

LINK 21

Learning from the Scottish Enhancement Themes... ...You take the high road...

There are many routes to assuring and enhancing quality and standards in Higher Education. In most of the UK, the QAA adopts an institutional audit approach – testing the capacity of the systems and processes of institutions to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities they offer their students. Reports suggest that enhancement is generally “quality assurance-led”, with institutions using the information and insights from quality assurance processes to inform action leading to enhancement. Continuous improvement can be an outcome of monitoring and review, but this requires a strong culture of planning and decision making actively drawing on the data and perspectives which these processes provide. Essentially too, concern for enhancing the learning experiences of students must be culturally embedded.

In Scotland, the QAA has been a partner in a different approach, one in which the Institutions work together to develop and share effective practice in themed areas. This is linked to a process of Enhancement-led Institutional Review. The “Enhancement Themes” approach is now well established in Scottish Higher Education. Developmental work characteristically involves a significant contribution from students and the relationship between institutions is akin to that of businesses working together to establish operational benchmarks...putting aside competition in the market place to benefit from sharing problems and solutions.

In this issue of LINK, colleagues in Scotland share their experiences of the Enhancement Themes. Evident from their contributions is a real sense of enhancement-led processes delivering widespread understanding of issues, and ownership for all stakeholders. The outcomes, in terms of learning and teaching practice, can benefit us all.

The benchmarking approach is being successfully employed to support enhancement of e-learning, through a Higher Education Academy led initiative. At subject level, the HLST Network is keen to explore how we might broker exchange of practice and enhancement-led planning by enabling several subject departments to work together for their own benefit but, as can be learned from the Scottish approach, to much wider benefit too.

There are many roads to the enhancement of quality and standards. It is important that we are all moving in that direction....

Clive Robertson
Director, HLST Network

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Quality Enhancement in Scotland

David Kirk, *Queen Margaret University Edinburgh*

Introduction

The Quality Enhancement Themes were introduced into Scottish HEIs in 2003 as part of the newly developed Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF). The QEF arose from a review of quality audit and subject review procedures in Scotland conducted by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC), (now the Scottish Funding Council), QAA Scotland, Scottish HEIs and NUS Scotland. Up to that point, institutional reviews had been conducted by QAA and subject reviews by SHEFC.

The general finding of the review of quality systems in Scotland was that the sector should move from an audited approach to an enhancement-led approach. In this new approach there would be a five-yearly cycle of institutional reviews, to be conducted by QAA Scotland, with a focus on enhancement rather than audit. There would be an overt delegation of subject review to the institutions. In addition, there would be a number of new components related to the provision of public information, the direct involvement of students, and the sharing of good practice across the sector. Within this framework, the interpretation of enhancement was that of enhancing the student learning experience.

The Role of Enhancement Themes within the QEF

In brief, the QEF consists of five inter-related aspects (QAA, 2006a):

- Internal Review at Subject Level
- Public information set
- Effective involvement of students in quality management
- Enhancement-led institutional review
- Enhancement Themes.

Thus, the Enhancement Themes should be seen as an integrated component of the QEF, not as a free standing initiative. The purpose of the Themes is:

“to relate to the development of a shared learner-centred strategy across the sector, introducing a thematic approach to allow the institutions, through an individual and collective approach, to:

- Address the problems and challenges inherent in twenty-first century mass and global higher education

- Find high quality and effective solutions to improve the student experience
- Be more efficient and effective in delivering transformation change” (QAA, 2006b).

During the development of the Themes, the organisations involved were expanded to include the Higher Education Academy and Student Participation in Quality Scotland (sparqs). A new committee, the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC), was introduced to overview the development of the Themes.

The role of SHEEC is to:

- support the embedding of effective enhancement-led approaches to managing quality
- support the sharing of good practice
- enable the continuing review of the area to be pursued through the topic-based Themes in feeding into HEI enhancement work
- support the evaluation of the effectiveness of the topic-based Themes in feeding into HEI enhancement work.

Initially it was agreed that there would be a five year rolling plan of Themes, with two Themes per year. Each Theme has a steering committee, with membership drawn from across the institutions.

The initial Themes were:

- Responding to student needs (2003-4)
- Assessment (2003-4)
- Employability (2004-5)
- Flexible delivery (2004-6)
- Integrative assessment (2005-6)

The current Themes are:

- The first year (2005)
- Research-teaching linkages: enhancing graduate attributes

Dissemination is seen to form an important role involving individual Theme meetings, publications on each Theme, and an annual enhancement conference.

Part-way into the first cycle of Themes a number of issues were identified which suggested that some changes were required in order to maximise the benefits of what was seen to be a very rewarding set of activities. Firstly, it was generally

agreed that, in practice, it was hard to contain the Themes into a single academic year. The effect of this was that work on the Enhancement Themes was multiplying, as new Themes overlapped with existing Themes. Secondly, it was often hard to achieve institutional buy-in throughout the HEIs and beyond those directly involved in the Theme. In order to address these issues it was decided that from 2005 onwards there would be one Theme per year, with the Themes establishing a series of cross institutionally based projects. For the Theme on research-teaching linkages this was taken a stage further through the involvement of cross institutional subject-led Themes.

Have the Enhancement Themes Added a New Dimension to the Quality Enhancement of Scottish Higher Education?

At this point I must stress that the comments below are my personal views and not necessarily views shared across the sector. Nor do they represent the views of Queen Margaret University. Also, they are subjective and impressionistic views, not views based on any systematically gathered evidence.

The answer to the above question has to be a definite yes! The Themes have made a big difference, if only in the way they have created a vehicle for institutions to work together, to share ideas and to share common problems in a non-threatening environment. However, I do have some qualifications to this 'yes'.

