

## Supporting Student Learning

*In our desire to enhance the student learning experience, it is essential that we picture ourselves in the role of student, and consider the various elements which impact on our capacity to succeed. These are mostly to do with effective communication – ensuring that information is easily available, easily understandable, consistent, and answers the questions we have: When is the seminar? Where is the seminar? What is the assignment? When is the assignment due? What is expected of me in the assignment? What grade did I get? Why did I get that grade? How can I get a better grade? What am I expected to get out of taking this module? Why is that important? Can I do something else instead? What help can I get? Where can I get help? When can I get help?*

*Learning and teaching strategies talk about the need to develop independent and effective learners who can face the world after higher education with appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding, and with confidence. We often concentrate more, however, on the curriculum than on the student and we should be helping them to effectively manage their time and take full advantage of the opportunities for their own development, which are available through the learning experiences we provide.*

In the mass Higher Education of today, it is essential that we focus on serving the needs and aspirations of the individual. Individuals who increasingly engage with us from a diversity of backgrounds and prior experience, and through new approaches to learning, teaching and assessment – foundation degrees, blended learning, individually negotiated learning. In the more traditional approaches, as well as in the more innovative, only well informed and effectively supported individual learners can gain the fullest benefit from the courses, work placements, learning resources, field work, laboratory work, virtual learning environments, guest lectures and other experiences we offer. Only well informed and effectively supported individual learners will flourish, progress and succeed in their chosen programmes of study.

In this issue of LINK, we look at a range of practice and development work which focuses on improving the support given to the individual learner and to individual learning. These range from developments in Personal Development Planning (PDP) to supporting development of study skills, from face-to-face support to internet-based support, from tutor-based support to peer support, from the support given throughout a programme of study to the support required at particular stages in the student life cycle. As always, our subject areas provide a rich source of practice to share and from which we can learn as we endeavour to enhance the learning experiences of our students. ■

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# Personal Tutoring to Enhance the First Year Experience

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## Introduction

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The hospitality programmes in the School of Services Management recruit approximately 90 students per year into Year 1 (level C). Unfortunately, student retention was below both the School and University average and had been so for a number of years. A study was therefore conducted to evaluate the effect of grouping individuals according to ability as a way of manipulating the learning environment and hence improving retention.

The aim of the research was to evaluate the learning environment and ascertain students' attitudes towards a mixed cohort learning experience. Four discrete focus groups, comprising seven to twelve participants, were set up with first year students following the Hospitality Management courses. Conclusions reached were that to enhance the learning environment, first year hospitality students would like:

- Small groups
- Mixed ability
- Support with the new environment of higher education
- Peer Assisted Learning
- Practical sessions

The third point led to further research being developed in the area of first year student support. Two key issues identified were that students have a 'need for security' and would like some form of formal or informal progress report during the academic year. The second key area identified was the intangible notion of psychological 'stroking'. The research showed that there was a lack of commentary on students' formative learning and development. The study also allowed some reflection on when to start the support mechanisms required by first year students.

With growing diversity and widening participation, a robust support system is increasingly required. Students are entitled to a structure which ensures that they are 'known', 'tracked' and 'supported' throughout their university careers (Owen, 2002). This can be achieved by a form of personalised tutoring. Three models have been identified which fulfil this criteria; pastoral, professional and curriculum (Earwaker, 1992).

The pastoral system allocates a staff member to each student and the role is one of personal and moral guidance embedded in academic support. The professional model dictates that students on approaching staff will be immediately referred to professional counsellors while the curriculum approach incorporates learning skills and personalised tutoring within an accredited course or module. Research would indicate a preference for the curriculum model (Owen, 2002), as every student would take the course and every tutor would be involved. Sessions would be timetabled and structured, ensuring consistency of contact. It has been demonstrated with this approach that better relationships develop between staff and students, and among the peer group itself.

## Present Culture

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The School of Services Management has a culture of open-door support for students. All staff have weekly timetables on their door and students can 'Stop and Knock' when the tutor is in or book wherever there is space available on the timetable. Feedback from students constantly shows this as a strength, although time-draining for staff. The demands are often curriculum-based, although pastoral concerns are also addressed. In addition to the open-door culture there is a formal process whereby students can go to their Year Tutor, HND Tutor or to the Hospitality Programmes Manager.

Support for students is also available through the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) scheme that has been running now for four years across the hospitality programmes. This places second year students with a first year group in a timetabled slot to facilitate learning skills and acclimatisation to HE. Moreover, a personal development website (PDP) has recently been designed which engages students with the notion and skills of reflection, supported by structured and systematic tutor contact (see Gush article, LINK 15).

## Justification

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The research raised a number of justifications for having a formal personal tutoring system in place. However, these would need to be balanced against the cost in staff resources, both in setting up and in running such an initiative. Key areas for justification are:

- Personal contact before a crisis

Students frequently do not attend tutorials voluntarily until too late. Having a personal contact and a friendly face can often alleviate a crisis.

- Fostering a sense of 'belonging' and the establishment of a 'friendship group'

Students leaving home and coming to any HEI are often alone, nervous, unsure and really want to belong. Having tutor groups gives that identity very early on. Our research found that group identity was formed in induction week. It was also found that each group formed a very quick bond with the tutor that they had looking after them in induction week.

- Small-scale discussion forum and an ability to feed back directly to staff

Having tutorials in groups rather than one-to-one enables a whole variety of discussions to ensue. These types of fringe discussion either did not take place or used up seminar time in timetabled subjects. Although students use PAL time for small-scale discussion, staff are not present at these sessions and therefore feedback can be misinterpreted.

- 'Head on' approach to communicate issues and goal setting

Having access to small groups of students, or individuals outside of the normal communication forms of notice boards and emails, allows for a much more personalised approach to motivating students appropriately.

- Support student self-management

Self-management is an area of weakness in the first year and research has found that students need to be encouraged to self-manage their new found freedom. They miss the teacher/parent discipline that they have had up to that point in time. Attaining self management is a gradual process that can also be encouraged through attendance monitoring and follow up of weaknesses in these areas.

- Support for skills gaps from formative feedback

Giving formative feedback and then enabling students to reflect on their learning will give students the opportunity to find gaps in their skills and knowledge. The PDP framework enables students to become more effective, independent and confident self-directed learners. With support in reflecting on skills gaps and then helping the students set objectives to fill the gaps, students will be kept on track.

- Cheaper to retain than recruit

This is perhaps the strongest justification of all. Increasing retention of students across the hospitality courses is paramount.

## The Bournemouth University approach

Next academic year we intend to:

1. Target ambition before arrival with 'Stepping Stones'

Stepping Stones is a web-based resource that students are encouraged to access as soon as they accept their place at Bournemouth University. They immediately become part of our community and we attempt to remove any trepidation they might have before arriving at the start of the academic year.

2. Develop a culture of learning and sense of community by piloting the curriculum model of personalised tutoring

In practice this will mean that five committed members of the First Year Team will be personal tutors to a seminar group of 16-18 students. There is much discussion whether all tutors should be personal tutors, so sharing the burden, or if targeted individuals who are committed are a better choice. We have gone for the latter. These tutors will nurture and take the students through induction week and

thereafter meet the group of students once every five weeks. These sessions will be structured, embedded in a first year unit (and therefore count as hours) and follow the set framework of:

- Cultural/administration
- Personal
- Academic
- Employment/real working environment/HAVE
- Career/placement

Having this structured delivery by the personal tutor will enable both a sense of community within the group and a feeling of identity, as well as building a culture of learning from day one. PDP is explicit within this framework.

In order to ensure the success of the project, research has shown that personal tutors need support. The staff will meet on a regular basis and be supported by the Programme Leader. Resource support is being given through both contact time for tutors and some staff development. In other institutions, resources that appear to be provided vary from: little through to extensive contact time; staff development time; organisational time and administrative support.

3. Retention of present culture of open-door 'Stop and Knock' tutorial support

The research carried out showed that students liked the opportunity to go to who they wanted to, when they wanted to, and whilst this was often the first tutor they were given, this was not always the case.

Required staff development for personal tutors has been identified and is needed to cover the following areas:

- Support
- Training
- Commitment
- Codes of conduct/ boundaries
- Consistency of experience

## The Future

As the title of this piece clearly shows, this is support for first years only, at present. It should be noted though that an additional finding from the research was fear of moving into Year 2 and losing the PAL support network. Moving the tutoring system into Year 2 (level 1) and onwards will be investigated as this first year's pilot takes place. The open-door policy appears to work well at Years 2, 3 and 4, and the retention level is now very high, being well above both the School and University average.

Further research in 2006 will build on previous findings within the School and provide a robust holistic evaluation of personalised tutoring. Evidence-based practice will subsequently form a framework for debate for the University as a whole.

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# Not drowning but waving: supporting resit students at Oxford Brookes

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It's the classic – the guy on the riverbank, leaping into the current to drag drowning people to safety, and wishing he had time to wade upstream and see why these people are falling or who is pushing them in ....

So it goes with failing students. Non-completion of university is clearly a complex issue (McLaughlin and Sutton, 2005), but the link between poor performance in the first year and students withdrawing feeling academically inadequate is well established (see for example Benn, 1995). So while 'failure' is a composite, it manifests itself in a string of individual failed modules. This is why we decided to 'wade upstream' and explore whether simple interventions to support students who had been awarded resits would improve resit pass rates on specific modules.

The pilot proposed had the greatest take-up in the Law field at Oxford Brookes. Previously, tutors would discuss a student's performance or exam paper with them, if the student approached them. Very few did – perhaps because students who had failed did not want to engage in the potentially embarrassing ordeal of going through a poor paper with their tutor, no matter how supportive that tutor might intend to be. For this project, we decided to continue with existing practice for most law modules but to select representative modules from both Stage 1 (first year) and Stage 2 (second and third years) in which we would offer additional support.

## The impact of guidance for students resitting basic (Stage 1) modules

Four basic law modules are assessed in semester 2. Three of these modules must be passed by students who want to become solicitors or barristers. We decided to offer greater support in just one of these three modules (Contract Law) so that we could compare the performance of resit students in that module with the performance of resit students in the other two modules (Constitutional Law and Tort).

All students who were awarded a resit in Contract Law were emailed, on the day the exam results were announced, with guidance on the paper they had failed. The guidance was in two parts:

- generic feedback detailing common mistakes and identifying what the examiner was looking for in each question;
- details of what they had done wrong, as an individual, in their examination and how they could improve.

Students were alerted to this email on their Personal Information Portal (PIP) since this is how students access their results.

	Students taking module*	Students passing the module (at first attempt)	Students failing the module but awarded a resit	Students failing the module and not awarded a resit
Contract	178	140 (79%)	22 (12%)	16 (9%)
Constitutional Law	169	124 (73%)	25 (15%)	20 (12%)
Tort	130	104 (80%)	16 (12%)	10 (8%)

**Table A** Students awarded and not awarded resits in Stage 1 law modules, Semester 2, 2004/05

There were fewer resit students than had been anticipated following improved results in basic Law modules, with the introduction of semesters in September 2005. This lessened the workload of those involved in writing individualised feedback, but meant that the number of students involved in the pilot was smaller than expected. Nevertheless the apparent impact of the intervention is clear (see below).

	Students awarded a resit*	Students sitting the resit	Students awarded a resit who passed	% of students sitting the resit who passed
Contract Law WITH additional guidance	22	16 (73%)	8 (36%)	50%
Constitutional Law and Tort WITHOUT additional guidance	41	26 (63%)	10 (24%)	38%

**Table B** Outcomes of resits with and without additional guidance in Stage 1 law modules, Semester 2, 2004/05

In Contract Law, a markedly higher percentage of students took the resit – 73% as against 63% in the other modules. It seems, however, that the guidance not only encouraged students to attempt the resit, but also appears to be linked to better performance in the resit – 50% of Contract resit students passed on their second attempt as against 38% of resit students taking the other two modules.

Overall, over a third of students awarded a resit in Contract Law passed, whereas less than a quarter of those offered resits passed the other two modules.

## The impact of guidance for students resitting advanced (Stage 2) modules

A similar experiment was undertaken in relation to advanced law modules. Two advanced law modules were chosen to test whether a greater level of resit support would bring dividends. The modules selected were Civil Liberties and Human Rights (one of four advanced modules which must be passed by students wanting to qualify as solicitors or barristers) and Crime and Society, (the largest Stage 2 law module not required for a qualifying law degree).

	Students awarded a resit*	Students sitting the resit	Students awarded a resit who passed	% of students sitting the resit who passed
WITH additional guidance given (CL&HR + C&S)	7	6 (86%)	6 (86%)	100%
WITHOUT additional guidance (Total of 7 modules)	38	27 (71%)	16 (42%)	59%

**Table C** Outcomes of resits in advanced law modules, with and without additional guidance, Semester 2, 2004/05

Both the percentage of students attempting the resit and the resit pass rates for the advanced modules were higher than for the basic modules. Again, there appeared to be a link between additional guidance and higher resit attendance and pass rates.

The difference between an 86% pass rate and a 42% pass rate appears dramatic, but the sample given guidance (7) was so small that it would be dangerous to rely too heavily on these figures. However, subject to that qualification, the experience with the advanced modules does support the apparent lesson from the basic modules that the extra guidance did seem to lead both to more students attending the resit and more students passing the resit.

## The Impact – Overview

	Students awarded a resit*	Students sitting the resit	Students awarded a resit who passed	% of students sitting the resit who passed
All law modules WITH additional guidance (3 modules)	29	22 (76%)	14 (48%)	64%
All law modules WITHOUT additional guidance (9 modules)	79	53 (67%)	26 (33%)	49%

**Table D** The impact of guidance for students resitting exams across the law field, Semester 2, 2004/05

These results cannot be viewed as conclusive: the number of resit students is small and the experiment has only been conducted in one semester. However, the indications are very positive. The individual contact with students is associated with a marked increase both in the number of students attempting the resit and a marked improvement in their performance.

The timing of the advice also seems successful. Most students access their results through PIP. Having a message displayed on their PIP page on the day stating that they have been emailed by their module leader appears to be a simple but effective means of encouraging them to check their university email.

The email messages sent to students also invited them to contact the module leader for further guidance – but no students took up this option. This may be because the timing of the summer resits (in July) meant that students had returned home and were no longer around Oxford, but we had anticipated that some students would engage in email discussions with staff. The fact that they did not may be a testament to the comprehensive nature of the advice given or may simply indicate that students who are awarded resits are not generally in close communication with the teaching staff.

