



Business,
Management,
Accountancy and
Finance

BMAF magazine

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www.heacademy.ac.uk/business

Issue 7
Spring 2009



Wish you were here?...
Don't miss your chance.

This year's BMAF conference is taking place in Cardiff Bay so, in addition to a great programme of events, attendees have the opportunity to explore the area and enjoy the spectacular views across the bay from St David's Hotel & Spa. What are you waiting for?



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Engaging with employers: Customers, consumers or collaborators?

Richard Atfield, Editor, BMAF Academic Developer,
ratfield@brookes.ac.uk

The main thread of this issue is the key priority for the Higher Education Academy and the theme for the BMAF Annual Conference this April in Cardiff – that of ‘Engaging with Employers’.

In five of the items, colleagues from across the UK reflect on how they have sought to enhance the learning experience of their students through proactive relationships with a variety of employers. For Manchester Metropolitan there are the twin challenges of part time students and potential conflicts within their employment circumstances. At Winchester through technology they are working with an employer to offer employees both face-to-face and synchronous online sessions.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) at Oxford Brookes and Glamorgan have paid dividends, both for the postgraduate ‘associates’ and the organisations in which they are placed, and through the knock-on benefits for other student groups offered ‘real’ practice opportunities. A consultancy approach has generated similar student feedback about the gains made through the experience and understanding of ‘real life’ application of knowledge. These all indicate why close relationships with employers can be beneficial and the latest Scottish enhancement theme of ‘Graduates for the 21st Century’ endorses this as an important part of the student learning process.

Universities are valued by employers for their strengths – developing intellectual and personal capabilities, leading edge knowledge in specific areas – which differentiate them from training providers. After all, who are the ‘employers’ of students from business and management schools? They may be large, medium or small; public, private or not for profit; and the needs of those organisations to employ graduates with ‘higher level learning’ are diverse. An added complexity for some business school programmes is the need to meet professional body requirements too.

Richard Brown Chief Executive of the Council for Industry in Higher Education (CIHE) recently emphasised that the relationship between business and universities is “not a simple customer-supplier model” but is a collaborative process, “a partnership approach that requires effort and commitment on both sides” (CIHE, 2008a). Their ‘*Influence through collaboration*’ report (CIHE, 2008b) suggests a number of key factors for success including:

- businesses identifying clear needs for jobs, skills and people
- choosing the right HE partners
- clear points of contact within both parties
- taking account of learner needs – identified as ‘the main customer’
- HE capacity and capability
- making and sustaining relationships
- building in governance arrangements from the start

Through these collaborations there is clear evidence in the UK and elsewhere (Patrick *et al.*, 2008) of benefits for the students, the employers and the university staff. We have published examples of relationships that work but each author would confirm the amount of continuing effort required to maintain them. It is clear that successful opportunities are often due to the efforts of a few motivated individuals.

Ensuring consistent and equitable access for business students to worthwhile experiences with employers will require more than collaboration, especially in the current economic climate. Policies need to be revised and investment made by both parties to address, among other things: staff workloads, time and policy constraints, student timetables and timescales, placement supervision costs, and for many international students that of visa and language restrictions.

Full references can be accessed on the website:
www.heacademy.ac.uk/business/publications/bmag

The BMAF team look forward to discussing these issues with you at the Conference in Cardiff this April.

Academy Scotland Practitioners Forum

Brenda Eade, BMAF Associate Director, attended the first meeting of this new Forum, which was held in Edinburgh on Friday 30th January.

Representatives from Subject Centres, Academy York, and Academy Scotland discussed key issues facing their areas of activity, including:

The purpose of the Forum is to:

- provide a mechanism that enables Scottish-based discipline communities to guide and inform the work of the Academy in Scotland at both strategic and operational levels
- provide a forum for sharing practice and innovations
- provide a forum for mutual peer support in terms of colleagues' experience of their role and relationship with their Subject Centre, etc.
- enable opportunities for exploring possible collaboration on research/development projects to tackle strategically identified learning, teaching and assessment challenges for Scottish discipline communities.

- communication
- training for new lecturers
- Highers and Advanced Highers
- the subject knowledge base of new entrants to some degree areas
- perceptions of the Academy.
- funding

The Forum provided a useful opportunity for dissemination of current projects and research activities as well as discussion around the new enhancement themes of QAA Scotland, in particular that of "Graduates for the 21st Century". BMAF will continue to be represented on the Forum and updates will be provided.

More information about Academy Scotland activities including travel scholarships can be found at:

www.heacademy.ac.uk/aboutus/scotland

Graduates for the 21st Century: Integrating the Enhancement Themes

To bring together the wide-ranging outcomes of the first five years of Enhancement Themes for Scotland, the new Theme will be "Graduates for the 21st Century".

The proposal is that Scottish HE institutions should work to integrate the benefits of the previous themes and consolidate those within the overarching questions:

- what should be the attributes of a graduate from Scottish Higher Education in the 21st century
- how can the achievement of these attributes best be supported?

To support this process the outcomes of earlier themes are to be presented in a guide which follows the student journey:

- Getting There – application to enrolment
- Staying There – transition and the First Year
- Being There – course design, teaching, assessment
- Moving On – employability and lifelong learning

www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/default.asp

Research-Teaching Linkages Workshop

BMAF are supporting a workshop at Abertay on Wednesday 22nd April to share the findings of this work in relation to our discipline areas.

Details on the back page and the BMAF website.

Discipline-specific pedagogies for new academic staff?

Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Research (SHEER) Year 2

During 2008, BMAF and three other Subject Centres were involved in a SHEER2 project led by Darren Comber of University of Aberdeen and Lorraine Walsh of University of Dundee.

Entitled “*Enhancing educational development for new academic staff through inclusion and comparison of disciplinary pedagogies*”, this pilot study investigated the perceptions of both new and senior academic staff about the extent to which in-house development programmes (e.g. PG Certificate in HE teaching and learning) should use discipline-specific pedagogies to enhance their learning.

In considering the benefits of disciplinary compared with generic support, their work reviewed both the resources offered to new academic staff by the Subject Centres and those through the formal Certificate level educational development courses. One finding indicated that senior academic staff do not always have positive preconceptions about such 'generic' programmes, although these are largely based on second-hand information and hearsay as few have completed such a programme themselves.