Firstly (and here I think that this is a common reflection) it has been hard to achieve buy-in beyond the normal group of enthusiasts (the 'usual suspects') found in all institutions. If a real test of the effectiveness of the Themes is that they have shone a light into all of the dark and dusty corners of institutions, then the answer has to be no, or not yet. Some of the recent changes, such as the involvement of subject areas and the funding of institutional based activities, will make a difference. This should take us beyond the outcome of some of the early Themes, which to the bulk of individuals in institutions may have been little more than publications and newsletters. Also, in this respect, the active participation of the Higher Education Academy and the subject communities has made a big difference.

A second issue was that some of the early Themes were very broad in scope and to hope to achieve much in a single year was very ambitious. This lesson was learned and later Themes may be seen as sub-themes of the early Themes on responding to student needs and assessment.

A third concern, which may be more of a personal concern, is the potential danger of involvement in Themes becoming a tool for audit. The initial idea of the Themes was that, in

accordance with institutional autonomy, institutions would opt into and out of Themes, based on the significance of that issue to their institutional strategies and current institutional needs. There is now a more pervasive view that all institutions should be involved in all Themes. In my view there is only a small step from this statement to a view that all institutions must be actively involved, with a template or checklist being used at the time of institutional review to measure this involvement. I should stress that this is a potential future concern and that it may be simply me exhibiting my normal paranoia! However, with the processes for a second round of Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) under way, I think that there is a danger of an institution's involvement in the Enhancement Themes being assessed in a mechanistic way.

Finally, particularly for small institutions, there is a danger of enhancement fatigue. I find it is getting more and more difficult to get volunteers. In my view this is not because there is no interest in enhancement, simply that there is so much going on and with so much external pressure on the curriculum (through legislative changes, the skills agenda and SFC priorities) that staff are finding it hard to respond enthusiastically against a background of constant change.

Notwithstanding these concerns, I think that the Enhancement Themes have proved to be a useful tool within the QEF, a tool which is leading to more sharing of ideas across the sector and to real changes in practice. The involvement of the HEA Subject Centres also seems to me to be an effective way to galvanise the work in institutions. There is every indication that the Themes will continue into the second cycle of the QEF in Scotland, with the blessing of the institutions. As a group concerned with the overview of this work, SHEEC has proved to be very effective. Recently it has been confident enough to look beyond Scotland and the UK, and a recent study tour of HEIs in Ontario was an excellent way of both finding out what is going on in other regions of the world but also of promoting the good work being done in Scotland.

Further reading

QAA (2006a) www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/background/default.asp

QAA (2006b) www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/background/enhancementthemes.asp

The Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee

www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/sheec/default.asp

Enhancement Themes Publications

www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/publications/Default.asp

Annual Enhancement Themes Conferences

www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/SHEEC/Conferences.asp

Quality Assurance Agency

Christine MacPherson, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Background: Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF)

The aim of the QEF is to support Scottish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to manage the quality of the student learning experience and to provide public confidence in quality and standards in Scottish higher education. Within the QEF, supported by QAA Scotland working with the sector, the 'themes' have been designed to encourage staff and students to share good practice in learning and teaching.

Enhancement Themes

Enhancement Themes are broad areas where it is felt that there would be value in focusing attention for some time, to the benefit of the sector, with a view to enhancing the student learning experience in Scottish higher education.

Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee

The Enhancement Themes topics are decided through consultation with the sector by the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC). This is chaired by Professor Kenny Miller, Pro-Vice Principal, University of Strathclyde, and includes:

- senior staff with responsibility for teaching and learning from each of Scotland's HEIs
- representatives from NUS Scotland and student participation in quality Scotland (sparqs)
- observers from SFC, Universities Scotland and the Higher Education Academy.

SHEEC manages the work of the Themes and is supported by QAA Scotland. Future Themes are set out in a five year programme which was introduced by SHEEC in 2005. This is a flexible plan and is currently under review through consultation with the Scottish HEIs to develop an updated programme of Themes.

How Themes Work

Each Theme has a steering committee, with membership drawn from across the sector, chaired by a Vice Principal Learning and Teaching. Institutions are invited to make nominations for places on the Steering Committee. Similarly, representatives of the student body are sought through nominations from the student associations. Also included are representatives of SFC (Scottish Funding Council), Universities Scotland, sparqs (see page 6) and the Higher Education Academy.

The steering committee considers the broad topic of the Theme and in light of current thinking and practice in the sector, and the associated challenges, encapsulated in a scoping paper written earlier by an expert in the area for the purpose of the Theme, it develops activities and outcomes which would be useful to the sector. Activities and outcomes include meetings and workshops, projects, toolkits and reports.

Whilst the aims of the Themes have not changed, over time the approach and their breadth have been adjusted to engage more extensively with the sector. Initially it was planned that there would be two Themes per year. In response to feedback, it was decided to adjust the programme so that only one Theme would be at its most active phase at any particular time, and to have Themes run over a longer period of around two years. This was to allow for increased engagement with the individual Themes whilst they were working, and for there to be a period of supported consideration of the outcomes of project work towards the end. This process is being implemented with the two current Themes: the First Year Experience, in its final stages of supported consideration of the outcomes of the project work, whilst Research-Teaching is finishing the project stage and will be moving to consider the outcomes in the near future.

Institutional Contacts

An additional significant development over time has been the development of the increasingly important role of the institutional contact. This contact is nominated by their institution to take forward the work of the Theme within their own institution, whilst also being involved in meetings with other institutional contacts, steering committee members and project groups. This allows many opportunities for contacts to share practice with one another, to contribute to and shape the work of the Theme as it progresses, and for the work of the Theme to be embedded within the higher education sector from an early stage. An example of the work of the institutional contact in the First Year Theme is that of working with their Vice Principal for Learning and Teaching to facilitate an institutional discussion of the nature and purposes of the first year.