This intervention is, however, costly in staff time. Specific advice for each student takes time to prepare, especially on modules with large numbers of resit students. Our experience was that writing the advice took about 30 minutes per student, including time for writing the feedback and emailing. Funding from Upgrade (a central University service) was available to recompense staff for the time involved in preparing the guidance as a one-off pump-priming measure. However, if the scheme is rolled out across additional fields in the University, provision for the extra work involved will have to be made.

It is tempting to think that a less time-intensive approach might be adopted, offering only generic advice. However, it may well be that the personalised guidance is one of the reasons for the apparent success of the intervention – not only because the advice was clearly relevant to that particular student, but also because it gave an implicit message to the student that we cared about them as an individual. This in itself may have helped the student to engage/re-engage with the module. Two students did email and both expressed gratitude for the advice – as both passed the resit, presumably it was of use!

In considering the costs of supporting resit students, the costs to the University of not supporting them needs to be taken into account. Students who retake modules swell lecture and seminar numbers, produce work that needs to be marked and so on. The cost of failure to the individual student is more obvious: the financial cost of having to extend their period of study; the negative impact of (re)taking an additional module or modules on their attainment in other modules, with potential implications for their final degree classification – another factor that could affect university league table positions.

There do seem to be strong arguments for the University to find the resources to fund a continued exploration of strategies to support resit students, at least to fund a larger trial project to see if the results and approaches trialled in Law can be replicated in future years and in other disciplines. The next phase of development must be supported by fuller data collection and analysis in order to: identify the profile of students who fail, or scrape passes, tracking them back to their entry qualifications; to identify the critical point at which a series of individual module failures triggers wholesale failure and drop-out; and to build all this into a system for identifying vulnerable students in advance of failure and exploring ways of supporting them earlier in the process. In short, to ensure that the University does more than fish bodies from the river, and commits to wading upstream to find out what is happening on the bridge.

In all tables: \* All figures exclude medical resits

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# Case study: Supporting the development of data handling and analysis using SPSS in Sports Science

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## Background and rationale

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Data handling and analysis skills are an essential component of all degree schemes in Sports and Exercise Science. First year students in Sports Science at the University of Essex follow several modules that introduce the fundamental principles of statistical analysis and related software used to perform the analysis. Practical work in Year 2 has been designed to develop the students' data collection, handling and analysis skills in an applied sports science environment. However, it was recognised that students would benefit from the provision of further learning resources to support their development in this area. The principle objective of the project was to develop an effective, sport and exercise science orientated, online learning package for statistics.

The learning resource was required to address each of the following areas:

- Provide online tutorial support for how to use SPSS software
- Assist students with understanding of appropriate test selection, execution and with the interpretation of readouts
- Provide instant formative assessment and feedback to students

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## Design and implementation of the 'Statistics for Sports Science' package

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Initially, it was determined that students required basic guidelines on using the software package (SPSS). The 'how to use SPSS' software section

was designed and includes information on various topics such as defining variables and entering and importing data.

Further to this, students also required assistance with selecting the correct test to use for the research project they were designing or data they had collected from a practical experiment. This section of the resource covers the following areas:

- What type of data do I have?
- How does my hypothesis affect my test?
- How does my project design affect my test?
- Tables to determine the test

A review was undertaken to identify the key statistical tests for data analysis used by undergraduates in Sports Science. Statistical tests were selected and grouped according to whether they were parametric or non-parametric based tests. From this, a databank of problems was developed and the resource covers topics such as Mann-Whitney tests, t-tests and analysis of variance.

The problems presented in the learning resource are categorised according to the type of statistical test. Students are given an explanation of the statistical test and the conditions required for the use of the test. A worked example is then presented, as shown in figure 1, and is followed by an annotated version of the output from SPSS, as shown in figure 2. Students had previously expressed difficulty interpreting the results produced in SPSS and therefore this section was specifically designed to assist with the interpretation of the analysis. Students are then able to have a go at a similar analysis using a different set of data. An annotated SPSS output for the data is provided for them to compare with their results and is used to provide further guidance on understanding the results and instant feedback on their own analysis.

Other sections in the learning resource include advice on producing simple graphs using SPSS, for example scatterplots and bar charts, and also a 'top tips' section related to research design and scientific writing skills, with particular reference to writing a results section.

WebCT software was selected to support the learning resources. The advantages of the virtual learning environment offered by WebCT for the project are that it offers facilities such as easy development of content categories, glossary development, self-tests and email facilities. Undergraduate students receive instruction in the use of this resource at the start of their second year. Thereafter, it acts as a self-directed learning, revision and self-assessment resource accessed from the University of Essex student portal.

## Does it work and what do the students think?

The benefits of the learning resource to the students include:

- Allowing students an opportunity to examine their own and model data sets and to produce summary statistics for interpretation
- Enabling students to more quickly assess and address their own learning needs
- Providing students with a revision tool so that they can review how to perform statistical tests that are required for the completion of coursework.

In addition to the improved support for independent student learning, one of the key benefits for staff is the reduced workload related to student queries – students now use the resource as their first port of call before seeking further assistance from staff.

Students took part in a course survey following their introduction to the resource package and from the survey it was found that:

- Over 94% of the students strongly agreed or agreed that the worked examples were useful and easy to follow
- 86% of the students strongly agreed or agreed that the SPSS outputs were clearly explained and that they had gained a better understanding of the results produced by SPSS
- 94% of students strongly agreed or agreed that overall the WebCT Statistics for Sports Science package was successful in meeting its aims and objectives and students felt they had a better understanding of SPSS, as a result of using the resource

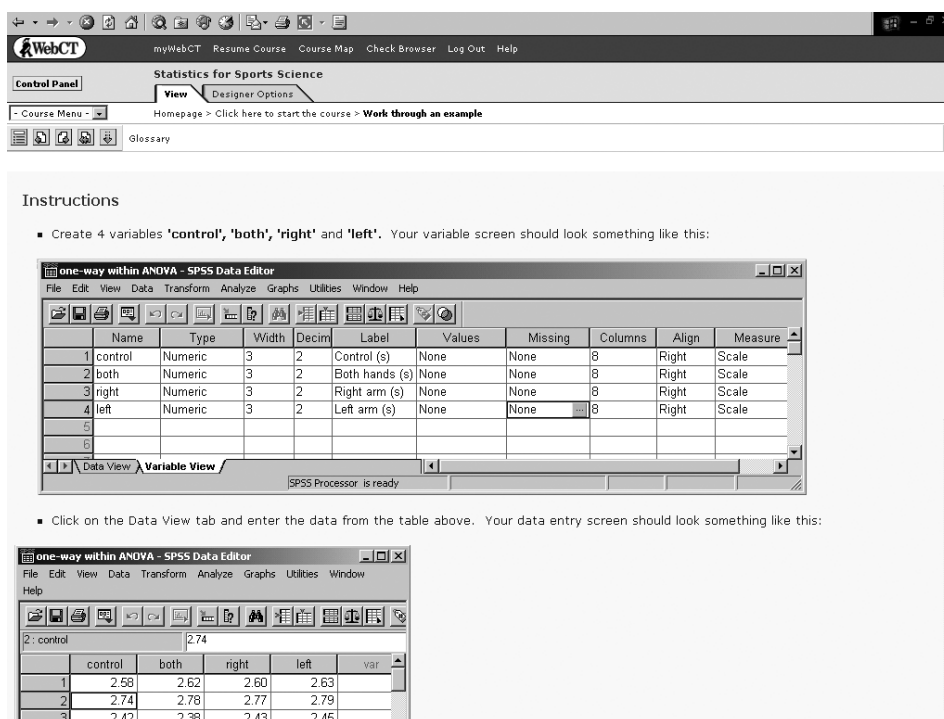


Figure 1 Worked example of a statistical test.

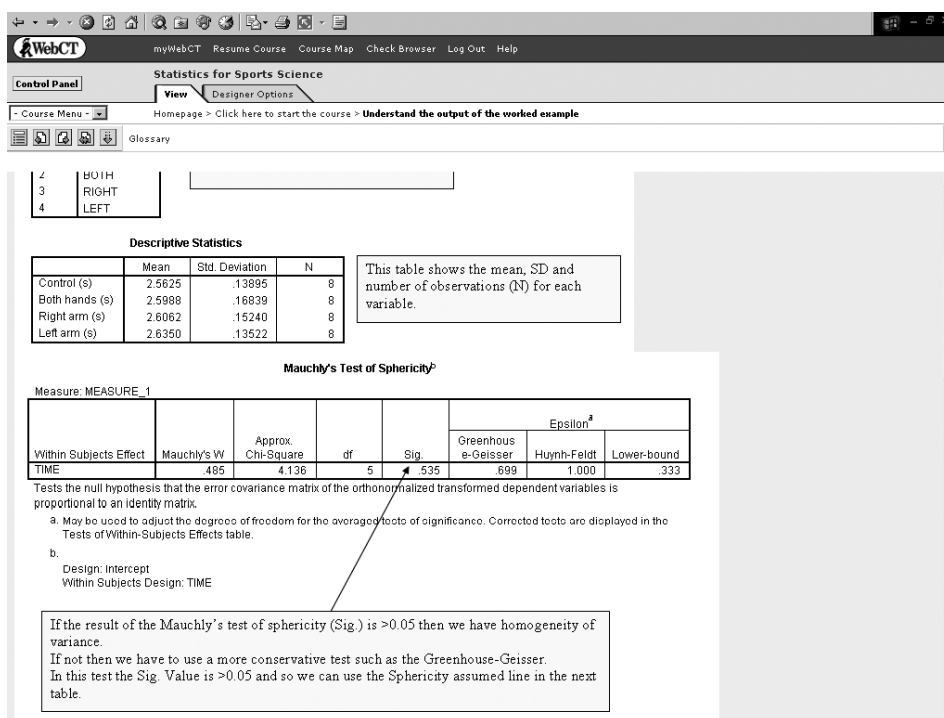


Figure 2 Annotated SPSS output.

- All students surveyed agreed that it was a useful tool and expected to use the resource again when they required further help with statistics

The comments received from the students were also very positive:

*"The instructions were quite easy to understand, which I found very useful because statistical testing can easily become complicated and difficult."*

*"Easy to use, will definitely be using a lot!!"*

"I think this is a brilliant idea, I can see that a lot of hard work has gone into it, but I'm sure this will increase peoples grades and boost their confidence in stats etc."

"I found this very useful and it will help me with my coursework"

## Further developments

The authors are currently working on the delivery of more formative assessment within the learning resource that will allow students to download larger example data sets for analysis. In the future it is also intended to produce online tutorials delivered as streaming video that integrate animated screen capture and voice-over. These tutorials will seek to explain fundamental concepts in statistical analysis in a more intuitive and appealing way.

## Accompanying material

The authors would like to invite others interested in using this resource to contact them directly ([cangus@essex.ac.uk](mailto:cangus@essex.ac.uk)). It is felt that with wider dissemination of the resource, ideas could be shared among users and this could contribute to the further development of the resource package. ■

# 'We have a story to tell' FDTL 5 Meta Project: From PDP to CPD

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## Introduction

This article highlights a current FDTL Phase 5 Project which is concerned with reflective thinking (and personal development planning), deep learning and meta-cognition, and how we can maximise students' achievement in experiential learning through peer support. A key element of the project's work is how we develop the skills of reflective thinking and the students' ability to provide support to others, through the use of narrative (storytelling).

The £250,000 three-year project is based at University of Gloucestershire and its partner, Manchester Metropolitan University, across the subjects of hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism. We have used the term 'experiential learning' rather than the more common terms 'work-based' and 'work-related learning' because of the nature of some of the contexts in both Universities. Indeed, the aim of the project is to develop approaches to encourage reflection and meta-cognition in three distinct models:

- 12 month paid industrial placements
- Volunteering within the local community
- Engagement in social enterprise projects

## Experiential learning and reflective thinking

Each of these contexts provides a potentially rich environment for students to become aware of their learning processes and to reflect critically on their experiences. Reflection provides the link and the key to deep learning in the range of experiences addressed by the project. It is reflective thinking which leads to changed behaviour, as Moon (2004a:105) confirms:

*"Experience is not quite the same thing as learning from experience".*

We know that the ability to reflect is becoming increasingly important to employers (Eraut 1994, Gray 2001), but the ability to really understand one's strengths and weaknesses, and how we engage effectively in personal and career development, is a vital competency in the modern, dynamic and rapidly shifting world of work. Indeed, Moon (2004b: 7) suggests that:

*"Students who achieve well are more often students who are aware of their own learning processes".*

The project is concerned not just with facilitating deep learning through reflections on content (cognitive skills), but with the reflective process itself, focusing on the student's ability to learn (meta-cognitive skill) and the notion of the reflective, affective learner.

*"Undergraduate courses include cognitive and skill based elements but rarely do they comprise a meta-cognitive, that is affective, element" (Hinett 2003: 5).*

This represents a key challenge for the project, and the main vehicle for its encouragement is a constructivist approach, using self-regulated strategies. The emphasis is on student learning in which students construct their own meaning of the knowledge they are acquiring.

The project also acknowledges the social context of learning, especially in the work-place, and a second key dimension is the use of peer support from students. The project takes the view that a constructivist approach (Biggs 2003) is essential in achieving deep learning, but that a socio-constructivist approach, as promoted by

Boud et al (1993), can be even more effective. Instead of learning and development occurring in an isolated and individual way, the support and involvement of peers ensures that the learning becomes shared, more meaningful, more likely and therefore socio-constructivist.

## Peer-supported learning

A central theme of this project, therefore, is the idea of students helping each other to learn. Whatever it is called, 'helping' is a growing phenomenon (Garvey 2004:6). One such form of 'help' is mentoring. Anderson cited in Alred and Garvey (2000:261) defines mentoring as:

*"A nurturing process in which a more skilled or experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development".*

Mentoring is often relevant when learners are making transitions at key points in their lives. Garvey suggests that the agenda is the mentee's, although it should be emphasised that, from the perspective of the Meta Project, both mentor and mentee will be engaged in the reflective learning process and the outcomes of that process.

In dealing with supporting students' placement and volunteering contexts, there is a case for providing peer support at key points in the process such as settling into the workplace and being prepared to work in 'communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger 1991:29). The peer support process can provide a safe environment for mentees to discuss their concerns; to know that they can learn from mistakes; and to link this process and these 'trigger points' to the skills of reflection and deep learning. Indeed, in many respects, this involves identifying and solving problems.