At all levels there was recognition that a structured programme brings together new staff from across all disciplines - possibly for the only time in their

career - and allows them to recognise that such 'generic' approaches encourage discussion and debate about issues fundamental to teaching and learning. While there may be disciplinary differences these are mainly differences of method rather than approach. Indeed, observing teaching in areas outside your own can generate ideas for your own practice.

Resources provided by Subject Centres were well received within the discipline communities, although the range and variety of format and content produced by each caused some confusion. It was clear that all Subject Centres take this part of their work seriously and will actively respond to comments from lecturers and academic developers.

An additional outcome of this project was that the resources available for new academic staff through the BMAF website were made more explicit. This project has also contributed valuable insights for those involved in the current BMAF Project - *Support for new academic staff in business disciplines* (see page 15).

The final reports of this and all the other SHEER2 projects have now been published on the Academy Scotland website:

www.heacademy.ac.uk/aboutus/scotland/educational_development/sheer

Helping students to be ahead of the pack

BMAF Entrepreneurial Learning Special Interest Group

On January 8th 2009 the European Year of Creativity and Innovation was officially launched at a special conference in Prague. A common theme emerging from conference discussions was the imperative role of education in nurturing creativity and innovation among our students, fundamental skills that when employed effectively serve to enhance entrepreneurial abilities and beliefs. Such attributes are needed now more than ever amidst the backdrop of financial crisis, economic downturn and increasing unemployment. In his address, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture and

Youth, Jan Figel, discussed the current climate and said: “Those who will have invested in creativity and innovation will find themselves well ahead of the pack”.

For us in the Entrepreneurial Learning SIG, the theme is a central one: it has informed our thinking from the outset. Led by our Chair's 2007 BMAF Conference contribution and ensuing discussions, we have long felt that there are lessons to be learned from the creative industries approach to teaching ideas development and innovation. Moreover, in the light of criticism of Business Schools delivered at conferences, such as the International Entrepreneurship Educators

Conference (IEEC) and Internationalising Entrepreneurship Education and Training (IntEnt), it is an area BMAF is keen to develop. Thus this SIG was established in January 2008 with the aim to “focus on and enhance the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment relating to entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship and enterprise related pedagogies”.

To get the ball rolling, the focus has been on creating a network of people interested in sharing good practice and experiences relating to entrepreneurial aspects of learning. Clearly some innovators and leading institutions have already tested the waters and have valuable experiences to offer and our choice of workshop locations has reflected this interest and understanding.

In the last Magazine editorial - ‘Looking Ahead’ - BMAF Director Clive Robertson introduced himself and offered some views and perspectives. Importantly, he noted the need for Universities to “recognise their graduates should demonstrate leadership and entrepreneurial skills amongst their attributes”. The primary challenges that have been identified in EL-SIG workshops so far have revolved around the means of developing the associated pedagogical shifts that will enable us to instil such competencies.

We have been fortunate to secure speakers who have a wealth of international experience and who are well versed in the various nuances of business education. Their role has been not to preach, but to trigger debate amongst those of us at the grass roots level of delivery, and these debates have been extended and focussed on the issues to hand. In feedback, the need for more time for discussion has been clearly identified - once our speakers have articulated the ‘triggers’, there is rarely a quiet moment.

Our workshop titles offer an indication of these debates, with ‘Entrepreneurial Learning in the Curriculum’ considered in Swansea and Newcastle, and more recently in Glamorgan we addressed “Right skills? Right contexts? Right Dreams? Catching the wave: key issues for effective entrepreneurship educators”.

The following two questions have consistently been raised and are ones that will guide and help us to focus in future discussions:

- How can we advance entrepreneurial capacity in our students?
- How can Business Schools' contribution evolve in the context of calls for more interdisciplinary approaches?

Clearly the theme of creativity and innovation is not new to BMAF. Indeed, it has recently been picked up by the Marketing SIG and others. However, for those of us with a direct interest in Entrepreneurial Learning, creativity and innovation is central to developing the capacities that Government bodies such as BERR and DIUS so fervently encourage. We hope that many of you will join in that discussion with us at our next event at the University of Surrey in March.

If Entrepreneurial Learning is your area of interest, and if you would be interested to host and/or contribute to a workshop, please get in touch.

EL SIG - Steering Group

Andy Penaluna – Swansea Metropolitan University, andy.penaluna@smu.ac.uk

Kathryn Penaluna – Swansea Metropolitan University, kathryn.penaluna@smu.ac.uk

Spinder Dhaliwal – University of Surrey, s.dhaliwal@surrey.ac.uk

Janine Swail – Newcastle University Business School, janine.swail@ncl.ac.uk

Richard Atfield, BMAF Representative, ratfield@brookes.ac.uk

SIG homepage with details of workshops and events:

www.heacademy.ac.uk/business/ourwork/sigs/entrepreneurial_learning_sig

More information about the launch of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation is available at:

http://create2009.europa.eu/press/news_archive/news_singleview/news/boosting-creativity-and-innovation-in-europe-official-launch-of-the-european-year-2009-in-prague.html

**Stop Press: Next EL-SIG Event
University of Surrey, Friday 20 March**

BMAF Conference 2009

The fourth BMAF Annual Conference is being held at the St David's Hotel and Spa, Cardiff from Tuesday 28th to Wednesday 29th April 2009, in conjunction with the University of Glamorgan.

This year we have key note speakers Helen Connor from the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) and Wendy Stubbs from the Quality Assurance Agency, with an example of practical application by Josephine Green of Phillips Design.

The focus will be on Engaging Employers and the themes are:

1. Sustainability

Issues related to sustainability including future Business School policy, globally-inclusive considerations, new (less damaging) approaches to developing and delivering teaching materials.

2. Enterprise and Entrepreneurship

Issues related to developing entrepreneurship in business and other disciplines, innovation, entrepreneurial learning.

3. International Dimensions

Issues related to teaching international students in the UK, collaborative provision, internationalising the business curriculum.

4. Technologically Enhanced Learning

Issues related to E-learning strategy, approaches to blending learning, the use (and re-use) of learning objects, the use of podcasting and other new forms of media, web 2.0.

5. Employability and Employee Learning

Issues related to developing soft skills, work-based learning, professional accreditation, APEL, placements, examples of business/education partnerships in practice.