Each Scottish institution, including staff and students, is currently continuing discussions started last academic year, on the first year, and separately undertaking discussion involving staff and students reflecting on, and exploring research-teaching linkages, and how they can be maximised to enhance the achievement of graduate attributes.

Project Work

The steering committee for each Theme decides the areas for exploration and these are developed into activities. A major focus of the early work of the committee is the development of a series of projects. These are taken forward following an open invitation to express interest in undertaking the outlined work. Project work varies according to the tasks outlined by the steering committee and can involve literature reviews, running events, consultation, sourcing interesting and innovative examples of practice from across the world, contributions to institutional discussions and conferences, and all involve a final report.

The final phase of the Theme's work involves dissemination of the outcomes of the project work, but is probably better defined as a period of supported consideration of the outcomes, because the work has been discussed as it has progressed and because the established institutional discussions mean that there is already consideration of the areas reported on.

Outcomes

The tangible Theme outcomes, mostly documents, are published on the Enhancement Themes website. Copies of the documents are free and can be ordered from the printer, through the website. There are also institutional outcomes, varying from institution to institution, facilitated by the institutional discussions and engagement with the Themes. These can include work to explore practice, student guides and the development of web resources. There are also many less obvious outcomes of the work such as discussions started and contacts made.

Current Themes

The First Year Theme commissioned a series of projects which fall into two broad groups: two sector-wide projects exploring the nature and purposes of the first year and student expectations, experience and reflections on the first year; and seven practice-focused projects exploring curriculum design, formative assessment, peer support, personal development planning, personalisation, and introduction to scholarship skills and transition. These will be supplemented by a Theme overview document and a further exploration of topics included in the first project, namely a reflection on international approaches to aspects of the first year.

The Theme is now in the final phase of work with the project work complete and outcomes becoming available. Institutional discussions are ongoing and will be informed by the project outcomes. This period of supported consideration will include events for the sector and within institutions. These will include the 5th annual Enhancement Themes conference in March 2008 as well as focused First Year meetings. International perspectives will contribute to discussions with visits to Scotland by first year experts Professor Kerri-Lee Krause of Griffith University, Australia and Dr Randy Swing who was until recently Co-Director and Senior Scholar at the Policy Center on the First Year of College, at Brevard, North Carolina, USA. He is now Executive Director, Association for Institutional Research, USA, and Tom Haffie of the University of Western Ontario, Canada, who has expertise in the use of personal response units in large first year classes. The Theme will also be contributing to the international debates on the first year at the 3rd European and 21st International First Year Experience conferences in Wolverhampton and Dublin respectively.

Research-Teaching Linkages: enhancing graduate attributes has taken the approach of commissioning projects focusing on broad subject areas of practice, running in parallel with individual institutional discussions. This Theme is also nearing the end of the project phase of work and further detail of the Theme is outlined by Professor Nolan, steering committee chair, in this edition of LINK.

How Can I Be Involved?

For those within Scottish higher education, there are opportunities to contribute to the work of steering committees and institutional discussions. For both of the current Themes the institutional discussions form a vital part of the Theme's work. The project work of each Theme is taken forward on behalf of the steering committee by project directors or teams. You can join the list of those contacted when work becomes available. Details of how you can join this list are available at:
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/opportunities/Default.asp

The Themes aim to engage with staff and students from across the sector in Scotland and the initiative is drawing considerable interest from much further afield. There are numerous opportunities throughout the year to attend workshops and conferences and a major focus of the Enhancement Themes year is the annual conference. This has grown into a two-day event, usually held in spring and this year's conference will be on 5th and 6th March at Heriot-Watt University. Papers relating to the conference will be posted to the website. You can join the mailing list to receive the quarterly Enhancement Themes newsletter which gives details of current work of the Themes and SHEEC.

Further Information

Information about the Themes, details of all projects and Institutional contacts: www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/default.asp

Sign up to the Enhancement Themes newsletter: www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/news/newsletter.asp.

Details of events are available at: www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/events/default.asp

The tangible Theme outcomes can be ordered from the printer, through the website:

www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/publications/default.asp

If you would like further information, please feel free to contact us. Details are available here:

www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/about/contactus.asp

Student Participation in the Quality Enhancement Agenda in Scotland

Erica Hensens, Development Advisor, Associate Trainers & HE Development

Student Participation in Quality Scotland – *sparqs* – has come a long way in the past 5 years. What started out as a development service, delivering training to student association officers and course representatives, has now become an agency in its own right.

sparqs is a unique organisation working across both the further and higher education sectors in Scotland, supporting students, staff and sector agencies active in quality enhancement, and the improvement of the student learning experience. We have built up a body of experience unique in Scotland, the UK and beyond.

sparqs, funded by the Scottish Funding Council and following a successful external review, is currently developing a 5 year strategic plan. While this is taking shape our work is centring on 3 strands of work developed in light of the York Consulting Review;

1. Embedding support for student representatives within institutions and student associations, including;
2. Facilitating sector-level collaboration to aid the development, sharing and dissemination of practice;
3. A pilot approach to supporting individual institutional agendas.

Each of these three areas includes support and programmes of work focused on the higher education sector including:

- the delivery of course representative training
- the development of staff workshops focusing on student engagement
- sector level engagement in SHEEC and the Enhancement Themes
- developing a new approach to working with institutions individually being piloted in the North of Scotland

To ensure we are responsive to the needs of the sector we continually review our existing services and explore new areas of work with our HE Advisory Group, chaired by Prof. Peter Easy, Vice Principal Academic Quality and Customer Service,

Napier University. This group has a wide membership, drawn from institutions and student associations, and has been key to the review of our resources and training.

sparqs specialises in the higher education sector, providing briefing events for staff and students on a wide variety of subjects and engaging with sector level enhancement activities through our membership of the Joint Quality Review, SHEEC and the Enhancement Themes work.

sparqs engagement with the Enhancement Themes has been ongoing, and began with membership of the steering committees. However, we quickly realised that this approach was not enabling us to contribute comprehensively with the materials produced, the work being developed and, ultimately, the dissemination of the outcome of the Themes.