## The role of 'problem solving' within mentoring and reflection

For the purposes of the Meta Project, these problems can be identified as 'trigger points' or critical incidents. Observing how placement students learn to solve problems during these 'trigger points' could provide evidence of the added value of peer support processes, and point to the qualities we need to develop in the mentors. Examples may include: patience; confidentiality; timeliness; understanding; determination to help; non-judgement and sensitivity.

In order to provide a sharp focus for the peer support aspects of the Meta Project, we could consider the premise of Barnett (1995:46) that:

- *"The most effective mentors are those who consciously move their protégés from dependent, novice problem solvers to autonomous, expert problem solvers, and,*
- *Reflection is the catalyst for developing protégés' autonomy and expertise in problem solving."*

A key way of encouraging this is through the use of storytelling, and the remainder of this article explains how the project is using this form of reflective thinking to help students identify and solve problems and challenges, and to work with a more experienced student as a catalyst.

## Storytelling

The project has recently begun the process of working with students to develop their skills of peer-supported learning in order to support less experienced peers. The process has incorporated the integration of the elements of the project outlined in the background:

1. With a group of Level 3 post-placement volunteers we have facilitated the development of their reflective thinking skills (in relation to their twelve month placement)
2. We have also started to develop their skills of support for a large group of Level 2 pre-placement students (who embark on a twelve month placement in semester two of the second year)

The aspects we would like to highlight for the purposes of this article are the use of storytelling for enhancing the skill of reflection and mentoring. Inevitably, we have had to summarise the approach and exercises adopted, and to largely eschew reference to the underpinning theories and principles.

The project team ran sessions in October and November 2005 for the Level 3 volunteers.

### Session 1

The first session introduced the students to storytelling as a method for learning about each other and themselves and as an innovative approach to personal development including:

- Why storytelling;
- Its significance / value to our lives;
- Its use in the context of the project;

- Its use in organisations and across the world; and
- A series of fun and light hearted exercises to encourage participants to think about the value of storytelling in everyday life.

In the first exercise, participants were asked to work independently and write a brief sentence which explained a situation where storytelling had created a memory or had an impact on their life. This was designed to illustrate the vast range of storytelling that exists in everyday life and how it is often emotionally charged.

The second involved what we called 'jump starts' and its purpose was to help students, working in pairs, generate stories in relation to their industrial placement experiences.

In the third exercise, called 'postcard stories', students were asked to focus on their recent work experience and to think about critical moments which most enhanced and most hindered their learning. They wrote these stories down on postcards which were collected by the project team at the end.

### Session 2

This focused on telling and developing a placement story, with emphasis on reflective writing and the development of skills in listening and questioning techniques. It involved exploring students' industrial practice realities and how the sharing of stories could also illustrate which attributes and values were considered important in particular contexts. It also demonstrated how listening to stories that reveal how experienced practitioners' (in this instance industrial placement students) work in complex situations can provide insights into practice realities, as appropriate responses are shared and the skills needed are identified (see McDrury and Alterio, 2003). It also returned to the postcard stories to encourage viewing situations from two perspectives.

### Session 3

Introducing the art of storytelling to promote the use and development of learning logs for pre placement students, the purpose was to:

- Introduce pre-placement students to the process and skill of reflective writing, through listening to placement stories developed and recounted by post-placement students
- Initiate a network for placement students to provide peer support during the placement experience

The session focused on sharing placement experiences. This represented the first opportunity for the post-placement students to engage with the pre-placement students within their placement briefing, and to help the latter begin the process of storytelling and reflective learning. Indeed, an early exercise (more 'jump starts') was to form the first entry into the learning log which the student would maintain throughout the placement. Its purpose was to help generate stories – role play on the theme of looking for placement.

Further activities included sharing stories (to enable pre-placement students to listen to two post-placement students' reflections on aspects of their placement experiences the previous year); a speed-dating type of meeting in order to enable Meta students to network with pre-placement students in a less formal way; and a concluding exercise in which pre-placement students wrote a 'fresh' postcard (maximum 50 words) to the placement unit or a preferred tutor recording their reflections on the day's session.

The above represents a distillation of the sessions and the planned activities. The project is very keen to work with other institutions that may be involved in placement and volunteering opportunities for students, or, indeed, those institutions that may be thinking of developing these forms of learning.

If you are interested in finding out more about the approaches, or indeed, any aspect of the Meta Project, then please contact [swatkins@glos.ac.uk](mailto:swatkins@glos.ac.uk).

See [Link 11](#), page 14–15 for further details of FDTL Phase 5

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# BASES Workshop in Sport and Exercise Sciences (in association with the Network)

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## Portfolios and Personal Development Planning in Sport and Exercise Sciences

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University of Essex, 31 March 2006

The workshop is targeted at academics and administrators with an interest in developing PDP programmes and/or using portfolios to support learning.

This will be a hands-on session to enable delegates to evaluate two platforms for the construction of learning portfolios (PebblePad and WebCT) in the context of Personal Development Planning (PDP) for sport and exercise science (and related) students. We will also explore ways of engaging students with the process of PDP, mechanisms for incorporating assessment, and evidence collection/reflective practice for assisting students to gain coaching qualifications.

Cost: £100 (or £75 for BASES members)

[www.bases.org.uk/newsite/workshopbooknow.asp?dbtSearchFor=Workshop](http://www.bases.org.uk/newsite/workshopbooknow.asp?dbtSearchFor=Workshop) ■

# Supporting Students on a Sport and Exercise Science Placement

Keith Stokes, University of Bath

## Introduction

A challenge in higher education provision is striking the balance between underlying theory and opportunities to put knowledge into practice. One approach to tackle this is to incorporate work-based learning into programmes through thick, thin or integrated sandwich modes of study. Over two thirds of employers regard sandwich placements during university studies, or 'other relevant work experience', as important criteria for employing graduates (Mason *et al*, 2003).

The University of Bath is committed to supporting placements and, as part of the BSc (Hons) Sport and Exercise Science, students have the opportunity to follow a thick sandwich programme of study, whereby they carry out an industrial placement between their second and final year. A placement can form a significant contribution to a student's personal and professional development, as well as enhancing the vocational relevance of their undergraduate studies. This appears to be attractive to students and between half and two thirds of students follow this mode of study. However, those students who choose not to carry out a placement as part of their programme also gain benefit, via contacts between those developing and delivering the programme and partners in the wider field of sport and exercise science. In this way placements help to ensure that the curriculum is relevant and meets the needs of prospective employers.

For the student, a placement offers an unrivalled opportunity to 'learn by doing' and can provide practical experience in the application of knowledge gained at the University. Examples of the benefits to students include:

- the opportunity to make sense of the theory;
- providing inspiration for final year dissertations;
- the development of transferable/key skills (eg teamwork, communication, planning, problem solving, working under pressure and decision making);
- the opportunity to explore possible career paths.

A wide range of placement opportunities are offered, including within professional sports teams, research laboratories, GP referral schemes, sports institutes and commercial organisations. Students develop job-specific skills through the placement but emphasis is on the experience, in addition to the technical skills that will be developed. The role of University staff is to facilitate reflective practice on the part of the student. This approach recognises the fact that some students will not seek employment in an area related to their undergraduate degree programme, and highlights the development of transferable skills.

## Supporting students through the placement process

### Preparing for a placement

It is recognised that students who are well-prepared for their placement are likely to learn more and to make better employees (Department for Education and Skills, 2002). It is important to state clearly the responsibilities that the students themselves have for managing their own placements, as well as being clear about the support that they can expect from the University. This information is provided in a Placement Handbook incorporating:

- why a placement is valuable;
- finding a placement;
- managing a placement (including issues of contracts, holidays, tax, work permits/visas, finances etc.);

- health and safety at work;
- what to do if there is a problem;
- the requirements in terms of assessment.

When students are making decisions about what placement to do, an excellent source of information is those students currently on placement. To facilitate interaction between these two groups of students, a Placement Conference is held at the end of the first semester. This gives those students who are on placement a chance to return to the University, meet with their peers, speak with staff and provide useful information about their placement experiences to those going on placement the following year. Unfortunately, it is often not possible for students working overseas to return to these events. However, they still contribute by submitting a poster presentation or a video presentation for display at the conference.

Subsequently, they can be contacted by those interested in their placement. A web page also provides a list of current placements, with testimonials from the students and links to placement organisations' web pages. In addition to these sources of information, one-on-one meetings between the placement tutor and students trying to find a placement help to identify placements that meet the needs of each student.

Whilst it is ultimately the student's responsibility to secure a placement, the University has a list of organisations that have supported placements for a number of years. Alternatively, students can find their own placement with support from the placement tutor (who must deem the placement to be appropriate in terms of congruence with the programme and on-site supervision). As part of this process it is vital that health and safety and insurance requirements are met. The University has a clear policy for all placements with regard to these issues. Before departing for their placement, students are also briefed on generic aspects of health and safety at work.

### During the placement

A major challenge associated with managing placements is to communicate effectively with students whilst they are away from the University. Students on placement remain under the duty of care of the University and still require support for their learning. In addition, students must be able to identify that the placement year is an integral part of the degree programme rather than a 'bolt-on' extra.

In order to provide continuity of support on our programme, students on placement remain assigned to their personal tutors. It is emphasised that students should keep their tutors updated regarding their placement experiences. Those students working in the UK are also visited at least once by their personal tutor. This visit allows tutors to check on the students' welfare, to ascertain whether the work being carried out is appropriate and to identify any concerns that the student or the employer may have. Students attending the Placement Conference have a further opportunity to meet with their tutor and discuss progress. However, the obvious attraction of overseas placements makes supporting all students on placement more challenging.

Virtual learning environments (VLE) provide a useful tool for the effective support of students on placement. At the University, a VLE is used to provide a source of information for students, an interface for sharing experiences and a means by which contact between staff and students can be maintained. In this way a sense of community is generated, even though students are dispersed across the globe. Furthermore, features such as shared and secure file stores allow the submission of documents for peer feedback or for assessment.

We require students on placement to submit a series of assignments related to their placement experiences, including:

- an introduction to the placement organisation;
- a skills assessment (technical and transferable skills);
- a learning plan (objectives and action plan);
- a development record;
- an updated curriculum vitae.

Students are grouped according to their tutor and each assignment is placed in a shared file store for comment from peers in this group, providing an opportunity for shared experience.

## Integrating students back into full-time study

There is no formal assessment of the placement as it does not contribute to the final degree classification, but students are required to submit the portfolio of assignments described above. This is reviewed by their tutor and marked on a criterion basis. There is then an opportunity for students to meet with their tutor to discuss their placement experience, with a focus on development of their CV

and future skills development. This is also an opportunity for the tutor to ensure that the student is prepared for the demands of their final year of study.

## The students' view

Through careful selection of appropriate placements, the majority of students who complete a placement have a fantastic experience. A welcome additional benefit to some graduates has been that they have been employed by the organisation at which they did their placement. Typical sound bites from students describing their placement experiences include:

*"...my placement has given me a crucial foot in the door for future career opportunities in sport"*

*"I have greatly increased my technical ability...as well as developing personal skills such as confidence and problem solving"*

*"...my lab skills have improved both in proficiency and range and I have greater depth of understanding"*

*"I am more organised, independent and able to think critically"*

*"The placement ... is an amazing experience, and has provided us with an ideal opportunity to work with world class fitness and coaching professionals"*

## Summary

We are fortunate at the University of Bath to have a relatively small cohort of students, all of whom are highly motivated. Despite this, the challenges of managing placements are not inconsiderable. The model of support for students on placement presented is one example of how to tackle some of these challenges. We view the role of the tutor in the placement process as facilitating the development of reflective practice and planning of future learning. Our goal is that the support offered helps the students to recognise the value of the placement, within the context of their programme of study.

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# Pedagogic Research and Development Day 28 April 2006

The 2006 Pedagogic Research and Development Day will be held on Friday 28th April at the University of Worcester – this day provides an excellent opportunity to meet others interested in learning, teaching and assessment, and to find out more about current activity in this area.

As we go to press, we have received confirmation of some of the workshops we hope to run at this event.

The workshops, mostly arising from projects funded by the Hospitality Leisure Sport and Tourism Subject Network from the Pedagogic Research and Development Fund in Round 5, 2004/05, will cover such varied themes as:

- the use of story-telling in reflective learning
- student motivational attitudes and how these relate to performance
- the relationship of tutors to diversity and inclusion
- an investigation into problem-based learning's impact upon learner autonomy and academic achievement

Over lunch, there will be an opportunity to see posters from the FDTL5 Projects related to HLST, and a chance to talk to the teams involved in implementing the projects. ■

# Students assisting in their own retention?

**Heather Hughes** and **Marie Lawson**, Department of Tourism and Recreation, University of Lincoln

A retention strategy can be seen as an indication of how far we, as staff, are prepared to go in order to accommodate the needs of our diverse student population. It is a statement, in other words, of how flexible we are in tailoring our practice to students' needs and expectations.

Across the HE sector, there are growing calls to adopt such a stance. And though it sounds like the right thing to do in terms of current pedagogical thinking, it is not easy. It assumes for a start that we know a lot about our students' needs and expectations, what conditions predispose them to success, and why they may struggle or, worse, withdraw or fail.

It also assumes that 'flexibility' is a straightforward, uncontested notion, which in reality it is not. It covers virtually every area of our role as educators – curriculum content, modes of delivery, assessment, academic support, skills support, special needs support – all of which are subject to vigorous debate about how best to design and implement new approaches. Moreover, 'flexible-rich' departments often have to function in institutional environments that are rigid or outdated in their procedures and attitudes, with compromising results.

So where, assuming that the will to be flexible exists, does one begin? In our department (Tourism and Recreation), we have begun by focusing on increasing our knowledge base about our students – a task that becomes more explicitly necessary with an ageing staff population. Some information is of course plainly obvious – the gender balance, for example – but we need to examine the implications. For example, students on our Tourism degrees are overwhelmingly female. Research coming out of projects such as the Students Online Learning Experiences (SOLE) has pointed to the fact that women students tend to be less confident about using Virtual Learning Environments than men, and this is a potential difficulty for those staff members committed to exploring VLEs for more 'flexible' course delivery and assessment. It means we have to make specific attempts to try to build women's confidence.

We know, too, that we have a large number of European students on exchange programmes, some of whose English is highly polished, but some of whom struggle to cope. We are in the process of devising a

new approach to English as a language of study (alongside other options such as Spanish, French and German) as a way of addressing this need.

