Dr Catherine Walton, Dr Laura Richards, Professor David Polya and Yin Tun

Earth and Environmental Sciences

Outstanding teaching and learning innovation in social responsibility

TIDE (Transformation in Distance Education) Initiative

Myanmar (Burma) is a nascent democracy that has recently opened up to the rest of the world. Its isolation from the global community for around 50 years has meant that higher education in Myanmar has been in a time capsule with extremely limited resources. There is a strong focus on rote learning based on out of date and limited resources. The newly elected government is keen to change this and is investing heavily in education and redeveloping its entire education sector including higher education. A major objective of the new government is to produce new graduates that can think creatively, problem solve and who are aware of the wide range of environmental challenges facing Myanmar in order to develop in a sustainable manner. This objective can only be realised by capacity building and training for Myanmar academics in both environmental subject material and pedagogy.

The University of Manchester together with Oxford University, the Open University (the lead partner) and the Myanmar Ministry of Education are partnering to run the TIDE project over 4 years to build capacity at around 20 standard and distance-learning Myanmar Universities including the University of Yangon and the University of Mandalay.

How Catherine, Laura, David and Yin have made a difference

Manchester has provided training in environmental science and innovative pedagogical methods to 12 universities using: residential schools on ‘Water and Pollution’ and ‘Biodiversity and Conservation’ covering topics such as Arsenic in Ground Water and the Role of Genetic Diversity in Conservation; face to face seminars e.g. “Environmental Change and Mosquito-orne Disease”; and training courses in Freshwater Monitoring and Statistics. This has involved generous contributions of time and effort of academic staff across the University including (to date): Laura Richards, Gianfranco Pincetti, Amanda Bamford, Cecilia Medupin Catherine Walton, Susanne Shultz and Tucker Gilman. Yin Tun has played a vital role in training for non-academic staff, such as librarians and IT support, to help Myanmar academic staff generate new and innovative teaching materials. Despite the huge amount of effort involved, all the Manchester participants have truly enjoyed this extremely worthwhile experience and have been rewarded by the engagement, enthusiasm and appreciation of their Myanmar counterparts.

www.manchester.ac.uk/betterworldshowcase