In the last 18 months we have developed how we engage with the Enhancement Themes, creating a more proactive approach to the Themes, their outcomes and our work with the student officers who could also be engaging. In order to do this we have developed a range of events for student officers to support their engagement in the Themes. Two of these events centred on the current Themes, and our third event will take the form of three workshops at the Enhancement Themes Annual Conference in March 2008 focusing on how student officers can engage effectively with Themes in their own student associations. 2008 will see our first residential event for student officers newly in post, and this

will introduce them to quality enhancement and the outcomes of the Joint Quality Review. This overnight event will be run in conjunction with the QAA and on the 11th of March we will be hosting our second event for staff to consider how they can best support and facilitate student officers to engage in quality enhancement, both locally and nationally.

However, this is really only the beginning of what we hope will be greater student engagement in the Enhancement Themes. For the Themes and their subsequent impacts to be truly student centred, students need to have greater engagement from the Themes' inception, with considered consultation with both staff and students to identify areas for future focus, supporting the ethos of a student-centred approach to quality enhancement.

But why stop there? Following the success of engaging students as reviewers in ELIR, should we not build on this and develop more proactive student engagement with the Themes? Not only steering the Themes, as is done now, but developing the work that flows from this activity. Students have a valuable role

to play in conducting research, assisting in the identification of practice and playing an active role in the dissemination of information to the sector in the future.

Whilst student engagement has come a long way in the past five years, it still has further to travel. Continuing to engage students as we do now will not fulfil the future needs of the sector. We must broaden our horizons and ensure participation is further embedded in our every day practice as well as our national initiatives. Only then will higher education continue towards becoming student centred.

For more information about sparqs please see our website www.sparqs.ac.uk

The website is undergoing a period of review and redevelopment and will offer new content and structure in the coming months.

If you have any particular enquiries please contact Erica Hensens at erica.hensens@sparqs.org.uk

Sports Entrepreneurship Interactive Learning and Teaching Resource

This CD was produced over the course of 2006 and 2007 within the School of Sport and Exercise Science at the University of Worcester, supported by the Higher Education Academy HLST Network. It offers anyone involved in teaching entrepreneurship to sports students a valuable resource linking theory with practice in an entertaining, thought-provoking way. By connecting people's experience of setting up a business to the lessons learnt, it brings to life concepts that students might otherwise struggle to assimilate.

The CD grew out of a TE3 project (Technology Enhanced Enterprise Education www.te3.bham.ac.uk) entitled *SupPORTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP*.

The Supporting Entrepreneurial Skills Matrix (SESM), which is on the Higher Education Academy website, is an integral part of the CD. The matrix provides teaching materials (and teachers' notes) which aim to develop entrepreneurial skills for business start up. They focus on the knowledge, skills, aptitude and motivation required to start, develop and run a small business.

The CD combines access to the matrix with interviews with two sports entrepreneurs: John Wood, from Teardrop Technology, who develops innovative sports goods, and Kelly Moller, from KM Training, who provides personal and business performance through fitness training.

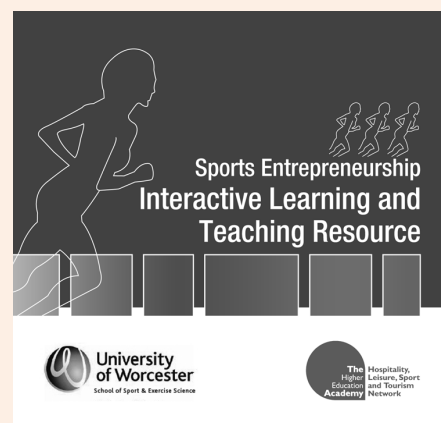
They were filmed in the summer of 2006 answering questions about the whole process of planning, setting up and operating their businesses. The resulting interviews can be viewed as a whole or watched as bite-sized chunks which correspond with the sections of the matrix. This enables the student to examine specific elements of a business start-up, or discuss particular entrepreneurial concepts.

Copies of the CD are available free of charge by contacting: hlst@brookes.ac.uk

Please remember to include your full name and the address at which you would like to receive the CD.

(Karen Bill, the CD originator and author, has recently left Worcester and taken up a position as Associate Dean Research and Income Generation in the School of Sport, Performing Arts and Leisure at the University of Wolverhampton).

The Higher Education Academy Supporting Entrepreneurial Skills Matrix is available at: www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/learning/employability/enterprise/matrix



Increasing Employability in Events Management: A Sustainable Approach to Work Experience

Jenny Flinn,
Glasgow
Caledonian
University

Background

There is little doubt that a shift has taken place in recent years with students increasingly becoming 'consumers of education' (Slaughter, 2001). Competition among the UK HE sector is greater than it has ever been, with universities competing to attain market share in what is an increasingly crowded market place. As a post-1992 university, Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) has sought to carve a niche for itself as an inclusive provider of non-elitist high quality education and training (Thompson and McCallum, 1998). Renowned as one of the UK's leading providers of vocational education, a core belief of GCU is that all teaching and learning should be career driven. The theme of employability is thus central to the GCU ethos as is reflected in the fact that 92% of graduates find employment within 6 months of graduating (GCU, 2005a).

In line with its 2015 vision, GCU has developed an employability strategy that seeks to develop graduates who are dynamic, confident, innovative, inclusive, responsive and entrepreneurial (GCU, 2005b). This strategy has been developed to ensure that employability is a central focus in all programmes offered by the University, with each course expected to address issues of employability within or alongside its curriculum. Moreover, the vocational nature of many of the programmes offered by GCU means that students are also encouraged to develop and enhance their employability, not only in the classroom but also in the workplace, with programmes being encouraged to embed and give credit for work experience.

