

Q-Step Placement Host Profile

Ian Roderick, The Schumacher Institute



Ian Roderick took five Q-Step students on placement at The Schumacher Institute in 2017 and then another five students in 2018.

Briefly describe the projects that placement students worked on with you.

The main project is called 'Prepare for Change' involving horizon scanning and scenario work looking at the whole range of possible changes affecting the planet and societies with a view to improving resilience and working towards sustainability, relating these to the city of Bristol whenever possible. Topics covered by students include: homelessness, future of work, marine environment, peak oil, internet of logistics, urban metabolism...

What did the Q-Step students gain?

The objective is to give experience of working in a research mode – formulating a question, exploring and understanding the context and then telling a compelling story. We encourage the use of system thinking particularly causal loop diagrams. We expect the collection and interpretation of data to support arguments whenever possible.

I think one of the main things that students gain is how to cope with unstructured and self-motivated work. Many of the students say they would like to get a job in a think tank or policy making organisation, we try to give a flavour of what that means for taking responsibility and initiative for your own progression.

We introduce systems thinking methods particularly critical thinking and first person action inquiry – getting students to see themselves in the process of the work.

What did your organisation gain?

The Prepare for Change project is an ongoing and expanding repository of predictions and opinions about the future. Each student project helps to fill out the picture.

What skills did the Q-Step students bring?

- Awareness of the world: all students have shown a good grasp of present global problems and challenges.
- Good abilities at organising their work.
- All have been good at communicating and have not held back in workshops – so confidence.
- Technical skills in data analysis.

What challenges, if any, did hosting a student present to you/ your organisation?

Keeping up with them. Realising that the time is limited and the projects needs to be complete and not left dangling.

Will you/your organisation to host more Q-Step students?

Yes, I think we are getting better at defining what we need out of the internship. We may get slightly more formal in style and structure.