably have got further evidence from one of the universities, but I did not have time. Perhaps more advice on how to get evidence for those not doing research as part of a masters (would be useful).

### **Collaborating with others**

- More needed, perhaps via virtual platforms.
- Really just at the meetings.
- I didn't really have the opportunity (because of my own commitments!) to collaborate with other researchers, but my research coincided with a number of discussions through FE national bargaining around lecturer professionalism, including meetings between EIS FELA and GTCS, my election to GTCS Council and also the CDN-led review of Professional Standards, so plenty of opportunity to collaborate more widely!

- Emails were provided but I tend not to exchange views anyway. It wouldn't have helped me, but it's good to know you are not isolated.

### **Reporting and sharing findings**

- Guidelines could be expanded.
- Maybe 5000 words is not enough to capture qualitative quotes and thick description.
- I attended the final session for the researchers and I am very keen to share my findings more broadly and potentially to write up my research for publication. This is one area that I'd probably like some more support/guidance on – I'm not clear on whether the EIS intends to publish the reports?
- Support needed to publish in other publications.
- Everyone has been very supportive when updating on reporting progress.

### **Impact on your professional learning/ practice**

- This has been hugely important to my professional learning and I've done a great deal of reflection in the last year around lecturer professionalism, professional identities and how these intersect with our identities as trade unionists. This in turn has informed my practice and also my wider engagement with CDN, GTCS etc.
- This has encouraged me to be more proactive in 'claiming my professionalism' and taking ownership of my professional role, through reflection, CPD and dialogue with colleagues.
- It has been a great opportunity and has refreshed my outlook on work in the class.
- Well worth the time and effort on a personal level. Thanks to everyone involved.

### **Wider impact and any next steps**

- This project comes at a time when we are actively engaging as an Institute with issues of lecturer professionalism, the potential for (mandatory) GTCS registration for lecturers and the impact of national bargaining on the sector. We are in the process of rolling out a workshop around lecturer professionalism and registration – Anne Keenan ran the first session (for reps) at Moray Place in May/June, and I've since replicated it with another rep at Glasgow Kelvin. The plan now is to try to roll this out to other branches to engage our members in dialogue around lecturer professionalism and registration to ensure that it is member-led, rather than being a top-down approach from management. For many members, this the first meaningful discussion they have had around lecturer professionalism (at all, far less with the EIS) and I think this is a really important development which will hopefully have a wider impact over time. My project has given me a context and theoretical framework for these discussions as well as a base of empirical evidence, and I would be keen to disseminate this to members.

- My HT has been very supportive and has recognised its worth to the school and has put Moving Image Education on the improvement plan for next year.