Events Management: A Professionalising Industry

The events industry has witnessed phenomenal growth in the past 10 years, exemplified by the growth in HE courses dedicated to the subject of events management (Bowdin, McPherson and Flinn, 2006). This reflects the increasing professionalisation of the sector, with employers expecting potential employees to be in possession of both relevant qualifications and industry experience (ibid.). The development of industry experience is vital for any student undertaking an events management or related programme. It should be noted that the experiences gained by students whilst working in the industry do not just benefit their future careers, but can also enhance their educational experiences, allowing them to put theory into practice and providing a context on which to base their learning. Indeed, many of the skills and abilities required

of the events manager can only really be understood through experience. Therefore it is the job of the events educator to ensure that a balance is reached between learning in educational and industrial settings.

Embedding Employability and Work Experience

In line with the GCU employability strategy, the Division of Cultural Business (DCB) has sought to place work experience at the core of its BA/BA (Hons) Entertainment and Events Management course. All students undertaking this programme are required to achieve a minimum of 300 hours of work experience to allow them to gain access to a core third year module (Capable Professional Practice), which has been designed to embed and build upon their understanding of the work environment and enable them to identify how they can develop their skills to improve their employability.

When developing the degree programme it was recognised that due to the intermittent nature of events a traditional 'placement' scheme would not always be suitable. Instead a work experience scheme was developed allowing students to undertake a wide variety of work experience opportunities during the course of their studies. At the start of the course, many students have a clear idea of the area of the industry in which they wish to work, but they rarely have a fixed idea about what is actually involved. It is vital that they get the opportunity to gain experience of working in that area (and others), throughout their time at University, in order to prepare themselves for their careers. This is something which is recognised by students and practitioners alike, with Claire McCauley (Senior Events Officer, Culture & Sport Glasgow) stating that, "work experience allows the student to have a better understanding of what area of the industry they are most suited to".

The DCB has adopted a flexible approach to work experience which allows and actively encourages students to undertake a variety of different experiences. Although students are required to undertake a minimum of 300 hours of work experience, few other constraints are placed upon them. Students may choose to gain their hours in as many (or few) jobs as they wish and can alternate paid employment with voluntary opportunities. A wide range of experience is not only attractive to employers upon graduation but can also increase a student's employability whilst they are studying. For example, many of our students have been offered more permanent positions after volunteering at one-off events.

The issues of employability and work experience form an integral part of the student experience with a dedicated Personal Development Planning (PDP) process being embedded throughout the first three years of study in order to support the student's journey through university. While it is ultimately the responsibility of the student to ensure that they meet the work experience requirements, they are fully supported by DCB staff. Through the use of a Virtual Learning Environment, staff are able to communicate job opportunities to students, in effect operating a virtual employment agency. The use of this 'employment agency' allows students to access a wide range of work opportunities, from casual work at one-off events to more permanent positions. It is also beneficial to the recruiting organisation in that they are able to reach a captive audience who they know will be committed, motivated, and possess the skills and knowledge to carry out the job. In effect this employment agency is self serving, with many events organisations actively contacting the DCB to advertise job opportunities. Moreover, alumni of the course (and its predecessors) are often keen to provide opportunities to current students, and current students often pass on details of opportunities to staff and other students, further raising the profile of the course to employers.

Building for the Future: Sustainability and Long Term Partnerships

With students now having access to a wide range of opportunities, the DCB is looking to develop more sustainable long-term relationships with relevant organisations to ensure that students are given the opportunity to be involved in the planning stages of an event as well as the chance to work on the delivery of these events. Specifically, the DCB has entered into a formalised relationship with Culture and Sport Glasgow (CSG), the charitable trust which delivers culture and sport on behalf of Glasgow City Council. A mutually beneficial relationship between the DCB and CSG has been developed which, amongst other things, means that students are not only given the opportunity to work at large scale events such as the UEFA Cup Final 2007 Fan Zones 'on the day', but are also invited to attend formal briefing and debriefing sessions, allowing them to develop a deeper understanding of the event planning and delivery process.

Furthermore, CSG offers one student per year the opportunity to undertake a full time summer placement with their events team. Claire McCauley has developed this placement to offer a well structured and varied range of experiences, covering different elements of events management as well as the day-to-day operational requirements of an event office. Initially the student spends one day a week working with the events team; this offers an important stepping stone which allows the student to familiarise themselves with the work environment and events portfolio. Moreover, this means that by the time the student is working full-time they are in a position where they are able to be given responsibility for the

planning and delivery of one part of an event. For example, this year the placement student was responsible for co-ordinating the traders' village of the World Pipe Band Championships.

The benefits to the student undertaking such a placement are clear but in order for the placement to be worthwhile the organisation must also benefit. When the Central Scotland Forest Trust (CSFT) were looking for additional help in organising their annual conference (amongst other things) they found that employing a student from the Entertainment and Events Management programme:

"...brought fresh approaches and ideas, not to mention oodles of enthusiasm. It was great for the team to learn from the student, as well as to use their skills to help develop the best event possible." (Leigh Ritchie, Marketing & Promotions Manager, CSFT).

Concluding Remarks

It is evident that employability is a key issue which the HE sector and industry needs to tackle in partnership. Input from both sides is required if students are to gain the necessary skills and characteristics to work in their chosen industry. This is particularly true for students studying vocationally-oriented courses such as those found in hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism, as much of the learning that takes place in the educational environment requires to be contextualised in a practical setting. In line with its core values and beliefs, GCU has strived to place employability at the centre of the student experience, enabling individual courses not only to encourage work experience but to also give credit for its completion. The innovative and flexible work experience adopted by the DCB allows students to gain a wide variety of different opportunities within their chosen field. However, it is clear that in order for the maximum benefit to be gained by both student and employer, more long term and sustainable partnerships must be developed between the HE sector and industry. While the needs and requirements of both sectors are constantly changing, there is little doubt that employability is an issue which is here to stay.

