Message from the Director

The Scottish Universities Insight Institute supports programmes of knowledge exchange and mobilisation that address multi-dimensional issues of relevance to policy-makers and practitioners. We seek to foster collaboration between researchers in our partner universities and more widely, across disciplines and between those with research based and experiential knowledge.

Workshops at the Institute have provided the basis for new and extended networks; for exchange with wider groups and, where knowledge gaps have been identified, for new research collaborations.

We are now midway through our second year of operation and we have been much encouraged by the enthusiasm of programme participants both for our operating model and for our purpose designed premises.

Dr Jane Morgan

Reports from past programmes

Scots Law of Evidence

This programme report examines the risks arising when evidence from science or technology is used in Scottish criminal trials. When such evidence is introduced, it is currently unclear what rules govern its admissibility in court and whether these are always compatible with a fair trial for the accused. With the aid of international experts, the programme therefore set out to establish first, the processes courts adopt in determining what constitutes science, its scientific reliability and validity, and its probative value. The report identifies appropriate scientific protocols to regulate admissibility of scientific evidence and, where relevant, makes recommendations for law reform regarding the rules of admissibility of scientific evidence in court, and their fitness for purpose in the digital and global age. Download the full report or a short summary.

Meeting Children’s needs for Care and Protection

The report focuses on the issues involved in using administrative data routinely collected on children safeguarded in the community to better inform planning, service delivery and evaluative research. It also reviews the methodological, contextual and process issues inherent to designing longitudinal studies that explore the complex and multi-dimensional nature of intervention. It demonstrates that longitudinal tracking of the effectiveness of service provision to vulnerable children over the longer term for both research and operational purposes will be greatly facilitated by better use of existing routinely collected data, better linkage of different datasets relating to different aspects of well-being, greater commonality of data fields collected across all local authorities and the establishment of a national minimum dataset. It is clear that a minimum dataset would not provide the evidence required to answer all the questions that might be asked in longitudinal research. However, if existing data can be used more effectively, research designs can then focus on what additional information is needed in relation to specific research and evaluation questions. Download the report or short summary.

Next Call for Proposals

A new Call for Proposals for programmes of Knowledge Exchange for 2012-2013 will be released in late February 2012.

Application forms and guidelines are being updated but information about the Institute’s funding scheme for KE activities can be found on our website: http://bit.ly/yXFc8W
New programme from March 2012

New directions for work in digital Scotland

The questions addressed in this programme relate to the future of adults’ working lives that are affected by technological change and new work formats. It will identify ways that learning (including linguistic and cultural) can be promoted to benefit digital working; produce insights into how digital technologies are used in the workplace; provide recommendations for guidelines to reduce digital exclusions, particularly those associated with poverty, age, gender, rurality and disability.

Programme team: Irene Malcolm, University of Dundee; Vicki Hanson, University of Dundee; Claire Wallace, University of Aberdeen; Kaharevic Sanjin, Scottish Government; Brian McKechnie, University of Strathclyde; John McCann, Scotland’s Colleges; Marion Beattie, Skills Development Scotland; Donald Jarvie, Scotland’s Futures Forum.

Re-thinking responses to rape

This programme will collect initial soundings of the impacts of reforms of the definition of rape and its prosecution, recognising that experiences of rape survivors and public attitudes of blameworthiness towards them have in the past been stubbornly resistant to changes in law, policy and practice. The incremental steps that typify traditional legal reform represent progress, but are incapable on their own of producing the cultural shifts necessary to transform the social and legal practices that shape reactions to rape. The programme will harness the expertise of those familiar with these practices to stimulate debates that may produce unsettling reactions.

Programme team: Jane Scoular, University of Strathclyde; Fiona Raitt, University of Dundee; Dame Elish Angiolini, Faculty of Advocates; Sandy Brindley, Rape Crisis Scotland; Pete Duff, University of Aberdeen; Pamela Ferguson, University of Dundee; Kathryn Sharpe, Dundee City Council.

Fingerprints: A roadmap for reform

Fingerprints are one of the four accepted forms of identification for missing persons and disaster victim identification. A number of high profile cases from around the world, and from Scotland, have cast doubt on the validity and reliability of fingerprint evidence. Major figures in the criminal justice community have expressed public concerns about these developments and issues of public trust and accountability have been raised by the media. This programme seeks to examine these specific cases and by engaging a wide range of professional stakeholders and academics, to establish the causes of these failings and identify practical steps to address them. The effective resolution of this issue would place Scotland at the forefront of a global paradigm shift in understanding, policies and practices of major significance to criminal justice systems.

Programme team: Jim Fraser, University of Strathclyde; Sue Black, University of Dundee; Tom Nelson, Director, Scottish Police Services Authority Forensic Services.

Workshop and seminar programme for spring 2012

New directions for work

20th-21st April 2012: Sustaining work and learning in a complex geography

30th-31st May 2012: Overcoming exclusions

10-11th September 2012: Promoting learning and digital work

Responses to rape

30th April- 1st May 2012: Stocking: Lessons from the past four decades

28-29th May 2012: New directions and practices

21st-22nd August 2012: Alternative perspectives

Fingerprints: A road map for reform

19th-21st March 2012: Developing policy

June 2012 (tbc): Disseminating and informing practitioners

Developing capacity in Technology Road Mapping

23rd-24th February 2012: Research and Practice

3rd- 4th May 2012: Policy workshops

Industry workshops:
7th March, 14th March, 21st March and 28th March

For more details: http://bit.ly/wN5wx9