6. Lifelong Learning

Issues related to engagement with schools and the new 14-19 agenda, personal development planning and portfolios, postgraduate course provision, student-centred learning and flexible provision.

Student Article Competition 2009

The 2009 Student Article Competition is open to all students studying within the business, management, accountancy, finance and related subject areas so please let your students know about it.

It is an opportunity for them to win an IPOD Touch and contribute to the student area of the BMAF website. We want to include their views to inform current and future students of the benefits of studying a business degree.

Students are required to write 500 words on the following topic:

My Future Employability: The Benefits of a Business Degree

Submissions should:

- Evaluate employment opportunities for business graduates;
- Define how a business degree differentiates a potential employee from those with other qualifications;

- Be focussed and succinct and written in a style suitable for inclusion on a professional website;
- Demonstrate the ability to critically analyse and evaluate the topic.

The closing date is 1st April 2009. Submission requirements and the application form can be downloaded from the website

www.heacademy.ac.uk/business/ourwork/student_article_competition

and articles and application form should then be emailed to aharrap@brookes.ac.uk



BMAF Conference 2009

Conference Schedule

The conference offers a varied diet of discussion papers, workshops, posters, key note speakers and the prospect of a memorable conference dinner, as well as many opportunities for informal networking.

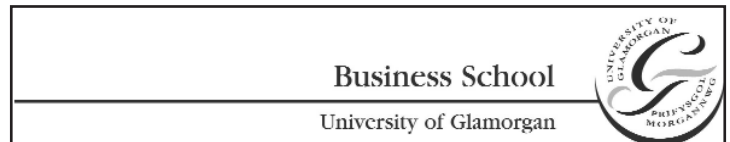
Conference Support

We are grateful to many of our Special Interest Groups for assisting with the review of papers and, along with colleagues from Glamorgan Business School and elsewhere, for providing chairs for the various sessions.

Registration

To register for the Conference, please complete and return the registration form which can be downloaded from our website:

www.heacademy.ac.uk/business/events/conference



Tuesday 28th April	
09.00 - 10.00	Arrival and registration
10.00 - 10.15	Welcome, introductions and conference overview
10.15 - 10.45	Keynote speaker: Helen Connor, CIHE
10.45 - 11.00	Refreshments
11.00 - 11.30	Engaging effectively: Josephine Green, Phillips Design
11.30 - 12.30	Paper session 1
12.30 - 13.30	Lunch
13.30 - 15.00	Paper session 2
15.00 - 15.30	Refreshments
15.30 - 17.00	Workshop session 1
17.00 - 18.30	Poster sessions
19.30 - 22.30	Conference dinner
Wednesday 29th April	
08.30 - 09.00	Arrival
09.00 - 09.15	Welcome
09.15 - 10.00	Keynote speaker: Wendy Stubbs, QAA
10.00 - 11.00	Paper session 3
11.00 - 11.30	Refreshments
11.30 - 13.00	Workshop session 2
13.00 - 14.00	Lunch
14.00 - 15.30	Workshop session 3
15.30 - 15.45	Refreshments
15.45 - 16.45	Paper session 4
16.45 - 17.00	Closing plenary

Engaging with employers: Work-based learning

Chris Ogilvie, Lecturer in Organisational Behaviour and Unit Leader for Work Based learning, Manchester Metropolitan University Business School c.ogilvie@mmu.ac.uk

“I’m your manager, not your tutor”

‘Learn while you earn’ is the concept behind newly designed elective work-based learning units currently being rolled out at Manchester Metropolitan University Business School. Since about a third of its undergraduates are working part time to fund their education, MMUBS decided this was an opportunity for students to learn about organisations first hand. Delivered mostly on line, the unit offers much valued flexibility to students as well as the chance of gaining external qualifications through the Chartered Management Institute. Tutorials and assignments require students to apply organisational and HR theory to their workplace and this involves some research within the employing company.

So what is the role of the employer in this form of informal work based learning? Unlike placement, most of the students work in industries not directly connected with their degrees. The contract with their companies is one of employment not training or education and their job is usually at a low level. To what extent would students need the co-operation of their employers in order to complete assignments? Would students be academically disadvantaged if they were unable to mobilise their manager’s support? Within the organisation, at what level would they need to engage with managers in order to source information? Will employers see this as a cost or a benefit? These are some of the questions that form the basis some BMAF sponsored research being carried out by Chris Ogilvie at MMUBS.

Initial evidence suggests many variables. Students who were well established in their jobs, had good working relationships with their managers and who possibly had credit in the ‘favour bank’ found their managers very helpful. Some went so far as to source information from elsewhere in the company for the student if they were unable to provide it.

Most students who were successful in mobilising support said they had chosen the timing of their request carefully. Two students said their managers were supportive because they had done degrees themselves. However, several said that operational pressures before Christmas meant that some promises couldn’t be delivered. A few students have not asked for help and the research needs to explore why.



Employer engagement had already been anticipated by some students, who at the initial workshop stated that they had already sought manager co-operation and had done favours to generate goodwill. A few students said they had chosen Work Based Learning in order to be able to have a reason to contact higher levels of management and make themselves known, with a view to future career prospects with the company. Almost all students were positive about having the opportunity to find out more about the company they work for.

Finally, is there anything in it for the employer? Is the student trading on goodwill or can the employer benefit? There is evidence of some learning for managers. For example, one student had to explain what a stakeholder was before his manager could help him identify them. Other managers learned about the company structure and values by researching them for the student. For the final assignment the students have to suggest an improvement to the business, based on topics studied. Employer consultations during the unit design process regarded this element very favourably. The research has yet to seek employers’ views on this question and the results may be surprising.

**2008 - 9
BMAF Grant
Project**

Engaging with employers through technology

Neil Marriott, Dean, Winchester Business School
neil.marriott@winchester.ac.uk

A Higher Education Academy/JISC Collaboration think tank: 'Technologically-Enhanced Work-Related Learning', was hosted at Winchester Business School on 15/16 January 2009. Participants were drawn from across the UK and many who travelled to Winchester were able to meet informally on the Thursday evening.