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Integrative Assessment: Optimising the Balance Between Formative and Summative Assessment

Kate Morss, *Centre for
Academic Practice, Queen
Margaret University*

The Scottish approach to managing the quality of students' learning experiences is led by the Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF) which incorporates five inter-related elements, one of which is the Enhancement Themes initiative. This is a sector-wide programme through which particular areas or themes are selected for institutional and sector-wide development in order to share good practice and collaboratively generate innovative ideas, research and models in learning and teaching.

One of the first themes to be introduced in 2003 was 'assessment'. This initiative resulted in a substantive collection of useful outcomes, but also identified that the relationship between formative and summative assessment was a significant issue in higher education and one which merited further work. Consequently, the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC) commissioned an Integrative Assessment Group to establish the optimal relationship between the two forms of assessment and their integration within the curriculum.

The aim of the Group was to focus on greater coherence of purpose and strategy in assessment of students by: producing a framework of principles and perspectives; embedding work in research and scholarship; and collating published case examples from around the globe. The outputs were to provide useful conceptual ideas and tools, data from empirical research and scholarship, accounts of good practice and practical tools of use to others.

The work of the Group, now published and accessible through the enhancement themes website has given us four succinct, user-friendly guides which address key aspects of an integrated perspective on assessment. These are:

- *Balancing Assessment for and Assessment of Learning*, dealing with strategies to implement and monitor the balance between the purposes and needs of formative and summative assessment;
- *Blending Assignments and Assessments*, suggesting strategies for matching learning goals and fostering student progression;
- *Monitoring Students' Experiences of Assessment*, including strategies to monitor how well assessment, in its various manifestations, is working;
- *Managing Assessment Practices and Procedures*, with ideas for ensuring consistency and avoiding overloading students and staff.

The guides are full of useful nuggets of information, in the form of published references and case studies, so that readers searching for solutions to problems or looking for creative ideas to enhance their own students' learning are bound to find treasures.

At Queen Margaret University (QMU) we are particularly proud of our practices and procedures for managing and profiling assessments, including processes which are well embedded in annual programme monitoring, validation and review, and our work is included in the guide on managing assessment. However, QMU staff have been particularly intrigued by the challenges of balancing assessment for and of learning,

and this has led to lively discussion. In workshops, staff have been asked to question whether there may be, within their modules or programmes, imbalance between these two functions of assessment. Such imbalance may be due to factors such as:

- 'low energy feedback' (focus on performance or grade rather than learning)
- misalignment between intended learning outcomes and assessment
- misunderstanding of expectation or standards of performance
- premature testing where students have had little or no practice prior to the assessment

In some instances the answer was yes, maybe. Suggested solutions to these types of difficulties were similar to those presented in the guides including: linked formative and summative assignments; cumulative coursework; speedier feedback (e.g. computer-based assessment); and engaging students in generating assessment criteria.

When prompted to share strategies for increasing the element of assessment for learning, we have been enthused by the good practice that has been uncovered through interdisciplinary discussion illustrated by the following examples:

1. Speech therapy students are asked to compare their own patient assessment results with those of an expert so that they may better understand the standards they are striving to meet.
2. Students studying events management are placed into groups of 4-5 and must propose, plan, execute and

evaluate live events of their choosing based on the SMART objectives they establish during the feasibility testing stages of planning. These students develop a wide range of personal and work-related skills as they learn through the assessment and clearly see its relevance, but they also experience fun and satisfaction.

3. Undergraduates in media and communications negotiate project-based work with a 'client', determining deliverables, timescales and project planning in the process. The client then contributes to feedback and the final grade. This type of assessment is a good simulation of 'real world' project work, and students respond enthusiastically and professionally to the challenges it presents.
4. Post-graduate students in physiotherapy are assigned a group research topic which they then present as a seminar

to their undergraduate colleagues as a form of peer teaching. The undergraduates then evaluate their post-graduate colleagues, learning about standards of research and presentation in the process.

Those who wish to pursue their interest in the redesign of assessment will be interested to see the work of the Re-engineering Assessment Practices in Scottish Higher Education project (REAP). Details can be found at: www.reap.ac.uk

References

QAA Enhancement Themes: Integrative Assessment.
Available at: www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/themes/IntegrativeAssessment/themes.asp

QMU Good Practice Case Studies.
Available at: www.qmu.ac.uk/cap/

The First Year: Engagement and Empowerment

Professor Terry Mayes,
First Year Theme Advisor

For some years now the main debate concerning the first year experience in Scottish HE has been focused on the issues of retention and progression. Ensuring that as many students as possible who enter their first year of studies remain to enter their second year, and then stay the course to graduate, is unquestionably an important goal, but we should not allow ourselves to believe that successful progression beyond the first year means that the learning experience has been a satisfactory one for the individual. The aim of the First Year ET is to shift the focus to how we can better ensure that all students are fully stretched, to understand how they become wholly engaged with the privilege and potential excitement of HE, and how they become equipped for lifelong learning in the increasingly demanding world of employment in the 21st century. If the ETs are to succeed then they should raise some thoroughly uncomfortable questions. The First Year ET should be viewed as a critical friend - asking awkward, but reasonable, questions while understanding the pressures and constraints from within.