Other information which we believe is central to any strategy for student 'achievement' – is this not a better term than 'retention', which carries connotations either of something undesirable, as in 'water retention', or of something very minimal? – is not obvious. Are students first-generation in HE? How many are in part-time employment during term time, and for how long every week? How many hours do students estimate they devote per week to their studies? Do they live in halls of residence, digs or at home? Do they come from cities or rural areas? Further, how do such variables correlate with their perceived ability to negotiate the maze of university experiences, especially in their first year?

Since the creation of our Department in 2003, resulting from a merger of Lincoln's Tourism Department and De Montfort's Recreation Department, we have worked actively to put a wide-ranging retention strategy in place.

Important features include:

- a carefully-designed induction programme which has developed over the years largely based on the results from student evaluation;
- a tutor system;
- a 'zero-tolerance' policy on absence from class without explanation, so it is really a 'zero-tolerance' policy on non-communication;
- an active student representative system;
- planned social events through the year;
- encouraging reflection through use of the personal progress file;
- working closely with support departments dealing with special needs.

We have clear policies on accessible and comprehensive year and unit guides, and on feedback arrangements – we can tick a lot of boxes.

Yet, if we examine our efforts so far, there is a missing element: students themselves. Usually, retention is perceived as something we 'do to' students, rather than as something in which they are participants (except, of course, as enrolled students, unaware of our retention designs on them). We might disclose elements of a strategy to students – such as the need to attend classes – and students know that they can discuss any difficulties with their tutor, but we seldom, if ever, make it explicit that a coherent strategy exists to help them through difficult patches and to guide them to a sense of personal achievement. It is even rarer for students to be involved in the process of planning such a strategy, of suggesting what might and certainly will not work, and of taking their own initiatives to improve the quality of Tourism/Recreation student life.

Once one is committed to more active student involvement, the information we discussed at the start becomes more vital than ever. It is a rather large undertaking to gather such information from 300-odd undergraduates. Last year, we successfully applied for a HLST research grant in order to conduct an undergraduate survey and, on the basis of the results, to initiate a series of discussions with students as to how to incorporate them as more active participants in our departmental retention strategy. Our focus has been on first year retention, although the aim is to develop – with the current first year cohort – a continuing strategy at second and third year. While there are certain practices in place for senior students – such as year handbooks, brief induction sessions and discussion forums for students returning from study placements – these need to be incorporated into a more 'joined-up' approach.

We have not fully processed the results of the survey. This will be completed early in 2006 and will form the basis of a series of structured group discussions with students, the aim of which is to have an 'active student' element in our retention strategy in place for the new academic year. In the meantime, less formal discussions with students are underway as to how best to incorporate their interests. Suggestions thus far are the creation of a subject-based student society (with support where necessary from staff), or focusing on ways to promote greater solidarity among class mates, such as forming discussion groups around key readings.

Involving students in this way is not a stealth attempt to shift the responsibility onto their shoulders for a successful retention strategy, or of letting in the old and regrettable 'sink or swim' approach through a back door. Rather, the wealth of information that we are confident will emerge from the survey data, together with active student participation in discussing various means of responding to the realities of student experience, are designed to increase the likelihood of an effective, student-friendly retention strategy.

For more information about the project, see

[www.hlst.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/r5\\_Hughes.html](http://www.hlst.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/r5_Hughes.html) ■

# 2005/06 Student Course Experience Survey

The Student Course Experience Survey is being continued for another year, after positive feedback from participants. The service is offered by the Network, without charge, and is available either on-line or in paper format. It is directed at final year students on Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism courses and aims to uncover information about their perceptions and attitudes towards a whole programme of study, rather than a single year or module/unit.

Each participating school/department receives a confidential report on the responses from their students. The survey also then enables staff at individual institutions to compare the attitudes of their own students with those more generally across the subject areas nationwide.

In order to participate in the survey we only require the specific titles of your courses. If you would like your course to be included in the survey please contact [tchapman@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:tchapman@brookes.ac.uk) ■

## Communication effectiveness – a survey of students' perceptions of information sources

**Jane Cantwell**, University of Gloucestershire and **Scott Fleming**, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff

The mission of the University of Gloucestershire [UoG] is "to create a dynamic and sustainable portfolio of learning opportunities for the communities it serves" (UoG, 2005a:3). In order to achieve this, there is a clear imperative to provide students with "appropriate information, which is accurate and up-to-date" (UoG, 2005b:3). Students receive information in a variety of different ways, but typically these include documentary and electronic sources. One significant challenge, however, has been to make information available to students in a way that is accessible and useful, and hence accessed and used.

During 2005 a survey was conducted amongst Level I students about the sources of information that they consulted in the preparation of assessed coursework, and how valuable they considered that information to be. The participants (N=100) were studying from the portfolio of leisure, tourism and hospitality programmes<sup>1</sup>, and (full-time students) were nearing the end of their second semester of study. The data was gathered during a Human Resource Management module.

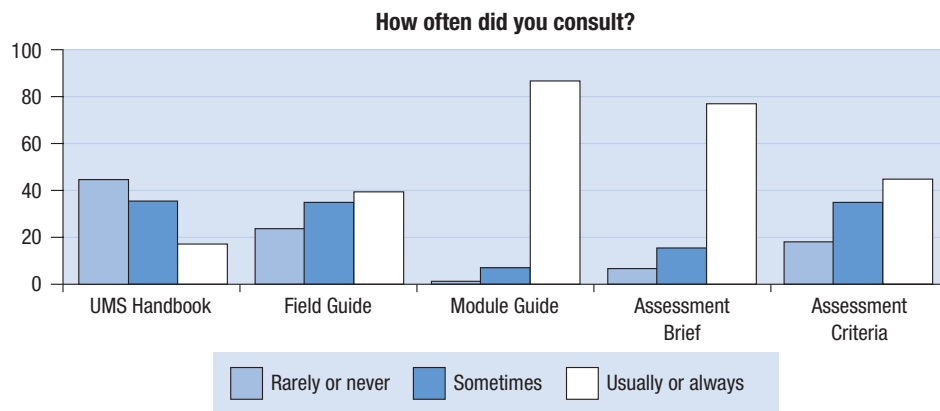
The participants were asked about the following sources of information:

- *Undergraduate Modular Scheme [UMS] Handbook* – the definitive University-wide document. It contained information about the annual calendar, scheme regulations, a glossary of terms, and University regulations for assessment (including 'assessment offences').
- *Field Guide* – the guide to the particular programme of study. Typically, it would have contained information about the school in which the programme of study was based, the members of staff involved, sources of advice / guidance / counselling, research ethics, the relevant module descriptors, and conventions for referencing and bibliographic citation.

- *Module Guide* – the guide that accompanied individual modules. There was a template for its contents and included, amongst other things, descriptive information about the module, its learning outcomes, the learning and teaching methods and schedule (including independent study tasks), indicative resources, and assessment details (in the form of the Assessment Brief and Assessment Criteria).
- *Assessment Brief* – the requirements and arrangements for each assessment task. This would have included a description of the task(s), weighting of the task(s), deadline(s) for submission(s), arrangements for the submission and return of work, and assessment criteria.
- *Assessment Criteria* – the set of descriptors that indicate how effectively the student had met the learning outcomes being assessed for a given assessment task.

<sup>1</sup> These were: Adventure Leisure Management; Events Management; Hospitality Management; International Hospitality Management; International Tourism Management; Leisure and Sports Management; Sports Tourism Management; Tourism Management.

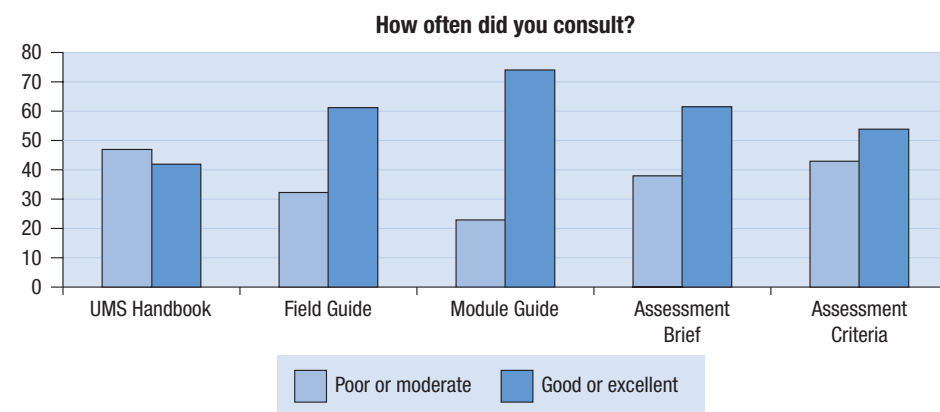
Using a simple questionnaire instrument, respondents were asked to indicate, on a five-point nominal scale, the frequency with which they consulted different sources of information when preparing coursework for assessment [i.e., Never – Rarely – Sometimes – Usually – Always]. They were then asked on a different five-point nominal scale to evaluate the usefulness of the information available to them in each of the sources [i.e., Woeful – Poor – Moderate – Good – Excellent].



There were some very predictable themes that emerged from this set of responses:

- The Module Guide and Assessment Brief were seen as key sources of information for the overwhelming majority of students;
- The Scheme Handbook was not widely consulted (despite containing some important material on 'dishonest means in assessment').

More surprising, though, was the number of students who rarely or never consulted the Assessment Brief or Assessment Criteria. Given that the latter were specifically intended to facilitate transparency of process and expectations, as well as fairness and consistency, this was an important finding.



The data from the second question were not entirely compatible with those from the first. There was, for example, an anomaly between the number of respondents who offered an opinion on the 'usefulness' of the Assessment Criteria and the number who reported never having consulted them. Leaving that aside, however, there are three broad trends:

- 1) None of the documentation was thought by the students to be 'woeful' in terms of usefulness.
- 2) A large proportion of students thought the Field Guide, Module Guide and Assessment Brief were generally useful.
- 3) A large proportion of students thought the Scheme Handbook and the Assessment Criteria were not useful.

The first two of these trends were reassuring, especially as the Module Guides in Leisure, Tourism and Hospitality at UoG were lengthy and detailed documents that went through a process of peer scrutiny and review to ensure that they were as 'useful' to students as possible. The last of the trends, though, was a source of some concern; and the further question that follows logically from it is to establish *why* it is that a large number of students did not find these important documents useful. Indeed, given that so many students consulted the Module Guide it seems even more perplexing that some of them did not consult the Assessment Criteria which were available within it.

In summary, the findings of this survey illustrate some key themes that may require further investigation of students' study patterns and behaviours, and/or a more effective method of conveying information to them. As a principle about the overall effectiveness of supplying information about assessment in a number of different documents there are two contrasting approaches. At the risk of over-simplification they are:

- the 'filofax' approach – where all the information is collated into a single source, but the failure of students to engage with that source is likely to be serious (even calamitous); and
- the 'scatter-gun' approach – where information is available in different sources, but it is possible (even likely) to miss at least *some* of it.

Amongst the documents themselves, all were thought to be useful by a significant proportion of the students who responded. Inevitably, of course, some were considered generally to be more useful than others. Another finding, however, prompts a second, more challenging question to be asked. That is to say, why was it that so many students did not find the same documents useful? And in particular, why was it that almost one fifth of all students never consulted Assessment Criteria, or did so only rarely?

## Acknowledgement

We are grateful to Bridget Osicki for her comments on a draft version of the questionnaire, to Val Dawson for administering the data collection process, and to the students who completed the questionnaires.

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# Research to Investigate Peer Mentoring in UK Higher Education

Roz Phillips, Psychology Department, Stirling University

## Introduction

By the year 2010 the government proposes that 50% of all young people aged 30 years and under will have access to higher education. This has encouraged many widening participation initiatives within UK universities to try and reach the more 'non-traditional' students: students from lower social economic status backgrounds, mature students, etc. At the same time, there are increasing pressures on universities to reduce student dropout, which remains a high concern to all those involved. However, performance statistics indicate a strong relationship between the 'non-traditional' factors; specifically mature, ethnic minority, working class, or part-time students, and withdrawal. These two pressures are thus conflicting. Is it possible that a scheme such as peer mentoring may aid in narrowing the gap?

Peer mentoring (PM) in higher education generally involves senior undergraduates supporting and advising incoming first year undergraduates. In 2003, out of the 100 universities questioned, 35 had PM schemes – only a few were available to all students. At the time, 19 were piloting and most were set up for reasons of widening participation and retention, highlighting the perceived belief in the value of PM. There were also several other peer support schemes running such as: peer assisted learning; nightline (a university based 'Samaritans' run by students for students); 'ambassadors' who act as 'tour guides' during the first weeks; and summer schools aimed specifically at non-traditional students and focusing mainly on the transition to university. So how might these support schemes help to maintain student numbers and benefit the student experience?

Internal evaluations and feedback regarding these schemes are generally highly positive. They may be, however, subject to bias. Only a handful of universities have conducted an objective evaluation of their schemes and the mentoring literature in general is full of methodological flaws. Our own research aimed to address these problems by conducting a series of studies investigating the prevalence and possible benefits of peer mentoring.

Most counsellors working within universities will acknowledge that students are especially vulnerable at the start of their courses; some would say that the first few days of university are critical (Earwaker, 1992). Although the transition to university is recognised as a naturally occurring change, it is still considered a challenge at the emotional and social level, as well as the academic level (Chickering, 1969). Much of the research into student transition has concentrated on homesickness and has identified a high proportion of males and females (60%) suffering from homesickness symptoms within the first few weeks of university (see Van Tilburg, 1996, for further details).

Some researchers have gone so far as to say that nearly all students arriving at university for the first time, irrespective of living situation (home vs. residential), show a rise in psychological disturbance, particularly depression and obsessionality (Fisher, 1994). This increase in mental ill health is possibly due to the lack of certainty adjusting to university and change in the support network and lifestyle. A peer mentor would be able to provide a friendly face in a totally new situation as well as provide basic social support within those first critical days.

## Social support

Social support has been recognised as a crucial buffer in times of stress. It is thought that support moderates the relationship between stress and outcome (ill health) by providing the individual with an important resource for effective coping and adjustment (Van Tilburg, 1996). Students who travel away from home and the friendships they grew up with – irrespective of the distances involved – will have to re-evaluate and develop a new social support network as physical, face-to-face contact with old friendships may become much less. Social support has been identified as one of the most important factors for new students' adjustment to higher education (Lamonthe, 1995). For example, students who fail to develop friendly relationships within university can suffer a greater degree of homesickness and loneliness. This subset of students also score significantly lower on levels of overall adjustment (Halamandaris and Power, 1996).