On the Friday, Sharon Waller, Academy Team Leader of the Academy / JISC Collaboration Team, provided an overview of the collaboration initiative. Steve Probert, BMAF Assistant Director, then outlined the work of the Subject Centre in supporting the use of technology for work-related learning.

These were followed by a series of information sharing and group discussions about current experiences and practices which aim to maximise the potential of technology to support work-related learning. Participants considered the perceived benefits and challenges from the learner, HEI and employer perspectives.

To focus on practical applications of technology, one highlight of the event was the discussion of the Winchester Business School/Logica Foundation Degree Collaboration Programme with presentations by Stella McKnight and Professor Neil Marriott. This was followed by a demonstration of the use of the new Wimba collaborative suite by Dr. David Rush in the Sargent Resource Room (photo below).



This new software works with the university's learning network to enable remote based learners to join in classes delivered at the Business School through synchronous web access.

In this case the students are employees of Logica and have day release to 'attend' the classes and work towards the Foundation Degree. The company also provide each with an internet-ready laptop for their personal use. While face-to-face opportunities are provided, learners only need access through the internet to follow live presentations, listen and see lecturers and to join in sessions by asking questions and participating in group discussions. Even if they miss the class at the time, they can replay the session asynchronously from the university's learning network.

While this work is still in the pilot phase, the results have been encouraging and eventually it will allow work-based learners the benefit of a fully interactive HE experience using and developing their social networking skills. Logica are particularly keen on the use of the technology as it complements their "smart working" initiative where staff are located at home for some of their time for their work role. They have also identified that familiarity of staff with using these technology-based skills are critical to their future business.



Simon Gosling is the Senior Staff Manager for the Energy, Utilities and Telecoms division of Logica UK, and has a interest in the channels by which the organisation brings talent into the organisation and is keen to challenge the traditional methods of recruitment and their effectiveness, hence his support for this programme. "The opportunities to combine the academic discipline with practical experience in developing the talent of these young people fascinates me and, if we get it right, should result in young professionals fully equipped to build a successful career in the industry", said Simon.

Engaging with employers: Relevance retained

Professor Hugh Coombs and Brian Telford,
University of Glamorgan Business School
hcoombs@glam.ac.uk and btelford@glam.ac.uk

Known as 'higher education's best kept secret' (The Times Higher Education Supplement, 22 September 2006), Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) provide a significant opportunity for academics to ensure that their teaching is up to date, challenging and relevant to the needs of today's students. The whole process is one based on partnership between an academic provider and an employer who may come from the private, public or 'third' sector. Engagement with 'business' is thus a natural feature of such schemes.

In essence, KTPs provide for an Associate (a recent graduate) to be employed on a project of strategic significance to a business. The Associate is an employee of the University and is funded by both the business and grants from various sources. Usually the project would fit around a particular theme which the government is anxious to support. The time frame for projects is normally two years although shorter projects are possible.

**2008 - 9
BMAF Grant
Project**

Teaching relevance is seen as a key performance indicator of such activities in addition to the specific business outputs from the project. For academics, KTPs provide opportunities to invigorate teaching and develop case studies and related material which is up to date and problem focused. They thus enable the development of analytical and critical skills which can be used across a wide range of levels and abilities.

The authors have been involved in three KTPs to date with third sector organisations. The projects were concerned with developing new social enterprises, improved procurement practice and improving an information system to support improved procurement practices. For the new social enterprises project, the charity Grŵp Gwallia, was under budgetary pressure as the government had reduced funding for one of its core activities after having given significant encouragement for the development of such activities. The idea of a KTP was therefore mooted to see if it could provide a long term strategic solution. In this context the charity developed a software provider and

maintenance company, became involved in computer recycling, built a training company and finally established a design and printing company, all of which are now up and running and generating revenues. In the case of the procurement projects a strategic review of purchasing practices has resulted in very significant savings to the organisation concerned. The information system was developed with the same third sector organisation and improved management of purchasing practices, also leading to savings. These savings and extra income resulted in the ability to transfer extra funds into direct service delivery to achieve the core aims for both of the third sector organisations concerned.

Finally, and naturally, all the above activities have been reflected in teaching activities within Glamorgan Business School. KTPs deal with live organisations and a wide range of potential projects across a spectrum of activities. They can be challenging but also immensely rewarding. To ignore them, or fail to exploit the potential benefits they can give to students to maximize educational opportunity would represent a significant failing as we aim to make the 'classroom' a more relevant and lively experience for all.



Brian Telford and Hugh Coombs

The authors have received a BMAF Teaching Research and Development Grant to study the linkage between KTP-based research and business and management teaching, and are currently conducting a survey of academics who have supervised KTP projects.



Engaging with employers: Oxford Brookes' 'outstanding' partnership with Webmart

Elly Sample, Oxford Brookes Business School
esample@brookes.ac.uk

A partnership between Oxford Brookes and Webmart, Europe's leading low-cost print management company, has been graded 'outstanding'. The £87K project involved analysing Webmart's market position, identifying areas for potential development, and integrating these into their strategic planning and systems investment. It was partly funded through £59K of government Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) funding which was secured by Oxford Brookes University and Webmart in partnership. Sales for Webmart, based in Bicester, Oxfordshire, almost doubled to £37 million over the period of the project and are forecast to increase by a further £30 million over the next two years.

The project finished in December 2007, and has since been given the highest possible grade of 'outstanding' by the government's KTP agency, Momenta. The grade was awarded for the project's impact on management skills, business-based training and academic research, and because of the lasting partnership developed between Webmart and Oxford Brookes. Webmart's founder and MD, Simon Biltcliffe (pictured), who was also named 'Director of the Month' by the Institute of Directors, said:

The KTP delivered sophisticated market intelligence which is already generating very significant business. It also made us clear about our aims and values, instead of just carrying these around in our heads.



The relationship between Webmart and Oxford Brookes developed when Simon Biltcliffe took part in a year long 'Business Growth' programme run by Oxford Brookes University Business School, following which Simon became a guest speaker for Brookes' MBA Entrepreneurship elective. Webmart then became Oxford Brookes University Business School's first Knowledge Transfer Partnership. Students at Oxford Brookes now have the opportunity to be involved with projects within this highly successful company.