It is clear that there is not a single 'first year experience'. HE is characterised now by its great diversity: diversity of institutional mission, diversity of the nature of the learning experience itself across disciplines, diversity of student background and experience of prior learning, diversity of teaching method and so on. One of the key concepts that we have encountered during the Theme is that of personalisation, a concept that acknowledges diversity and attempts to describe what a truly student-centred approach would involve. Much of the work of the Theme so far has centred on possible approaches to personalisation, considering examples of current practice in peer support, personal development planning, induction, transition, formative assessment, scholarship skills and the involvement of students themselves in course design. The Theme's commissioned reports look not only at those pockets of existing good practice that should be more widely discussed, but also at ideas about how such approaches could be significantly enhanced beyond any existing practice. Although our focus has been on 'empowerment' rather than 'support', the Theme projects have tended to show how completely these two concepts are intertwined.

There is evidence accumulating from many sources that the key success factor is individual attention and feedback early on, whether this involves formative assessment or personal tutoring, or something less formal and more social, like peer mentoring or joining a student club. If a key word here is 'individual' then two crucial questions are raised, both of which acknowledge that we cannot simply expand the amount of attention given to first year students without shifting resources from somewhere else in the system.

First, can we restructure our provision so that rather than getting more attention as they progress through their studies, students have the greatest degree of attention when they need it most - at the start of their learning experience? This implies taking more seriously the idea that the primary task for the first year is to encourage and empower students to take more responsibility for directing and regulating their own learning, imparting the expectation of increasingly high standards in reflective independent learning as they progress through their course.

Secondly, can we exploit more imaginatively, and on a much larger scale than at present, the idea that the best way to learn is to teach someone else, and to involve students in teaching and supporting each other? This is a potentially powerful idea, not least because it engages a resource that our current teaching methods position too passively – the learners themselves.

These questions have recently been partly addressed in three of the collaborative projects funded under the Scottish Funding Council's e-learning transformation programme: TESEP (www2.napier.ac.uk/transform); REAP (www.reap.ac.uk); and ISLE (isle.paisley.ac.uk). Within each, technology is employed very much in the service of a pedagogy that is aimed at empowering learners to control their own learning. Such an approach connects strongly with the First Year ET since, if it is to be successful, it must be applied from day one of the learner's experience in HE.



Taken from: Enhancement Themes Newsletter, Volume 2, Issue 2
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/news/newsletter.asp

14–19 Education and Skills

The government in England, and devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, are currently working to reform their respective education systems in order to better fit the needs of young people. Known as the 14-19 reforms, the changes will give all young people the opportunity to choose a mix of learning which motivates, interests and challenges them, and which gives them the knowledge, skills and attitude they need to succeed in education, work, and life.

Transforming the education system for 14-19 year olds

The 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper in 2005 outlined DfES plans to transform learning for 14-19 year olds based on 4 key priorities:

- A greater focus on the 3Rs – the functional skills needed for everyday life, demonstrated through real life application.
- Stronger vocational routes, where young people develop in part through practical experience, with qualifications that give them a broad enough education to progress further in learning as well as into employment.
- More stretching options on both general and applied routes and activities which extend young people, backed by greater flexibility for young people to accelerate through the system, or to take longer in order to achieve higher standards.
- New ways to tackle disengagement and to ensure that those in danger of dropping out can be motivated to stay in learning.

At the heart of the reforms is an entitlement for all young people to access the education that is best suited to them, in a setting appropriate to what they are learning and where standards are assured.

What are 14-19 Diplomas?

The Diplomas are a new set of qualifications aimed at providing young people between the ages of 14-19, with the skills and knowledge they need to gain a job in UK industry.

They have been created to provide an alternative to more traditional GCSE and A level qualifications, and are the most important changes to the country's education system since the introduction of GCSEs over 20 years ago.

There will be 14 Diplomas, launching across schools in England from 2008, covering broad subject areas as diverse as retail, manufacturing, hair and beauty and media. These qualifications will run in parallel with the traditional GCSE/A-Level and Apprenticeship routes and will consist of a new formula of blended learning – combining vocational on-the-job training with traditional academic study. The Diploma will give young people a new choice – a chance to learn by 'doing' and to develop and apply their learning, skills and knowledge in a context. By 2013 every 14-19 year old will be able to select from the 14 Diploma lines, in addition to the existing National Curriculum. The Diplomas will be designed to prepare learners for work or for further study at university.

Plans to expand the Diploma offer, creating three new Diplomas available from 2011, have been announced by the Government. The three new subject-based Diplomas in science, languages and the humanities won't relate to specific industrial sectors but, as with the first 14, will be designed by respective Diploma Development Partnerships (DDPs) comprising leading

academics and employers. The Government is consulting a wide range of partners and stakeholders on the content of these new Diplomas, with work on content design starting in the New Year.

What will be in the Diploma?

All Diplomas will contain some general learning (including maths and English, ICT and personal development skills), some learning that is specific to the industry (eg. hospitality and catering) and some additional specialist learning to allow the young person to tailor their course to help them meet their aspirations. This will also allow young people to change to another Diploma if they change their minds about their Diploma choice.

All Diplomas will require learners to have work experience and to complete a project. Diplomas will provide young people with a fully rounded qualification, which combines practical skills with the theoretical and technical knowledge they require to progress into employment, training or further/higher education.

In comparison with other qualifications used in schools, there will be three levels of Diploma learning. Level 1 is broadly equivalent to 4/5 GCSEs at grades D-G, Level 2 to 5/6 GCSEs at grades A* to C, and Level 3 to 3 A levels. Learners will be able to progress from one level to the next. Most candidates will go from Level 1 to Level 2 or Level 2 to 3. It is not envisaged that many candidates will take the diploma at all three levels.

The first 5 Diplomas will commence in September 2008.