## Retention

Addressing non-completion remains a priority within universities, with as many as 35% of students not completing their degree within 6 years in some institutions (HEFCE, 2002). With an average of 14% dropout, approximately 44,000 individuals per year will enter higher education but will not complete their course. It is inevitable that some students will drop out, especially within the first few months of a degree course, and in some cases this may even be desirable. However, the focus of peer mentoring schemes may be on more preventable withdrawals.

For the educational system there is a needless waste of money, time and effort in the selection and training of individuals who then go on to drop out. It is important to first make sure the student is applying for the correct course, but once registered it is equally important to keep supporting students throughout their time at university. To withdraw for reasons only revolving around 'not fitting in' is a waste of effort for both the individual and institution involved. Tinto (1993) proposed a model of student withdrawal within the 1970s, which still remains strong within the literature. Following Durkheim's theory of suicide, Tinto believed that students who failed to integrate into university life, not just at the academic level, but the social and emotional level as well, were at increased risk of dropping out. Tinto's theory has been supported by several studies from the 1970s to the late 1990s. If correct, this would suggest that a peer mentor would best be employed as tour guide, advisor and networker for incoming students.

## Role of the peer mentor

Focus groups, talking to peer mentors about their experiences, suggest that many will see their most important roles as: 'making sure the students get involved', 'showing them local areas and introducing them to fellow first years'. When mentees themselves are asked how the peer mentor best helped them, many state the benefits of 'knowing a friendly face', of having 'someone non-academic to seek advice from' and of support 'during the first day when they knocked on [their] door and invited [them] out for a friendly drink'. It was found that over 60% of first year students met their peer mentor within the first day and around 80% of all first meetings were initiated by the peer mentor and took place within the halls of residence.

In our own research, within 10 weeks, over 50% of the first year students no longer needed contact with their peer mentors. However, there were still 10% who felt the need to see their peer mentor for about one hour every week. This indicates that peer mentors are mostly used as 'tour guides' during the first month, yet there remain substantial numbers of students who

continue to need support. In addition, there was a significant shift over time in the type of support needed by the first years. During the first ten weeks, more practical support for external factors such as information and guidance decreased in our study, but need for personal support increased, for issues such as homesickness, loneliness, and family crisis. It is important to bear in mind that numbers needing this additional support remained low (around 10%), yet it demonstrates again that some students may require more personal and longer-term support, perhaps because they had failed to develop their own network of friends and had not succeeded in integrating fully into university life within the first few weeks.

Although there is a strong relationship between the percentage of entrants from non-traditional backgrounds and dropout, the evidence on this is mixed and thus inconclusive. For the non-traditional student there is an added strain of increased uncertainty of returning to education, financial pressures and 'other' role commitments (parent, employee etc). Many mature students show signs of self-doubt. However, a peer mentor could help them to build self confidence by providing a role model: someone who has been through similar experiences.

## Conclusion

Our research comparing a non peer mentoring university (NPM) with a peer mentoring university (PM) indicated that students at the NPM university displayed a decrease in self-esteem and social support from Time One (five days into university) to Time Two (end of the first semester). The students who had experience of a peer mentor had: higher levels of university support (including staff); were better adapted to university; and were less likely to want to withdraw. Scoring on the seven point Likert scale, 'have you thought of leaving?', which uses values 0 = 'not at all' to 7 = 'definitely', indicated that 3 times as many students from the NPM university had seriously considered leaving. In support of Tinto's theory, college adaptation was the greatest predictor of wanting to leave. Also of great importance, poor peer mentor satisfaction, peer mentor social support, and peer mentor usage at Time One and Time Two correlated with wanting to leave. Peer mentor usage also had a positive influence on coping strategies at Time One.

The benefits of a peer-mentoring scheme are three-fold:

- Students appear to be better adapted and integrated into university.
- More non-traditional students are encouraged to attend university, and supported to enable them to get the most from their university career.
- There is a commercial benefit of saving time and resources.

If you would like any further information on this research please contact Roz Phillips [rmp1@stir.ac.uk](mailto:rmp1@stir.ac.uk)

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# THE-ICE

**Clive Robertson**, HLST Network Director, and **Prof John Tribe** of the University of Surrey (and Chair of the Editorial Board of the Network's journal, JoHLSTE), are invited members of a 'Panel of Experts' convened by a new Tourism and Hospitality Education International Centre of Excellence, 'THE-ICE'. This has been established through a government funding initiative in Australia.

Professor Conrad Lashley, who is Director of the Centre for Leisure Retailing at Nottingham Trent University, is the third UK member of the twenty-strong panel, which also includes members from the USA, other parts of Europe, Asia and Australia, as well as representatives from industry, higher education and providers of vocational training.

The inaugural meeting of the panel was held at the Gold Coast, Queensland, 2nd to 4th November 2005, to consider approaches which might be taken to establishing and promoting international benchmarks for best practice in Hospitality and Tourism education - an ambitious project. Panel members also contributed to a day conference on Critical Issues and Future Directions in Tourism and Hospitality Education which attracted delegates from a wide range of colleges, training providers and universities across Australia.

It was gratifying to hear, from conference delegates, the high regard which the HLST Network enjoys overseas for the quality of information and resources available through its website. The conference provided an opportunity to further raise awareness of our activities and to discuss ways in which THE-ICE and the HLST Network might gain mutual benefit through collaboration. We now look forward to receiving contributions to our publications, JoHLSTE and LINK, from Australian colleagues, as well as case studies and examples of effective practice which can inform UK practice. The insights and expertise which our Australian colleagues have gained through their work in Asia and the South Pacific, and in vocational education provision for international students, will be of particular interest in the UK.

[www.the-ice.org](http://www.the-ice.org) ■

# ePortfolio: A system supporting lifelong learning

Crispin Dale, Alison Barber and Rachel Livesey, University of Wolverhampton

## Introduction

The development of reflective learning amongst students has been a priority of the academic process for a number of years now, encouraging the learner to take a lifelong learning approach to their academic and vocational careers. However, it could be argued that a coherent system and process for embedding lifelong experiences and reflections has been slow to emerge across the HE sector with ad-hoc systems being developed across programmes and/or modules. This has often been compounded by student experiences of reflective learning as a tokenistic exercise, lacking in credence to their programme of study. This undermines the philosophy and ethos of the reflective learning process and has done little to generate momentum for developing a coordinated approach. The following article describes a newly developed system at the University of Wolverhampton which intends to rectify the challenging process of documenting reflective learning.

## What is the ePortfolio system?

ePortfolio is a web-based system created by Pebble Learning in collaboration with the University of Wolverhampton. The system has emanated from the PACE (Personal, Academic, Careers, Employment) initiative at the University which endeavours to encourage students to take a reflective lifelong learning approach to their studies. The initial focus of PACE was the development of a paper-based system, embedded in modules, where reflective practice was a key feature. However, it was not unusual for different practices and processes of reflective learning to be adopted by different subject areas across the institution. In addition, a paper-based system can be cumbersome to maintain, lacks flexibility and does not naturally support a continuous cycle of learning and development throughout a student's academic and vocational career. In contrast, the ePortfolio system enables students to publish a series of experiences and reflections in a user-friendly way which can be stored, developed and shared with others. The reflections themselves are not restrictive or entirely exclusive and can be based around experiences drawn from academic life, employment, hobbies and interests, domestic life and so on.

## How does ePortfolio work?

Access to the ePortfolio ([www.wlv.ac.uk/eportfolio](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/eportfolio)) is password driven, so once a student becomes a member of the University they can begin using the system. The interface to ePortfolio (Figure 1) is based around a series of 'pebbles' (hence why the system is also known as PebblePad). Clicking on the pebbles enables the user to access and create Records, Webfolios, Weblogs and Learning Profiles.



Figure 1 The ePortfolio interface

The creation of records, or 'assets' as they are known, enables students to develop reflections on their learning. This includes records on abilities, achievements, action plans, experiences, meetings and thoughts. Each of these assets can then be categorised further into personal, educational, developmental, professional, placement or voluntary contributions to learning. The assets are then saved to the users Personal Asset Store which can be drawn upon as evidence when the user builds a Webfolio, a feature which will be explained later.

The system guides the student through a process which is built upon theoretical principles of reflection. For example, the 'Thoughts' asset enables the user to record their experience via a journal or structured entry. The structured entry is based upon Kolb's learning cycle (Experience, Reflection, Theorising and Action). This process makes it easier for the student to understand the process of how they can reflect upon their thoughts whilst planning for future action. The 'Action Planning' asset enables students to develop action plans based upon a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis.

## ePortfolio in action

Due to the newness of the system, the use of ePortfolio is still at an embryonic stage within the HLST subject areas in the University of Wolverhampton, though a number of staff have begun to pilot the system with their students. This has been driven primarily via the Webfolio function of ePortfolio in modules such as Personal and Professional Development (PDP) and Career Skills Development, where reflective learning and action planning is a key feature.

The Webfolio feature (Figure 2) enables students to own their web space where they can build a profile of their learning and development over time. The beauty of the Webfolio feature is that a user is not confined to having just one Webfolio but can create as many Webfolios as they like based around different contexts of learning. These can be personalised further with the use of different backgrounds, colours and styles. The user can hyperlink to other parts of the PebblePad where reflections have been saved. This includes asset-based reflections, word or image files relating to themes which the student would like to use as evidence to support their reflection. A sporting achievement, for example, could be supported with an image file of the performance. An academic achievement can be supported with the word file of the assessment feedback sheet with further reflections on areas for improvement and future action.

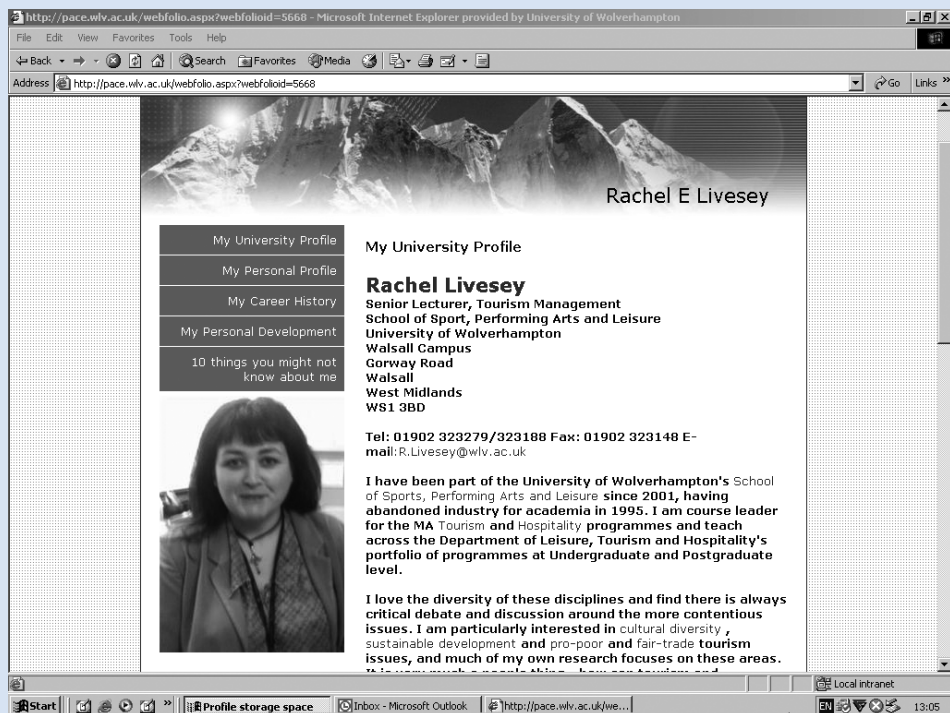


Figure 2 An exemplar Webfolio

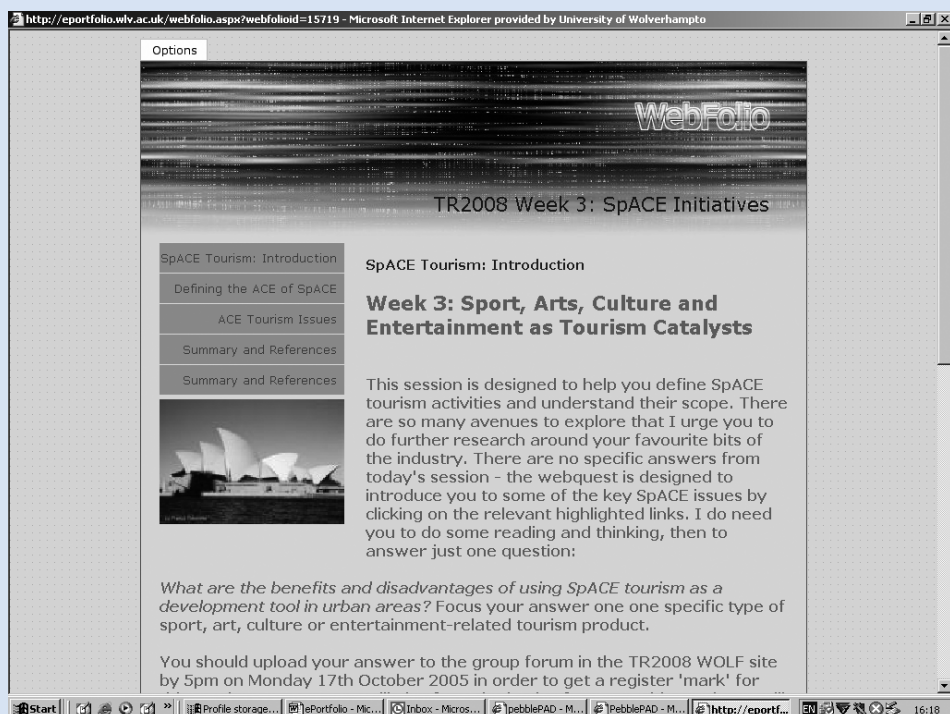


Figure 3 An exemplar Webquest

All the users' reflections on the ePortfolio are private unless they are shared. The sharing of information enables a wider reflective process to occur as users can add their own thoughts to the asset being shared. They can then subsequently share these thoughts further with other users enabling a continuous cycle of reflective learning to occur. Staff have also been using the ePortfolio system for documenting meetings with their personal tutees or dissertation students. Specific actions can be recorded and shared as an agreed record with the student, thus creating an evidence base of their ongoing development. This can then be used as an asset within the students Webfolio.