Nicolas Virtsonis led the project within Webmart and, as a result of its success, was appointed Research Director. He was supervised by direct marketing expert Sally Harridge-March of Oxford Brookes University Business School. Nicolas said:

The project was a huge success and we are delighted that it has been externally recognised in this way. We are particularly pleased that Oxford Brookes students are now involved in real-life business projects within Webmart.

Sally Harridge-March said:

My colleagues in the Business School have long associations with local and international businesses in marketing and business development. We are keen to continue to support such projects which help businesses, develop up-and-coming executives, and also enhance our research and teaching capability.

Sally explained that, as a further development in response to the effectiveness of the KTP, an additional project involving MSc Marketing students had recently been completed.

Currently Webmart is running the UK's largest print-buyer survey via 'Printelligence', a tool which was developed through the KTP:

www.theprintsurvey.com

For more about KTPs at Oxford Brookes University Business School visit:

www.brookes.ac.uk/business_employers/ktp

Engaging with employers: A consultancy project

Dr Ozlem Bak, Senior Lecturer, University of Brighton o.bak@brighton.ac.uk

This short article, based on work undertaken outside Brighton University, introduces experiences of postgraduates through a consultancy course at master's level, where students are placed in the role of consultants to a company to solve a specific problem without having the opportunity to gather prior knowledge about the problem itself or the associated company.

The students are given tutor guidance but left alone to design their own solutions, presentations and final report to the client. The clients' expectations are wide-ranging, from wanting to hear fresh to testing the waters for possible solutions, with some wanting the actual job done under the framework of creating a win-win scenario for the students and themselves. The role of the lecturers is to support the students but that is limited to providing guidance.

While the focus of the main consultancy activities have remained relatively constant over the years there are differences each year in terms of companies and their problem statements as the programme adapts to the changes in production technologies, course content, and the development of students' own needs and expertise.

The consultancy course usually involves one company and its setting but, depending on the scope (theoretical and practical), the problem statement can be divided into sub-tasks and students allocated accordingly. The distribution of student numbers is in relation to the scope of the task(s) - in some cases limited by the size or needs of a company, in others student numbers may be regarded by the company as too high (above 20), in which case a second company may be introduced.

The students visit the company, observe its operations and are introduced to the problem by the managers and/or department heads, during which the students can directly question the presenters. After the presentation, exchange of materials and documentation, the students start their project.

Broadly, the program includes:

- a workshop and seminar program for students who choose this option
- relevant operational activity-based workshops prior to the consultancy (including simulations/field visits of activities and the exploration of operations strategies)
- on-line discussion groups (Forum on WebCT) for students involved in this option; documentation – vignettes and case studies
- ongoing support provided by the team to help address possible problems

The findings and solutions are presented to the managers of the company, fellow students and the lecturers. The company managers provide formative feedback to students on the applicability of solutions.

Using the consultancy course as a vehicle for developing and delivering students' knowledge and skills has proved exceptionally fruitful. It has worked both as a learning process and for a team building. Students have undergone quite extensive and profound learning as they have been able to gain a real-life experience in the field with employers and demonstrate their knowledge in practice.

Taking part in the development and delivery of consultancy to real clients has allowed the students to develop skills, from administrative tasks to handling practical challenges, finally receiving the employer's feedback on the solutions provided as part of their assessment. Throughout the consultancy period, all in the employer, lecturer and student triangle are exposed to and experience many of the joys and frustrations, triumphs and difficulties.

Students' experiences have ranged from identifying this course as, "one of the highlights", to being glad to have created "value to a real problem and company", with one underlining they learnt more from the challenges of managing a real project. The employers' feedback has ranged from regarding the solutions as "additional valuable and interesting points" to "moving forward specific solutions" in order to assess their usability and practicality. As we worked though the development together in this interaction triangle the sense of shared experience, team spirit and belonging has flourished.

Do your students engage with maths?

Jon Warwick, London South Bank University
warwick@lsbu.ac.uk

Introduction

How we teach and support students who have to take mathematically-based modules as a supporting subject to their main studies is a topic that has generated many suggestions about possible good practice. Unfortunately it seems that what might be regarded as good practice in one institution does not always travel well to others. There are a plethora of pedagogic approaches and models of support reported in the literature all of which have had some measurable success but not, it seems, found universal acceptance. Many of these are described in the publications of our sibling subject centre relating to Maths, Stats and OR (www.mathstore.ac.uk).

I outline here some of the issues and preliminary findings of research carried out at my own institution, London South Bank University, and ask whether others who face similar issues and problems within their own BMAF programmes could inform me of their own experiences and approaches, so that some threads could be drawn together about how we teach, assess and support mathematical subjects within the BMAF domain.

The issues for investigation

Within the context of the Faculty of Business, Computing and Information Management, one primary issue seems to be there is a far greater diversity of skill levels and content knowledge exhibited by cohorts of students, and less so that students entering the university system are less mathematically able than they were in the past.

With the growing internationalisation of BMAF courses these diversity issues are likely to assume greater importance over time and I would argue that dealing with the challenges of greater diversity is likely to be more problematic than dealing with changes to average skill levels as far as learning, teaching and assessment are concerned.

Pedagogic research around this diversity of quantitative skills has included measurable student attributes such as their mathematical knowledge and skills sets (as measured by entry qualifications and perhaps diagnostic testing) and also more

qualitative attributes such as their perceptions of the relevance of mathematics to their course, the levels of anxiety towards mathematics and their levels of mathematical self-efficacy. Mathematical self-efficacy is a measure of the student's belief in their ability to successfully achieve certain learning outcomes.

Broadly speaking, the challenges of teaching quantitative subjects can be categorised as follows:

- i) Deciding how to measure mathematical knowledge deficiencies in students;
- ii) Deciding how to measure levels of self-efficacy, anxiety and other affective states relating to mathematics learning and assessment;
- iii) Deciding how to deliver and resource support sessions to help resolve the issues identified in (i) and (ii);
- iv) Designing a taught curriculum that delivers new material but which is accessible by students whilst support sessions are in operation (dependant on the model of support adopted);
- v) Designing a taught curriculum that simultaneously challenges the more mathematically knowledgeable students;
- vi) Developing the staff teaching skills for coping with student cohorts exhibiting diverse mathematical abilities.

These issues are faced constantly by those staff who have the responsibility for teaching mathematically based units across the range of undergraduate degree programmes. They have all, to a greater or lesser extent, been the subject of research over the last 30 years much of which has been conducted in the USA.

