

NOMINATION DETAILS

Who is being nominated?

Individual

Please provide the name of the person being nominated:

Gil Martin

Job title:

Social work lecturer

Organisation:

University of Dundee

AWARD DETAILS

Which category are you entering?

Category 3: An Enlightened Approach

Please confirm that the work carried out relates to the last two years (up to January 2018):

Yes

Q1. Overview: (max 200 words)

This nomination is for Gil Martin, lecturer on the social work qualifying programmes at University of Dundee. Gil is a former graduate of the MSc Social work and joined the staff team in 2015.

As a social work student Gil stood out for her commitment to, passion for and creativity in learning. As an academic Gil shines. Gil approaches every learning encounter with a humility that pushes her beyond tried and tested methods into an enlightened approach and practice. As a graduate in fine art she brings a creativity and curiosity to learning that students routinely describe as innovative, stimulating and refreshing. As a human being with rich experience Gil always approaches social work learning critically and from the perspective of those social work exists to support.

It sounds cliché to say that the above is routine for Gil, but that's the reality. Gil lives and breathes an enlightened approach because she is passionate about learning for practice. In the words of a current student:

'I found Gill the most engaging and inspiring staff member of our MSc Social Work ... and that is a non-trivial matter, given how engaging all of the staff were'.

Q2. What did you do? (max 500 words)

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SSSA Entry Form 2018 : Entry # 115

Q2. What did you do? (max 500 words)

The following provides one example of a learning sequence co-designed and co-delivered by Gil and a service user (K) to 40 social work students. The sequence was delivered as part of a module on social work models and methods, with a focus on communication, relationship building and writing skills.

Rather than churning out an existing powerpoint, Gil and K co-designed a case study based on K's lived experience. It set out a scenario triggering a first social work contact relevant to a range of social work roles and settings. The task for each student was to write to K to initiate contact and in doing so to consider issues of professional communication, initial contacts and relationship building.

The students understood the task as a 'simulated' activity and engaged as normal. Individually completed letters were posted within an internal university mailbox with an assurance that Gil would feedback on the letters in the next class. In the next class Gil began the session but was interrupted by an actor playing the role of a team manager. The team manager communicated that she had service user 'K' in the office who wanted to speak to the social worker about the letter he had received. 'K' entered the classroom and, with Gil's support, began the process of feeding back to each student how it felt as a service user to receive their individual letters/ written communications.

The impact of this simple sequence on the student group was extremely powerful. It was described as an emotive, challenging and empowering learning opportunity. It was also described as a refreshing and empowering experience for K. Hearing how it 'felt' for K to read their words, choice of phrase, assumptions, errors, style etc powerfully conveyed the potential and hazards of professional communication and writing, allowing students to unpack that within a safe environment. While much of the feedback and learning was challenging, Gil and K's use of self, care and humour ensured that feedback enabling and supportive.

The above is a single example of how Gil routinely demonstrates a creative, collaborative and enlightened approach. She routinely approaches learning with creativity and innovation. She makes time to involve and empower service users, and she works hard to ensure students push beyond procedure and a technical approach to understand the complexities and emotions of real world practice with real people.

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Q3. What did you achieve? (max 500 words)

Together, Gil, K and the students achieved a learning sequence that was collaborative, empowering, challenging and real.

The use of an innovative, active and participatory approach created a powerful and reflexive learning environment which supported students to feel, think, reflect and grow.

The meaningful involvement of a service user enabled students to get beyond the books and theory into real world social work as experienced and explained by service users.

Supporting feedback from the social work students involved is provided below:

'I look forward to each session as it was hardly ever just read from the PowerPoint kind of lecture. The letter writing task was brilliant, the fact it caught people off guard. ... Preparing us for tasks we'll face every day.'

'Talking with a service user after we had wrote him a letter was particularly useful. It gave me an insight into what the other person feels when they read a letter from a social service worker.'

'We were ... given a scenario where we were the social worker/manager. With the information, we were given we had to write a letter to the service user regarding the given information. This seemed like a simple task, however, we then actually met the service user and he told us how our letters had made him feel, whether it was positive or negative. This was a very useful exercise as it brought to light how important language is in a letter and how things can be perceived differently'.

'Interactive, informative, contemporary, enlightening, fun'.

'You will leave critical of everything you read on social work. You'll learn a lot about social work practice. And you will enjoy it for sure, especially if you are lucky enough to have Gil.'

'Gil is a very passionate and exciting lecturer. She made the module one of the most enjoyable I have had since starting university. The letter writing exercise was particularly good and this should definitely be part of future modules.'

'Who knew learning could be so fun?!'

Q4. Why should you receive an award? (max 100 words)

Gil should receive this award because she routinely demonstrates an enlightened, innovative and collaborative learning practice. Gil always goes above and beyond, she is always willing to share her time, skill and expertise, and she works hard to approach learning from the perspective of the learner and those who use services. As importantly, Gil demonstrates a humility and care which is often transformative for those she supports.

In sum, Gil is an outstanding ambassador for social work and social work learning. She is an inspiration to students, staff and service users in Dundee and beyond and we want to celebrate that.

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