In addition to Webfolios, the system is being used as an educational tool for the purposes of developing learning activities for students. An example of this is via the use of Webquests and Treasure Hunts (Figure 3). The process of developing the Webquest using the ePortfolio system is remarkably easy as no knowledge of HTML language is required. Staff can simply build the Webquest via the Webfolio function. Students completing the Webquest can subsequently develop and share their reflections using the asset based features on the ePortfolio system.

## Conclusion

The development of the ePortfolio system generates an exciting time for the lifelong learning agenda within the University of Wolverhampton and the wider HE community. The ease with which students are able to record, develop and share their thoughts and experiences enables a clear process of reflective learning to occur. Indeed, the ePortfolio system creates the opportunity for the learning journey to be documented and evidenced over time, highlighting the development of employability skills, which can be demonstrated to prospective employers upon graduation.

Further information about the PebblePad ePortfolio system can be found at [www.wlv.ac.uk/eportfolio](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/eportfolio)

# Supporting Student Learning through Personal Development Planning

Jacqui Gush, Bournemouth University

## Background

The introduction of a formal approach to Personal Development Planning (PDP) was a recommendation of the Dearing report (NCIHE 1997), and subsequently adopted by the HE sector as part of the Progress Files initiative. This is a sector mandated initiative and all HEIs are expected to have introduced PDP by 2005/6. The HE Progress File Guidelines (QAA 2001) define PDP as;

*“a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and / or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational, and career development.”*

## Development at Bournemouth University (BU)

At Bournemouth University, it was decided to address the principles of PDP by co-ordinating an institutional approach through the design of a website facility, offering tools and resources, as part of a structured process.

Although this was designed as a student website, it was recognised that this was “something that an individual does with guidance and support” (ibid) and therefore initial staff engagement was a crucial precursor to student engagement. In addition, student support and guidance would need to be provided through the curriculum, as BU does not have a formalised personal tutoring system (see Hartwell and Farbrother article, LINK 15).

The web-based facility was designed to explicitly address the three areas of development and follow a clear 3-step process. This also provided a structure for teaching and learning purposes. The objective was to offer a flexible facility which tutors could use on a ‘pick n mix’ basis in ways that met the needs of the unit(s) being taught. We aimed to do this by developing a trans-disciplinary, generic framework based on the national guidelines. The site takes a progressive approach to student learning and development – the three stages reflect the normal pattern of learning that a student experiences in their progressive development through Levels C, I and H. Thus, the PDP process becomes a spiral, not a repetitive cycle (Figure 1).

An extensive resource base is provided for use by students and tutors in support of the process and most of this has been provided through electronic links. Tutors are able to use the facility, as they think appropriate, as part of taught units. It is envisaged that, for many tutors, the structure of the website will provide a base for their teaching scheme. Support staff and Level Tutors will also be able to use the site to support student learning and development

In summary, students are encouraged to engage with the process through structured tutoring by knowledgeable staff committed to supporting students learning and development within an existing curriculum.

Features of the website which support students include;

- Guidance notes on the skills of reflection
- Glossary of academic terms

### Stage 1: Understanding

How to Study

Transferable Skills

My Academic Work

Me and My Employability

My Interests

My Goals

### Stage 2: Developing

My Skills and Knowledge

My Interests and Talents

Contributing to the Community

My Employability

My Goals

### Stage 3: Effectiveness

My Academic Effectiveness

Learning from the Workplace

Planning for Employment

Goals for Continuing P&PD

Figure 1 The three stage design approach

- Structured guidance on how to make best use of your tutor in HE
- Support and structure to build a portfolio and an itemised list of all portfolio documents available through the site
- Student-friendly design using visuals, diagrams and explanations
- Embedded links to the University's Career Management System
- A wide range of links to internet and other resources
- An electronic PDP Talis reading list compiled from library resources
- An effective search facility
- Structured approach to guide students' reflective exercises

With reference to 'My Transferable Skills', the following traces the process that students follow:

They are introduced to the concept and importance of Transferable Skills (Figure 2), and click on any of the skills icons for a definition of that skill and are invited to undertake a self assessment of their skill level.

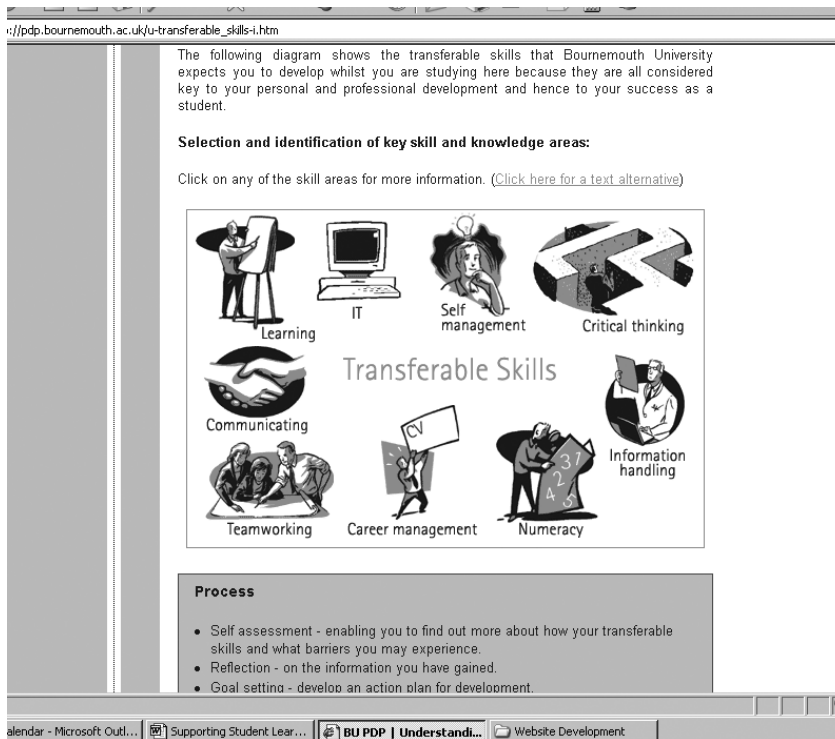


Figure 2 Transferable skills

Once they have received feedback, they are asked to reflect on this and develop an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and areas for development. From this they are asked to set themselves developmental goals and associated action plans (Figure 3).

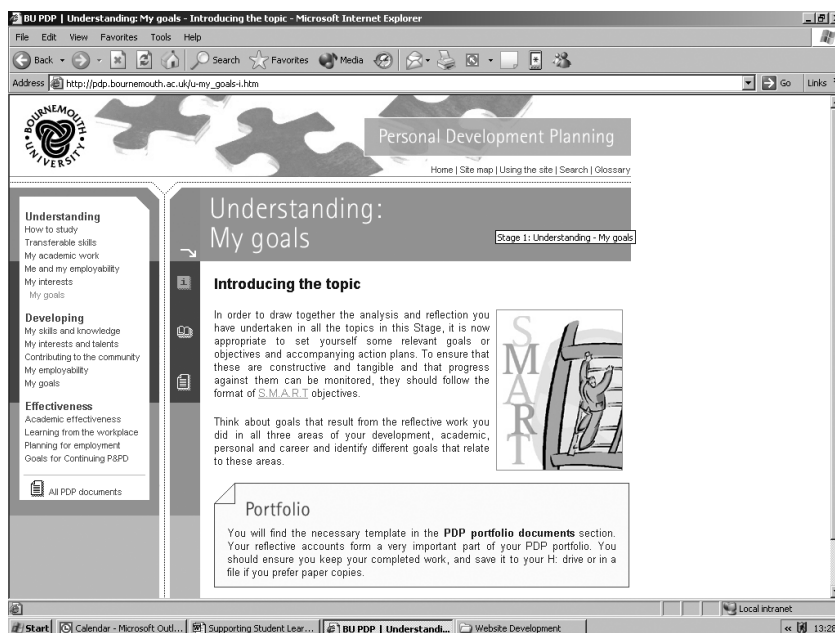


Figure 3 Goal-setting

### Case Study 1

Under 'My Academic Work' in the first stage (see Figure 1), the students are introduced to the purpose of different academic tasks. For example, the meaning of formal assignments as opposed to formative assessment, how they are expected to study independently at university and what is expected for in-class work. There is a structure students can follow which helps their reflection on the stages they will go through with any given task. Figure 4 details the reflective process for a formal assignment.

#### Reflection on task ahead

Am I clear about why I am being asked to do this work?

How does it relate to the Intended Learning Outcomes?

What will I be demonstrating that I know/am able to do by completing this assignment?

Am I clear about how it will be marked?

Do I have access to adequate resources? How will I ensure that I do?

How will I manage my time in order to do my best work?

How much time will I need to spend on this assignment given its weighting?

#### Reflecting on completed work

If I were assessing this work against the Assessment Criteria, what mark would I give it?

What are its strengths and weaknesses?

What aspects have given me the greatest challenge?

What do I specifically want tutor feedback on?

What have I learnt from doing this assignment?

How has doing this activity developed my skills and knowledge?

Figure 4 Reflecting on Academic Development (continues overleaf)

### On return of marked work

Do I understand why I got the mark I did?

Do I feel the mark given is consistent with the feedback comments?

How have I learnt from the feedback?

Am I clear how I could have done better?

Have I filed the feedback for evidence?

### Goal Setting

How might I be more effective in future?

How will I plan my learning?

Can I update my Record of Academic Achievement with final unit marks at this Level?

What learning objectives should I be setting myself as a result?

Do I need to see my tutor for help at this stage?

These resources have been used by a first year tutor in Hospitality to support student learning in her subject. On introducing her assignment she asked the students to answer the first set of questions and was able to address queries that arose. Before the hand-in date she asked them to discuss how they had found the task using the structure provided and what grade they would expect to get. When the assignments were handed back they reflected on the feedback received:

*"This tool was extremely useful and helped clarify any misconceptions right at the beginning. As students became accustomed to the process it was not necessary to formally address all points – students became more reflective themselves."*

It helps to motivate students, helps them adjust to HE, and to become independent, self-directed and confident learners with a positive attitude to learning at an early stage. It develops skills of self awareness and self evaluation, problem solving and task management.

### Case Study 2

Within an Organisational Behaviour second year unit called Managing People students actively develop their managerial competences and undertake placement preparation. A major component of the assessment is a reflective portfolio through which they are expected to analyse their journey of learning and development over time. Thus the tutor is able to integrate aspects of

the PDP process into an existing academic unit. The structured website facility and its wide range of resources help with self-assessment and with reflecting on the findings, as well as providing a structure for the development of the portfolio. The 'My Employability' section guides students in the stages of career planning and management.

At Stage 2 the reflective exercises are more challenging reflecting the progressive nature of the development. For example, in Stage 1: 'Me and My Employability' the open question for reflection asks students to discuss their strengths and areas of development and why they think these are so. In stage 2 they are asked to, "critically appraise your SWOT analysis and based on this develop a career plan for yourself".

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**Figure 4** Reflecting on Academic Development (*continued*)

# Supporting students through employability development

**Sarah Graves**, Oxford Brookes University

In an increasingly competitive and volatile graduate employment market, it is vital that students are equipped with skills that enable them to maximise their potential for a successful career. Although definitions of employability abound, the concept is largely associated with the development of employability attributes, career management skills and engagement with lifelong learning (Harvey and Morey, 2002). Whilst an individual's employability can be impacted on via extra-curricular activities, work placement and part-time work to name but a few, the support students receive through the curriculum directly impacts on their development. Although higher education has an accepted responsibility to prepare students well for working-life (CIHE, 1996), there is no one best way to embed employability support (Yorke and Knight, 2004).

The Enhancing Graduate Employability Project is seeking to enhance the employability of hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism students in 10 partner institutions. It aims to make available a range of tried and tested teaching, learning and assessment interventions and materials for embedding employability into the curricula of other HE providers. Project partners are currently engaging in action research case studies covering a range of approaches to embedding and evaluating employability within HLST.

Case study titles reflect the diversity of approaches and interventions being undertaken and include:

- 'Entrepreneurship in Sport' module

Based on an undergraduate and postgraduate sport programme, this study focuses on the development of students' entrepreneurial capabilities and employability skills via the introduction of the module.

- Using PDP to audit, track and evidence employability skills

Involving 100 students on an undergraduate sport programme, this study aims to use a new institutional PDP system to encourage students to audit, track and evidence their employability skills. It aims to maximise students' ability to articulate their learning and experiences across the whole curriculum.

- An evaluation of the role of PDP in the delivery and assessment of graduate employability skills

Initially impacting on 180 undergraduate leisure, sport and tourism students, this intervention aims to analyse the impact of PDP on students' abilities to articulate their employability skills.

- Employability enhancement for new students approaching a work experience year

This intervention, based on an undergraduate hospitality and tourism programme with 150 students, aims to evaluate the effect of learning activities to enhance students' preparation for work placement and longer-term employability skills in a first year module.

- Developing employability skills through employer mentoring

This study focuses on the development of a structured employer mentoring scheme and seeks to evaluate its impact on the development of students' skills for employment. The intervention is being piloted with approximately 50 undergraduate and foundation degree students in hospitality and tourism.

- Problem-based assessment: development of a working model

Initially involving 30 students undertaking hospitality foundation degree programmes, this study investigates the impact of work-related learning on enhanced student employability via the introduction of problem-based assessment and the involvement of industry employers in course assessment design.

- From potential to achievement: enhancing students' value to employers

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## Resource Guides

Our Resource Guides are intended to provide a compact but essential guide to the texts, journals, websites and other resources in specific areas that may be covered within hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism programmes. The guides can be read on screen, to make use of the links, or printed for reference away from the website.

We are keen to hear from individuals interested in writing a Resource Guide, particularly in Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism related topics. We will pay £500 for a guide and if you are interested in writing one please take a look at our website and then contact Nina Becket [njbecket@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:njbecket@brookes.ac.uk) ■

Working in partnership with students, employers and academics, this intervention seeks to draw together the skills and experiences of key stakeholders to develop a highly relevant undergraduate sport curriculum that maximises employability potential.

Full details of all the partner case study proposals currently being piloted can be found on the project website at [www.enhancingemployability.org.uk](http://www.enhancingemployability.org.uk). The case studies, to be published in 2007, will serve as practical examples of the varied ways in which employability development can be embedded, enabling educators to implement and modify interventions within their own institutions. In addition, a Good Practice Guide, offering guidance on generic aspects of curriculum audit, employability strategy development and techniques for embedding employability in the curriculum, will also be made available in 2007.

If you would like to learn more about the project or become involved in developing resources, please contact Sarah Graves, Project Manager at [sgraves@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:sgraves@brookes.ac.uk).