Some ideas from our pedagogic research

Within my faculty a number of small research projects have been conducted looking at some of the issues mentioned above and particularly focussing on the 'softer' issues of mathematical self-efficacy and anxiety. These types of issue are not often addressed in terms of student support as the tendency is to focus on addressing any significant knowledge gaps that appear. For example, students taking quantitative courses as part of IT related programmes within my faculty were asked to

complete questionnaires and were individually interviewed to explore the factors influencing student learning on their quantitative units. From their responses three key issues were identified:

- i) The data suggested that students who were weak in mathematics were poor at making the self-judgements necessary for accurate assessment of mathematical self-efficacy and, in some cases, seemed to have inflated self-efficacy expectations. This relates to the so called Dunning-Kruger effect and is important in that when student expectations do not match their actual experience then the likelihood of drop-out is raised;
- ii) Poor self-judgements produce inappropriate expectations of success on the mathematics unit leading to a gap between expectation and actual performance. This had subsequent effects on student engagement and the balance of time spent studying mathematics;
- iii) Some students demonstrated gaps in their basic mathematical knowledge so that actual knowledge did not exactly match the unit's requirement for pre-requisite knowledge. Some students were not able to identify such gaps and misattributed their mistakes to an inability to cope with the new material rather than more fundamental mistakes in calculation.

As a consequence of these research projects, we have identified some recommendations for further work and pedagogic development including:

- a) A model of quantitative support in which students are required to attend timetabled sessions until they can demonstrate further attendance is no longer necessary. Students may also volunteer to attend quantitative support sessions offered by the university but experience shows that weaker students are not inclined to attend voluntary sessions. The pace of mathematical development work should be continually reviewed to ensure that the rate of knowledge acquisition expected of the students matches their capabilities;
- b) Some students' self-judgements seem to be inaccurate. Students' judgements of mathematical self-efficacy are sometimes poor and this should be examined in more detail by using more task-specific questionnaires linked to identified core mathematical support

topics. Poor self-judgement is rarely mentioned in the literature but is crucial if self-efficacy measurement is to have value for educators. We are now developing more task specific questionnaires for use with students;

- c) Students should discuss their expectations of success with their tutor so that realistic expectations can be fostered. This can be a very difficult task as lowering expectations can be disheartening for students but, if it is coupled with improving self-efficacy feelings from the support sessions then a balance may be achieved;
- d) Finally, students should be encouraged to reflect more critically on their performance, not just in mathematics but across all units that they take.

Conclusion

How we overcome the problems of teaching and supporting students taking quantitative subjects across BMAF courses has, I'm sure, produced a variety of responses and approaches.

I would very much like to hear the experiences and observations of others and would warmly welcome any comments and teaching practice you are willing to share.

Online Resources

Our colleagues at other Subject Centres and projects have recognised this 'Maths problem' and case studies and links to further resources you may find useful include:

- Economics Network
www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/themes/maths
- Maths Stats and OR
www.mathstore.ac.uk/index.php?pid=41
- MathsCentre Resources for Economics
www.mathcentre.ac.uk
- METAL (an FDTL5 project)
www.metalproject.co.uk
- MathsSkills Discipline Network
www.hull.ac.uk/mathskills

Editor: We would be pleased to receive similar items on this and other practical issues for future issues of the Magazine

Support for the development of new academic staff in business-related disciplines: Project update

Richard Atfield, BMAF Academic Developer,
ratfield@brookes.ac.uk

This project aims to identify the personal and discipline-specific development needs of new academic staff in the BMAF subject areas to influence the future provision of BMAF resources for new academics, e.g. resources, events, publications. In the baseline surveys of Deans and Key Contacts the support for new academics is seen as a priority, and such initial and continuing support is one of the key aims of the Higher Education Academy.

Following on from a pilot of the project in two universities during autumn 2008, six more have been selected from the expressions of interest received and the main part of the project was formally launched in January.

There are four main components:

- HESA data analysis of the characteristics of new academic staff over the past 3 years since the Francis report to ABS in 2006)
- interviews with senior staff about the expectations about and recruitment of staff new to academic roles and perceptions of their support needs, together with analysis of relevant policies.
- interviews with a range of new academic staff in each institution in terms of their career, life-stages and plans, their preferred learning styles and personal learning strategies.
- to identify examples of good practice in support provision and resources and make recommendations to BMAF to enhance future provision of resources and events.

As reflected in the recent Oxford workshop, a clear definition of 'new' is difficult, as was also found with 'part-time' in the joint BMAF/HSAP project. Many employed on a lecturer contract have previously taught while in research roles and completing PhDs, while others recruited mid-career from professional and management roles may have been involved with business schools for some years as an associate.

This work is being informed by a number of other sources:

- recent SHEER2 projects which considered the disciplinary versus generic contexts of learning for early academic staff
- the BMAF/HSAP 'Part-Time Teachers' project report and recommendations
- the feedback from the 'new and aspiring academic staff' workshop with the Oxford CETL
- wider developments for the initial and continuing support of academic staff through the Academy
- a reference group of interested academics from the UK and Australia

BMAF has a developing area on the website of resources and links but would be pleased to hear from colleagues if they have identified or created a useful resource, or if they have identified a need for one. We are also keen to hear the views and experiences of those who are currently 'new' by their own definition.

If you would like to contribute to this project, either contact Richard ratfield@brookes.ac.uk or offer a short item for publication in this magazine or on the website to BMAFMagazine@brookes.ac.uk

How is it for you?

New to an academic post? New to teaching in the business school environment?
What has been your experience?

BMAF are trying to identify how best to provide that support to you, your subject area and faculty and to academic developers across the UK.

Let us know of your expectations and experiences for the Summer issue of the BMAF Magazine – copy by Friday 8th May 2009.

Workshop for 'new and aspiring academic staff'

Richard Atfield, BMAF Academic Developer,
ratfield@brookes.ac.uk

In November, the 'Preparing for Academic Practice' CETL hosted a joint workshop with BMAF at Oxford University to consider the initial and continuing development of academic staff in business disciplines. This is one of a number of similar CETL events held in partnership with Subject Centres.