*"This project is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) under the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL)."*

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# Delivery of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Higher Education Courses in Further Education Colleges

As a result of funding by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) for 2005 to 2007, the Network is now able to extend its activities to directly support staff delivering HE programmes in Further Education Colleges.

The aim is to offer practical assistance to support those involved in the day to day management and delivery of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Higher Education courses in Further Education Colleges.

Activity will concentrate initially on finding out what staff need and then on collecting, producing and making available specific resources that will be useful to staff working in this area. The work will be co-ordinated and managed by two HE in FE liaison officers:

Leisure and Sport – Adrian Taylor – Solihull College  
Hospitality and Tourism – Vicki Hingley – City College, Norwich

If you would like:

- Adrian or Vicki to visit your College
- To find out more about what is happening, or
- To get involved

then please contact [hlst@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:hlst@brookes.ac.uk). ■

# Identifying 'at risk' students: avoiding high with-drawal rates

Hilary Matheson, University of Wales, Newport

## Introduction

New students at Level 4 enter higher education with a variety of skills, depending on their past experience. They will, therefore, have varying levels of confidence relating to their ability to complete aspects of assessment, as well as participate in modules. Inability to complete essential tasks in class can reduce students' confidence in being successful and in completing the module. Early identification of perceived skills gaps and competencies may identify interventions which would reduce feelings of inadequacy and encourage retention.

Self efficacy is defined as levels of confidence individuals have in their ability to complete actions or achieve specific attainments (Bandura, 1977; 1982; 1997). Thus, self efficacy can impact the ability of individuals to self initiate; determine the level of effort used to attain an outcome; or affect the amount of persistence required to attain the outcomes, if faced with difficulties and setbacks (Lane et al, 2002). It has been shown that high levels of self efficacy are related to successful performances (Lane et al, 2002).

The basis for this study was developed from a similar one completed by Lane et al, who had examined self efficacy and performance among Sports Studies students. A modification of Lane's self efficacy questionnaire provided an appropriate tool for the proposed pilot on confidence and assessment completion. The purpose of the study was to determine whether a low level of confidence, in any of the subscales, could be used to identify greater risk of withdrawal. Following publication of final results, data were analysed to determine whether calculated risk factors contributed to lack of progression.

## Methodology

The Rosenberg 'Self Esteem' scale and Lane et al's modified 'Confidence at Completing Assignments Questionnaire' were completed by 56 of the 176 Humanities & Science 1st Year students (32%) in March 2005. Descriptive statistics were used to identify students who were more than one standard deviation (SD) below the mean, on each of nine variables. A value of one was added to students' Overall Risk scores when their scores fell below the one SD threshold. The higher the Overall Risk score, the greater the possibility for failure and potential withdrawal.

*Rosenberg Self Esteem* – In this section of the questionnaire, students indicated if they strongly agreed (4), agreed (3), disagreed (2) or strongly disagreed (1) with 10 statements about feelings of worth, failure, success, satisfaction, pride and uselessness.

*Measures of Confidence* – Twenty seven questions, adapted from Lane et al (2002; 2003; 2004) asked students how confident they were about various aspects of completing assignments. A four-point scale, from not confident at all (0) to very confident (4), was used to compile six Confidence Indicators of success. The six indicators are listed below, with their component questions summed and averaged to make-up each indicator's score:

- Lecture Behaviour = focus throughout lecture + pick out key points + remain alert 2 hrs + ask questions
- Using IT = Windows + MS Office + computer packages + internet
- Motivated Behaviour = research + read around topic + keep trying + persevere decisions + know you are right + remain enthusiastic + work outside lectures
- Time Management = organise time + set deadlines + attendance + work in own time + meet deadlines + work alone
- Statistical Theory = order information + clear plan + understand terminology + logical thinking
- General Competence = ability to pass module

## Results

### Self Esteem

There were 49 students who completed all 10 self esteem questions. The Total Self Esteem score was calculated by summing the 10 question responses with a maximum score of 40 representing the highest feelings of self esteem. The mean score was found to be 30.73 with a SD of 4.53. Students with scores lower than 26.2 (-1SD) were assigned a 'likely to fail' score of one for use in calculating their Overall Risk scores.

### Measures of Confidence

The results for the six Confidence Indicators are presented in Table 1:

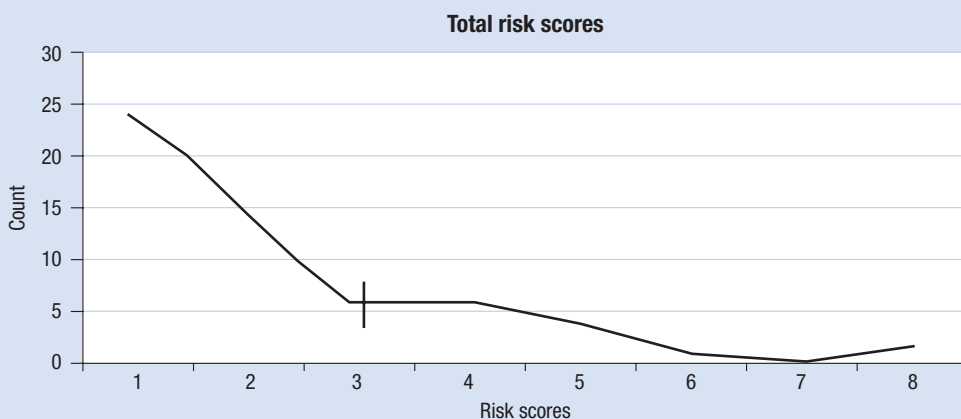
Summed Indicators	N	Mean	Std. Dev
Lecture Behaviour	55	9.98	2.43
Using IT	55	12.76	3.07
Motivated Behaviour	55	17.76	3.75
Time Management	52	16.77	3.10
Statistical Theory	53	10.35	2.24
General Competency	56	2.79	.76

Table 1 Confidence in Assignments

Students attaining a score 1SD below the mean in a subscale were assigned a 'likely to fail' score of 1. It was noticeable that the distribution of scores in IT was negatively skewed. While this indicated that many students were confident in using IT, there remained a large proportion that were not.

The Overall Risk score was calculated by summing seven 'likely to fail' scores. Overall Risk increased by one each time a student's score fell below 1SD for the following variables: Rosenberg Self Esteem; Confidence in Lecture Behaviour; Using IT; Motivated Behaviour; Time Management; Statistical Theory and General Competence.

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of Overall Risk. Students with scores greater than 2.87 (+1SD) could be considered likely to fail; however, the distribution is positively skewed, indicating fewer students were likely to fail, i.e. they had a cumulative Overall Risk score of less than 2.87. Therefore, the Overall Risk score of 3 was chosen as the value for identifying risk. The proportion of students within this risk area can be seen to the right of the vertical line on Figure 1, and the proportion of the sample at each risk level can be seen in Table 2.



**Figure 1** Frequency distribution of Overall Risk scores

Using the Overall Risk score of 3 or more as defining those students most likely to fail, 10.7% of this group is predicted not to be retained.

Overall Risk	N	%	Cumulative %
0	24	42.9	42.9
1	14	25	67.9
2	6	10.7	78.6
3	6	10.7	89.3
4	4	7.1	96.4
5	1	1.8	98.2
6	0	0	98.2
7	1	1.8	100
Totals	54		

**Table 2** Overall Risk percentages

## Correlation analysis

A Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis, using SPSS v12, was completed in order to ascertain which of the 'at risk' factors were contributing to whether or not a student progressed into Level 5. Complete data were available for a total of 43 students. In order to fully understand the data, an additional variable was created indicating student status and whether progression to Level 5 would occur. This was based on the final results presented to the Examination Board in June 2005. Analysis revealed that using IT was significantly ( $p < .05$ ) correlated with final results. Lecture Behaviour, Motivated Behaviour, Time Management, Statistical Theory and General Competency were all significantly ( $p < .05$ ) correlated with self esteem. Using IT was significantly ( $p < .05$ ) correlated with Lecture Behaviour, Statistical Theory and General Competency (see Table 3).

## Conclusions

Results from the pilot study completed on Year 1 Humanities and Science students provide interesting outputs. While it was initially believed that self esteem would be a key factor in determining whether a student progressed into the next level of their studies, it appears that it is not a significant contributing factor.

While it is true that self esteem significantly impacts feelings of confidence in relation to Lecture Behaviour (focus through lecture; pick out key points; remain alert; ask questions), Motivated Behaviour (research; read around topic; keep trying; persevere decisions; know are right; remain enthusiastic; work outside lectures), Time Management (organise time; set deadlines; work alone), Statistical Theory (order information; clear plan; understand terminology; logical thinking) and General Competency (ability to pass module), it is Using IT which appears to be the highest 'at risk' factor. It was the only measure to correlate significantly with final results. This measure was also significantly correlated with Lecture Behaviour, Statistical Theory and General Competency.

Clearly, there is high expectation that students entering higher education will utilise IT for many aspects of their course. It appears, therefore, that a lack of confidence in this area could seriously impact the ability of the student to have the quality of experience other students enjoy, thus influencing their ability to progress to the next level. In order to test this assumption, a further study will be

Pearson product moment correlation	Final results	Self esteem	Lecture behaviour	Using IT	Motivated behaviour	Time management	Statistical theory	General competency
<b>Sig, (1-tailed) Final results</b>	–	.130	.483	.010*	.443	.093	.296	.250
<b>Self esteem</b>	.130	–	.015*	.104	.014*	.029*	.002*	.044*
<b>Lecture behaviour</b>	.483	.015	–	.045*	.000	.003	.000	.000
<b>Using IT</b>	.010	.104	.045	–	.121	.112	.033	.005
<b>Motivated behaviour</b>	.443	.014	.000	.121	–	.000	.000	.000
<b>Time management</b>	.093	.029	.003	.112	.000	–	.000	.000
<b>Statistical theory</b>	.296	.002	.000	.033*	.000	.000	–	.000
<b>General competency</b>	.250	.044	.000	.005*	.000	.000	.000	–

**Table 3** Correlations of Final Results with Rosenberg’s Self Esteem and Six Measures of Confidence

completed with the 2005/06 cohort of students in the Department of Health and Sport, School of Health and Social Sciences. A revised questionnaire will be completed by all these Year 1 students during the first two weeks of their course.

Psychology and Sports Studies students will continue to have a Communications and Information Technology module included as an integral part of their course. This module is a compulsory Level 4 module providing students with skills for being successful in higher education. Using IT is integral to the module, thus levels of confidence in using IT can be assessed and changes in this measure tracked following completion of the revised questionnaire at the end of academic year. Success of the module can be determined by comparing progression rates and scores of Psychology and Sports Studies students with Counselling students. Questionnaire scores will also be correlated with final results, once these have been confirmed in June 2006.

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# Acronyms in Action: From PA to PAD to PDP in a Swiss Hotel School Offering a UK Curriculum

Gavin Caldwell and Roy Wood, IMI Institute of Hotel and Tourism Management, Luzern, Switzerland

## Introduction and context

Founded in 1991, the International Hotel Management Institute (IMI) is one of many privately owned largely residential hotel schools in Switzerland. IMI works closely with the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) which recognises its sub-degree programmes and validates its BA (Honours) degrees. In keeping with UK developments, IMI was required to introduce student personal development planning from mid-2005.

## From 'professional attitude' (PA) to 'professional attitude and development' (PAD)

In developing its concept of PDP, IMI started from an auspicious position. Traditionally, many Swiss hotel schools have had some system of assessing students' 'professional attitude'. Such assessment generally relied on marking: 'self-maintenance skills' relating to dress, appearance, grooming and 'keeping a tidy room'; general behaviour and self-discipline. This system was in place in IMI until 2002, and unsurprisingly, led to considerable student dissatisfaction, as well as being disliked by staff. Assessment of PA was perceived as unsystematic and arbitrary, and students had no stake in the process. Also, from the Institute's point of view, the final marks for professional attitude included on students' transcripts were unsatisfactory because it was not clear what they represented.

As a result, the existing system was redeveloped into one that emphasised both professional attitude and students' personal development. It was felt important to maintain some aspects of the former, since a significant proportion of students in Swiss hotel schools are from South-East Asia. An attraction of such schools for them, and their parents, is an albeit abstract idea of discipline and order, reflected in physical symbols such as school uniform and behavioural symbols. The result of this process was that elements such as conformity to School dress and appearance codes and room maintenance were reduced to an assessment 'rump' of 20% of the total, measured on an exception basis.

The remaining assessment for the new Professional Attitude and Development system was given over to the production of a reflective report at the end of each semester (40%), marks for contributions to the community (20%), and, for certain groups of students, the performance of tasks (in food production, food service and housekeeping) associated with the practical elements of their courses. Clear guidance was given at induction and in the IMI Student Handbook on the elements to be included in the reflective report. As with the preceding system, the PAD mark was included on the student transcript and as an added incentive, a prize was introduced for the student achieving the highest mark in each semester (IMI has two academic semesters per calendar year, each semester representing a compressed equivalent of a British academic year. Students may complete a BA degree in five semesters, four academic and one compulsory semester of internship).

## Personal development planning (PDP)

Shortly after the introduction of the PAD system it became clear that in order to comply with UK QAA requirements, UK higher education institutions, and by extension their overseas partners, would have to move towards system of personal development planning for students.

IMI undertook extensive research into issues in the development of PDP in the UK and saw PDP as a significant and welcome challenge. At the end of the exercise a number of (largely sceptical) observations were made that included the following:

- The two principal models of PDP suggested by the UK QAA occupied extremes – one mechanistic, essentially focusing on the provision of discrete modules in the curriculum, and one organic, the so-called 'embedded' approach

- The second of these approaches appeared to us to be 'usefully vague' – designed to allow cash-strapped British higher education institutions to meet the requirements for PDP at comparatively little financial, administrative or bureaucratic cost
- The underlying philosophy of PDP was highly ethnocentric and promoted a somewhat monolithic concept of learning. In the early stages of our research we could find little concession to the multiculturalism that exists in many British higher education institutions, let alone how PDP might be evolved to cater to a wholly multicultural student environment such as that in IMI

After discussion among staff at IMI, it was decided that a degree of expedience was necessary in approaching the development of PDP. Two immediate strategies were:

- 1) For the School Principal to begin a series of mechanistic iterations of a PDP policy that began with what was 'required' and relate this to the IMI context, mission and resources. The policy document was widely circulated among staff for comment and underwent several revisions until a series of decision options and criteria were generated in the manner of a SWOT analysis
- 2) To introduce a representative focus group of IMI students on the PDP process. This involved them reading QAA documents and various exemplar strategies supplied from research literature, sympathetic colleagues in several UK higher education institutions and IMI's partner, Manchester Metropolitan University

To our surprise, the initial student reaction to PDP was overwhelmingly hostile. IMI had proposed that only PDP units in the degree course would have a credit value and for all other courses, satisfactory completion of PDP units would be a programme requirement. Rightly or wrongly, the School felt this reflected the spirit of PDP as articulated by the UK QAA and was consistent with engendering a sense of responsibility for learning, free from artificial incentives. Our students felt otherwise!

Students felt that if PDP were not formally credited, it would provide little motivation for engagement. A second common reaction was that PDP was insulting to the intelligence of students – one member of our focus group commented that it seemed that through PDP, IMI students were being made to pay for the skills deficiencies of UK students! A third outcome of this process was that students preferred a material rather than electronic format for their portfolio, and this was subsequently adopted.

We sifted these responses as best we could and fed them into our iterative document, providing the final statement of options to our students for comment. We maintained the 'no credit' position for PDP units below degree level and sought to overcome resistance to the idea through emphasising the 'self-help' elements of the curriculum.

It was agreed that PDP would take the form of developmental taught units, emphasising: acquisition of specific transferable skills; and acquisition of skills generically and demonstrably relevant to student learning, performance and improvement. In respect of the latter, and following an emphasis on reflection, the curriculum sought to include a series of diagnostic and corrective techniques that students could themselves use to monitor and improve their own performance. This was felt to be a route to ensuring that students would take ownership of PDP as, if they themselves could acquire and employ techniques that

led to measurable change, then any motivational battle for hearts and minds could be won.

In terms of development, the PDP curriculum was devised to sell the idea of progress throughout IMI's different levels of study, i.e. Certificate, Diploma, Higher Diploma and Degree. Added to this, at each level of study a broad theme was created for the specific transferable skills to give greater form to each unit's learning outcomes. At Certificate level, where students are new to the cultural environment at IMI, the emphasis is on basic individual academic and personal skills. At Diploma level, the focus is on developing and working in teams and at Higher Diploma level on developing skills in creating and handling different kinds of data. Finally, at Degree level, the emphasis is on preparing students for employment and lifelong learning.

Also, within PDP units at all levels of study, students create their own personal and academic goals, set objectives and continuously self-evaluate their skills and performance. At all levels, guidelines are given for the documentation of academic and personal progress through a series of reflections and the collection of appropriate supporting evidence. Certain parameters are provided in order to support the structure of students' portfolios, with the support of academic staff, but encouragement is given to creativity in building the portfolio.

## Initial response to PDP

Implemented in July 2005 throughout IMI, feedback to date has been positive, particularly from final semester degree students who are keen to prepare for future employment and at a stage where their own personal audits and self-development create sufficient interest to merit valid reflection and improved personal performance. It is too early to make broader observations. A key challenge throughout the evolution of PDP at IMI has been to ensure that it is not simply seen as a 'stand alone' skills element, but that it is integrated to the broader curriculum. As part of IMI's staff development programme, full-time faculty were already engaged during the development period, on completing a Certificate in Advanced Academic Practice with a UK university. This included a module on PDP which staff took as part of their course. Internal seminars encouraged all faculty staff to buy into PDP and it was decided at an early stage that after the first one or two semesters, a review would be held of the extent to which PDP was being referenced in the rest of the curriculum. The School anticipates that PDP will progress as a dynamic element of the curriculum and School life more generally.

For further information on the matters discussed in this paper, please contact Dr Roy Wood on [r.c.wood@imi-luzern.com](mailto:r.c.wood@imi-luzern.com) ■

## Network Staff

*There have been significant changes within the HLST Subject Network during the last few months:*

The Network offices moved from the Headington to Wheatley Campus of Oxford Brookes University at the end of October last year. This has enabled shared accommodation for the Network along with the new Subject Centre for Business, Management, Accountancy and Finance, also now hosted by Brookes. We are now settled into our new offices, and have new members of staff working with us, some of whom you may have already had contact with:

Terri Chapman has been working with us since August 2005 as our Projects and Information Officer. Prior to this she worked as a Contracts Manager on education business link programmes with Business in the Community, and before that for a training provider

working on projects to get young people at risk of offending into training, education and employment – both based in London. Terri is responsible for: editing, proof reading and updating the content for the website; managing projects such as the Student Course Experience survey; maintaining the external examiner database; and is currently developing our digital learning objects repository.

Sam French joined us to undertake responsibility for our publications, LINK and the Journal for Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education (JoHLSTE). So, this is her first LINK publication, and she is currently working on the next edition of JoHLSTE which will be available in the early summer. Sam's previous work experience includes a number of administrative positions in FE and the Health Service.

As Academic Developer, Patsy Kemp is responsible for: developing and maintaining links with HE providers and other stakeholders; the organisation of events within the subject community; and the commissioning and production of materials and articles. Patsy has work experience across both public and private sectors in language teaching, business training and management consultancy. Before joining the HLST Subject Network,

she was manager of the Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination team.

Anna Willmore joined us in January this year as an Administration Assistant. Her brief is broad, offering practical help to colleagues organising events, as well as being the first port of contact for HLST Network enquiries. Anna has worked in the public sector for many years in FE, teaching and managing a Children's Centre, and in Local Government and the Health Service in an administrative capacity.

Regrettably, Laura Mattin left us in early February to take up the position of Operations Manager at a management consultancy firm based in Oxfordshire. Laura became the 'face' of the Network and was recognised as a reliable source of information, help, advice and encouragement by colleagues within the Network and the Academy. Laura made an immense and immeasurable contribution to our subject network and leaves us with every good wish for her future!

Work is underway to now recruit a new Operations Manager for the network. ■

## 10 Employability Case Studies

### 1. Embedding employability in the curriculum: enhancing students' career planning skills

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**Angela Maher**, Oxford Brookes University

The experience of developing and delivering a career planning module for final year Hospitality and Tourism undergraduates at Oxford Brookes University is described and discussed. Lively examples are given of the impact of key aspects of the module on student development.

The study encapsulates both the philosophy and the practical aspects of adopting this approach to embedding employability in the curriculum. At the heart of Brookes' approach is the philosophy of creating a learning environment that values and promotes self-reflection and values experiential learning. This infuses the entire curriculum and is central to learning and teaching on this module.

### 2. Implementing an institutional employability strategy

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**Jacqui Gush**, Bournemouth University

The approach taken by the University in designing and implementing a strategy for enhancing student employability is set out. The study outlines the considered approach taken to developing a list of employability attributes and how these have been directly implemented by the development of an Employability Resource Zone. It goes on to highlight experience of implementation within the Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism subject areas and how this can be used to enhance teaching, learning and assessment practice that directly impacts on 'education for employability'.

### 3. Enhancing student employability: a New Zealand case study of cooperative education in sport

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**Jenny Fleming**, Auckland University of Technology, and **Lesley Ferkins**, Unitec, New Zealand

An insight is given into two co-operative education courses offered as part of three-year degree programmes in Sport and Recreation, based at Unitec and Auckland University of Technology.

The study demonstrates the benefits of work-integrated-learning to students in the sport and recreation industry. It shows that students who have undertaken co-operative education have a competitive edge in the employment marketplace and that during this experience they develop the capabilities, beliefs and attitudes that make them valuable employees. The case study describes aspects of the courses that enhance student employability, for example, the placement process, supervision, learning outcomes, assessment of learning, employment and career pathways.

## **4. Integrating employability and management skills into the tourism curriculum at Leeds Metropolitan University**

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**David Hind**, Leeds Metropolitan University

All university courses need to develop further the employability skills of their students. Development of employability skills does not occur overnight – it is a lifelong process. Students do not necessarily find skills-development easy and it can be just as challenging as developing academic subject knowledge and understanding.

This study explains how employability skills are integrated into the tourism curriculum at Leeds Metropolitan University. All students start developing a portfolio of employability skills from day one on a new level 1 module – Employability and Management Skills. The module includes a variety of innovative assessment, learning and teaching strategies to facilitate the students' skills development. Micro-teaching is a key component of the learning strategies, as are work-related management scenarios. Peer assessment is used in a creative way to provide rapid and immediate feedback to the students on the development of their skills. Employability skills are integrated and embedded into the curriculum at all levels.

## **5. Enhancing student employability through a team exercise on a Visitor Attraction Management module**

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**Debra Enzenbacher**, Bath Spa University

Given the pace of recent developments in the tourism industry there is a growing need for universities to produce Tourism Management graduates able to manage change. This study deals with a first year undergraduate module, highlighting a team exercise that forms one part of the assessment. The Managing Visitor Attractions module at Bath Spa University is designed to help students gain valuable experience and confidence by dealing with working tourism managers and learning about the many challenges facing them. This module makes employability-related learning more explicit within the curriculum and builds in direct contact with employers. The team exercise provides an opportunity for students to meet tourism managers while relating what is learned in class to work in a field setting. The study demonstrates how this enhances the employability of students.

## **6. Placements and employability in Sport and Leisure Management**

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**Marc Keech**, Chelsea School, University of Brighton

Placements are a promising vehicle in helping to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and industry practice. The challenge is to sustain a placement system that assesses the skills and abilities of the students, whilst at the same time producing graduates who can provide evidence of their abilities.

This study is based on the placement process established by the Chelsea School at the University of Brighton for the BA (Hons) Sport and Leisure Management degree. It outlines the practices that underpin the placement process and evaluates the extent to which students benefit from the variety of activities undertaken. Inherent within the practices are two fundamental principles. First, building experience with employers and businesses into courses through partnerships, and second, embedding employability within the curriculum and making it explicit within the learning experience. Employers, students and other higher education institutions have identified the work as innovative, successful and transferable.

## **7. Students' awareness of the importance of transferable skills to their potential employability: tourism students at the University of Luton**

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**Petia Petrova** and **Dorota Ujma**, University of Luton

This study reports on the work carried out after a 2001 survey amongst tourism undergraduate students at the University of Luton, which looked at how students assess the skills, knowledge and personality characteristics necessary to give them a competitive edge in securing employment in tourism. Results of this survey and other research showed that Higher Education needs to work at developing students' skills, and also needs to take steps to improve the students' ability to be self aware.

Nearly all University of Luton students are 'non-traditional' in one sense or another, so there is a great need to empower all of them with skills and experience that will support them through frequent change and lifelong learning in their future careers. The authors believe that continuous improvements to the curriculum will achieve this and the case study gives details of a number of measures taken to develop comprehensive, subject-specific support for skills relevant to the tourism industry. The range of modules offered within tourism courses provides students with opportunities to gain a number of skills, both academic and practical.

## 8. Enhancing enterprise, entrepreneurship and employability through PDP

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**Will Bowen-Jones** and **Karen Bill**, University of Worcester

The focus of this case study is reflection on the University of Worcester School of Sport and Exercise Science customised programme of Personal Development Planning (PDP) as a vehicle for the development of students' employability skills. This builds upon an established PDP programme at the University. The case study also incorporates examples of actions undertaken to enhance the curriculum in respect of employability aspects.

## 9. UWIC Academy of Athletics: addressing employability within the total student experience

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**Sean Power**, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff

This study looks at how one institution is in the process of addressing the practical issues associated with the delivery of sports-related degrees that, by definition, assume a vocational outcome. This objective has been approached partially through establishing sports academies. The UWIC's Academy of Athletics includes a Junior Academy, currently involving some 180 children who are coached by students from UWIC Athletics Club. All the students involved in this scheme are studying on one of four BSc (Hons) undergraduate programmes from within the School of Sport, PE and Recreation.

## 10. The Leisure Professional –using online learning and the involvement of employers to encourage skills in reflection and to support the development of skills for employability

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**John Buswell**, University of Gloucestershire

This study illustrates a recent initiative in a Level 1 module in which leisure and sports employers engage with students in online discussions concerning professionalism and employability in the workplace.

The Leisure Professional is a compulsory module on the Leisure and Sports Management degree programme at the University. The primary focus of the module is to introduce learners to the idea of professionalism in a leisure and sports management context, and to apply this knowledge to the process of Personal Development Planning (PDP) by developing students' skills in reflection and metacognition. The module addresses the nature of work in contemporary environments and introduces the idea of professional work practices. It considers personal empowerment and the steps that can be taken towards this.

The full case studies can be viewed at:

[www.hlst.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/employ.html](http://www.hlst.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/employ.html)

and

[www.business.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/landt/employ/stories](http://www.business.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/landt/employ/stories) ■

## LINK 16 – Internationalisation

The theme for the next edition of LINK, to be published in May 2006, will be Internationalisation. Articles are welcome on the following topics, or others related to the theme:

- Teaching international students
- Internationalising the curriculum
- International examples of learning, teaching and assessment practice
- International issues within hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism
- Exchange and/or study abroad programmes for staff or students
- Franchising HLST programmes overseas
- International students' experiences of UK higher education in HLST
- Cultural issues in international learning, teaching or assessment
- International views and perspectives
- Implications of the Bologna Declaration

If you would like to contribute an article to LINK 16, please contact [sfrench@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:sfrench@brookes.ac.uk)

## Useful websites

CRAC insightplus

[www.insightplus.co.uk/](http://www.insightplus.co.uk/)

Higher Education Academy Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Student Learning

[www.heacademy.ac.uk/documents/Standards\\_Framework.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/documents/Standards_Framework.pdf)

Higher Education Academy - Supporting Learning

[www.heacademy.ac.uk/44.htm](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/44.htm)

Making your teaching inclusive

[www.open.ac.uk/inclusiveteaching](http://www.open.ac.uk/inclusiveteaching)

Napier University - Student Retention Project

[www.napier.ac.uk/qes/studentretentionproject/SRPhome.asp](http://www.napier.ac.uk/qes/studentretentionproject/SRPhome.asp)

Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL)

[www.peerlearning.ac.uk/](http://www.peerlearning.ac.uk/)

Personal Development Planning and the Progress File Resource Guide

[www.hlst.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/resource\\_guides.html](http://www.hlst.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/resource_guides.html)

Student Transition and Retention Project (STAR)

[www.ulster.ac.uk/star/](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/star/)

The Centre for Recording Achievement

[www.recordingachievement.org/](http://www.recordingachievement.org/)

Google Scholar – Supporting Students

[scholar.google.com/scholar?q=supporting+students&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&hl=en](http://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=supporting+students&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&hl=en)

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