After a slow start applications for places was eventually nearly double the capacity, with interest from all over the UK and parts of Europe. Those offered places were a mix of full and part time PhD students, recently appointed lecturers and some who were both, together with four more senior academics.

Divided into mixed groups during the day and facilitated by the senior academics the 40+ participants considered:

- What does academic practice mean to you?
- With academic practice changing what are the challenges for new and early career academics?
- What are the different ways in which people learn about academic practice?
- What support needs do you have? What opportunities have you found valuable?

Inevitably the conversations ranged far and wide, not only about what 'academic practice' may be but more fundamentally what might characterise a 'new' academic?

Online tutor training for small group teaching

<http://tutortraining.econ.usyd.edu.au/>

This website - the result of collaboration between the University of Melbourne and the University of Sydney - is designed to support tutors and sessional academics responsible for small group teaching in the disciplines of economics, finance, accounting, actuarial studies, management, and political science. One of the key features is that it incorporates video-clips of authentic and simulated classroom scenarios with 'real tutors', in order to demonstrate a range of styles, approaches and strategies.

Variations in expectations and understanding were identified between the various institutions represented and particularly the emphasis on research as a primary role for some, with 'teaching' seen as more secondary, and vice-versa.

Ultimately there were more questions than answers but general agreement that the opportunity to listen and share with colleagues from such varied environments and backgrounds had been both informative and useful. All were encouraged to give themselves three targets as a personal follow through after the event and from several recent contacts these are being acted on.

My thanks go to Martin Rich, Heather Kent, Christine Cuthbertson and Hussein Mirza for agreeing to facilitate groups during this workshop, and to the CETL team of Lynn McAlpine, Nick Hopwood and Richard Arnold for their roles in organising and coordinating the event.

For more information about the work of the CETL go to www.learning.ox.ac.uk

The demand for places and the positive feedback to this workshop clearly suggests that a further networking event would be appreciated.

Plans are under development for a north of England venue for autumn 2009. Details will be available on the BMAF website and circulated in the e-news bulletin shortly.

It also features interviews with tutors and academics offering their insights of a range of teaching issues.

The website has been designed to stimulate your thinking about teaching and learning, with key teaching points and links to self-assessment tools and additional resources. However, although located within specific disciplinary contexts, there is much that is just good small group teaching.

If you are aware of similar useful resources, please let us know.

BMAF Teaching Research and Development Grants 2009 - 2010

Once again we are offering small grants to support and encourage pedagogic research and the development of new practices in the teaching, learning and assessment of the BMAF disciplines. These are available for application by individuals and teams by mid-May 2009.

The maximum amount offered will be £3500 and the grant period will run from September 2009 to May 2010.

Suggested Themes for 2009-10

These are based on the main priorities and enhancement themes for the UK:

- Assessment and feedback;
- Employability, work-based learning and employer engagement;
- Graduates for the 21st Century
- Internationalisation and teaching international students;
- Education for sustainable development
- The first year experience and student recruitment and retention;
- HE in FE;
- Inclusive curriculum;
- Dealing with plagiarism;
- Professional development of staff
- Research-Teaching linkages;
- Teaching large groups.

This list is not exclusive and we would welcome applications which reflect your areas of interest outside those areas.

Expected Areas of Impact

Potential benefits to the community from these projects include:

- information on new evidence-based examples of innovative and effective practice;
- dissemination of educational methods which others might use;
- access to reviews of current practice and the development of recommendations.

Potential benefits to the individual and programme team include opportunities to:

- initiate or develop an aspect of pedagogic research they feel is important
- make their work visible through presentations at BMAF events and in BMAF publications
- network with others interested in the same area

Potential benefits to students are:

- opportunities to participate in and contribute to experimental programmes
- enhanced learning experience following implementation of new models

The availability of grants will be further advertised in the e-News bulletins and on the BMAF website.

Interested?

Relevant documentation including criteria, guidelines and application forms can be downloaded from the 'Funding' page of the BMAF website at www.heacademy.ac.uk/business/funding

Proposals must be submitted to bmaf@brookes.ac.uk (attention Anne Harrap) by **15th May 2009**.

For further information, contact aharrap@brookes.ac.uk

Grant-supported Outcomes

In this and previous issues of the BMAF Magazine you can read about the impact of grant-supported work on practices, and these have been shared further at HEI and BMAF workshops and conferences.

Copies of reports from previous projects are available on the BMAF website.

Enhancing student centred learning

in business and management hospitality leisure sport tourism

The Third in the 'Enhancing' Series

We are pleased to announce the publication of the third in this BMAF/HLST series which focuses on 'Student Centred Learning', co-edited by John Buswell of the University of Gloucester, and Nina Becket, Assistant Director of HLST.

Why 'Student Centred'?

The underlying principle is that if we encourage students to take more responsibility for their learning they are more likely to enhance the skills required for this approach to learning. A student-centred approach is founded on the principles of active and self-regulated learning, which has gathered momentum in recent years. (Burgess, 2007). This not only requires reflection, reflexivity and self-awareness but also emotional engagement by the student.

Student-centred learning makes the student an active participant in the learning experience and develops the capacity of self-regulation. This includes the ability to understand and manage the use of cognitive skills and strategies and involves identifying, setting and monitoring personal goals. This is intentional learning (Jackson, 2004) and leads to the individual taking control of their learning (Biggs, 1985).

Many of the eighteen case studies in the book feature examples of support and mediation of learners as they gradually develop these skills and strategies. We are delighted that a number of the contributors have been supported in their work by BMAF small project grants.

The case studies are placed in the following categories of support:

- Self-management through addressing the constraints to learning.
- Feedback, including self-assessment, on learning.

- Recording and reflecting through e-portfolios.
- The role of staff in inspiring and supporting students.
- Embedding PDP and student-centred learning in the curriculum.
- The diversity of learning spaces.



These are testament to the skill and creativity across our sectors in designing learning environments for our students. They demonstrate a range of ways in which we mediate and structure our students' learning experiences as we support an increasingly diverse and needy student population for the uncertainties of the 21st century.

Contributors

- Dorota Ujma, Mark Atlay, Petia Petrova: University of Bedfordshire
Peter Robinson, Crispin Dale, Debra Wale: University of Wolverhampton
Sarah Nixon & Caitlin Walker: Liverpool John Moore's University & Training Attention Ltd
Mark Moss: Northumbria University
Dominic Micklewright: University of Essex
Pru Marriott: Winchester Business School
Jacqueline Lynch: University of Westminster
Susan Lea and Derry Corey: University College Plymouth: St Mark & St John (Marjon)
Christine Keenan: Bournemouth University
Jacqui Gush: Bournemouth University
Louise Grisoni, Carol Jarvis, Margaret Page: University of the West of England
Graham Baker and Robert French: Bristol Business School, University of the West of England
Simon Cox, Leeds Metropolitan University
John Buswell and Angela Tomkins: University of Gloucestershire
Will Bowen-Jones: University of Worcester, and Karen Bill: University of Wolverhampton
Wendy Beekes: Lancaster University Management School
Colin Beard: Sheffield Hallam University

Case studies from the 'Enhancing' series can be downloaded from the BMAF website www.heacademy.ac.uk/business/publications/Enhancing_series and a printed copy can be requested from BMAF@brookes.ac.uk

The next book will focus on Enhancing Assessment and is due to be published in late 2009. If you have an interesting case study illustrating an aspect of assessment to offer, please contact Richard Atfield ratfield@brookes.ac.uk

Supporting Part-Time Teachers in Higher Education: Perspectives from Business and Health

Richard Atfield, BMAF Academic Developer,
ratfield@brookes.ac.uk

Jointly lead by the BMAF and Health Science and Practice Subject Centres, this project has been funded by the Academy as part of its review of the circumstances for part-time teachers in UK higher education.

The project included interviews undertaken in the health and/or business schools in seven universities across the UK, seeking strategic, operational and individual perspectives of the development needs of Part Time Teachers (PTTs).

Significant proportions of academic staff employed in both health and business schools enter academic life mid-career from a previous professional role and present different support needs and expectations than those following the more conventional PhD, Research Associate and Graduate Teaching Assistant route.

In addition to the interviews and other data from over 100 interviews, the HESA data was also reviewed. Of particular note was the fact that PTTs have only recently been included as a requirement in those statistics and the interpretation of that data is difficult (Bryson *et al.*, 2007).

Findings

This project has shown that, despite evidence that PTTs perform a significant role they are largely invisible with respect to national employment statistics. PTTs are also a very diverse group – it is simply not possible to generalise about their employment profile, career orientation or work motivation.

The project suggests that despite heavy dependence on their contribution, business schools, and to a lesser extent health schools, do not treat PTTs as favourably as full-time employees with respect to employment policy and practice. Many senior staff were ambivalent about employing PTTs, despite much evidence that they were crucial to the achievement of a flexible response to short term contingencies, particularly relating to teaching.

As a result there are missed opportunities for managers who do not always use PTTs to best advantage, and some frustration for PTTs themselves. Unsurprisingly then, most of the case study findings echoed earlier research on the experience of PTTs in HE in terms of the isolation that they encountered, lack of confidence, lack of clarity about their role, problems with educational management and administration, lack of resources, and the feeling of being an outsider. Also that most formal support opportunities lack recognition of their existing skills from their previous or other career or lack flexibility to enable access at a time and place and to learning that PTTs feel they need.

Recommendations

These focus upon several levels and include proposed actions to:

1. Clarify the requirements for PTTs within the individual school context.
2. Develop a systematic school-wide approach to managing and supporting PTTs.
3. Develop a comprehensive and flexible school-wide approach to supporting the learning of PTTs.
4. Establish a strategy and policy framework for supporting PTTs across the whole HEI.

The Project Report (Woodall & Geisler, 2009) and HESA Data Analysis (Bryson *et al.*, 2007) can both be downloaded from the BMAF website at

www.heacademy.ac.uk/business/ourwork/projects/parttime

The Australian Experience

A significant piece of work across 17 Australian Universities reports that:

Sessional teachers are the hidden part of the massification that has taken place in higher education in Australia over the last 30 years... this could not have been achieved without the massive contribution of sessional staff. (Percy *et al.*, 2008)

The 'RED Report' and supporting RED Resource' can be found on the ALTC website at

www.altc.edu.au

BMAF Workshop Programme 2009

The Subject Centre Workshop programme is under continuous development and further details will be available via the monthly E-News bulletins and the BMAF Website.

Date	Topic	Location
11 March 2009	Internationalisation of the curriculum: Internationalisation SIG Workshop	Regent's College, London
20 March 2009	Entrepreneurial Learning SIG Workshop	University of Surrey
2 April 2009	Assessment - when, why and how?: Project Management SIG Workshop	University of Leeds
22 April 2009	Research-teaching links in Business, Management, Accountancy & Finance: Sharing & Enhancing Practice	University of Abertay Dundee
7 May 2009	University Challenge! Careers for life have gone... delivering effective entrepreneurship education across the faculties	Napier University
4 - 5 June 2009	Internationalisation SIG Conference	Lancaster University
12 June 2009	Students in Transition - Issues and Solutions	Ulster Business School

There is no charge for any BMAF-led workshops. If you would like to reserve a place at any of the above, please email bmaf@brookes.ac.uk and include the venue/date of the workshop you are interested in attending in the subject line.

We are keen to hear from those of you who may wish to host and/or contribute to the workshop programme. All enquires to bmaf@brookes.ac.uk or 01865 485670.

This magazine is published by the **Business, Management, Accountancy and Finance Subject Centre**, which is part of the Subject Network of the Higher Education Academy.

Extra copies of this magazine can be requested from BMAFMagazine@brookes.ac.uk and the online version can be accessed at www.heacademy.ac.uk/business/bmag

We welcome contributions for the next issue which we intend to publish in June 2009. We are particularly interested in items about your experiences as a 'new academic' in one of our subject areas. Guidelines for submissions and copy deadline will be available on the website.

Richard Atfield *Editor*

Sam French *Publications Officer*

Business School, Oxford Brookes University
Wheatley,
Oxon OX33 1HX

Tel: 01865 485670
Fax: 01865 485829

The BMAF Subject Centre is proud to work closely with the Association of Business Schools as a strategic partner in higher education. Jonathan Slack, ABS Chief Executive, is a member of the BMAF Advisory Board.

Focus activities include surveys of business school deans, round table meetings with professional bodies, joint workshops, conference contributions and support for initiatives and projects.