People 1st involvement:

People 1st is currently involved in two diplomas:

- Hospitality and Catering Diploma – this will be available from September 2009 and means that HE and employers should see learners with this qualification coming to them from 2011.
- Travel and Tourism Diploma, along with 'GoSkills' – work on the Diploma started in June 2007. It is due to be launched in September 2010, and rolled out nationally from 2013.

SkillsActive involvement:

SkillsActive currently has involvement in two diplomas:

- Society, health and development diploma – SkillsActive represents the children's workforce and this diploma will be available in classrooms 2008
- Sport and leisure diploma – SkillsActive is leading on the development of this diploma and it will be available in classrooms in 2010

The information in this article is taken from the DCFS, People 1st, SkillsActive and GoSkills websites.

people1st

SkillsActive
Shaping Skills for the Future

GoSkills
Moving skills forward

More information

QCA website
www.qca.org.uk

Department for children schools and families (previously DfES) website
www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/

Edexcel Diploma Website
For information about the 14-19 Diplomas
<http://developments.edexcel.org.uk/diplomas/>

Edexcel Policy Watch Services (recommended)
You can sign up with Edexcel to receive the latest Policy Watches as soon as they are issued. www.edexcel.org.uk/about/policies/signup/

People 1st website
Latest news on the Hospitality and Catering Diploma
www.people1st.co.uk/about-us/improving-productivity/14-19-diplomas

SkillsActive website
Latest news on the Sport and Leisure, and Society, Health and Development Diplomas www.skillsactive.com/training/qualifications/14to19

GoSkills website
Latest news on the Travel and Tourism Diploma
www.goskills.org/client/standards_goskills.aspx?id=29

General information sheet about the new diplomas
www.skillsactive.com/training/qualifications/14to19/QCA_Diplomas_Information.pdf

A comprehensive (30 minutes long) video discussing the new diplomas
www.teachers.tv/video/20558

Research-Teaching Linkages: Enhancing Graduate Attributes

Andrea Nolan,
Chair, Research Teaching Linkages Steering Committee,
and Claire Carney,
QAA Scotland

Research-Teaching Linkages: enhancing graduate attributes is one of the Enhancement Themes currently being considered by the Scottish Higher Education (HE) sector. The Themes aim to enhance the student learning experience by creating a collective focus within the sector, which provides staff and students together with opportunities to share, learn from and build on practice, and to generate new ideas and approaches and encourage innovation. A key feature of the themes is their international perspective such that the sector's work is systematically informed by developments and practice around the world.

Work on the Research-Teaching Linkages Theme began in July 2006 with the appointment of the sector nominated steering committee, chaired by Professor Andrea Nolan, Vice-Principal Learning, Teaching & Internationalisation, University of Glasgow.

The focus of the Research-Teaching Linkages theme is on the student learning experience (taught programmes at all levels and all modes to Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework 11), institutional processes, and the development of, "graduate attributes associated with research". The Theme is not so much concerned with the general relationship between research activities and teaching and learning activities as it is with the more focused issue of how research-teaching linkages can help support the achievement of graduate attributes. The 'attributes' are the high level generic attributes of the type such as critical analysis and evaluation of issues and arguments; synthesis and originality; and creativity in formulating solutions etc. The Theme deliberately takes a broad inclusive definition of 'research' that embraces not just 'RAE' type research but also practice/consultancy led research, research of local economic significance, and various types of practice-based and applied research, including performances; creative works; and industrial or professional secondments.

The Theme has two strands of work. A general strand comprises an ongoing sector-wide discussion within and between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) involving staff and students reflecting on, and exploring Research-Teaching Linkages and how they can be maximised to enhance the achievement of graduate attributes. All Scottish HE Institutions have a nominated institutional contact (IC) whose role is to take forward discussions within their own institution regarding the Theme and to act as conduit between the steering committee and their individual institution. The sectoral work is supported by a project team, led by Professor Ray Land and Professor George Gordon, University of Strathclyde, who will draw discussions together at the end of the theme into publications.

This overarching sector-wide discussion strand is running simultaneously with a discipline level strand, in recognition of the disciplinary differences that exist in what constitutes research, how it is done and how students experience research in their undergraduate study. The focus of this work has been on the sharing and development of current and emerging practice at the discipline level.

For these purposes, subjects were grouped into 9 broad areas of generally cognate subjects as follows:

Physical sciences encompassing:

chemistry, physics, earth sciences, astronomy and related areas.

Information and Mathematical sciences

encompassing: computing science, mathematics, statistics and related areas.

Arts and Social Sciences encompassing:

education, social work and community education, languages, history, geography, philosophy, politics, law, psychology and related areas.

Health and Social care encompassing:

nursing, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, podiatric medicine and surgery, radiography and related areas.

Business and Management

encompassing: accountancy and finance, business and business management.

Life sciences encompassing:

Anatomy, Aquatic Bioscience, Biochemistry, Biomedical Sciences, Biotechnology, Genetics, Immunology, Microbiology, Molecular & Cellular Biology, Neuroscience, Parasitology, Pharmacology, Physiology, Sports Science, Zoology and related areas.

Creative and Cultural Practice

encompassing: music, drama, drawing and painting, animation, film & TV, graphic design, photography, design and applied arts, sculpture, fine art and related areas.

Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine

Engineering and the Built Environment

encompassing: mechanical, electrical and electronic, chemical, and aeronautical engineering, architecture, landscape, planning, construction, surveying and related areas.

The aim of the discipline level projects is to identify, share and build on good and innovative practice in utilising research-teaching linkages to enhance the achievement of 'research type' graduate attributes at the subject level. Nine project teams have been commissioned to undertake each of the subject projects. All project work will be completed by March 2008, with outcomes available from July 2008 onwards. These will be accessible from the Enhancement Theme website. Following on from the above work, the final phase of the Theme (dissemination phase) involves a greater focus on supporting HEIs in considering and engaging with the outcomes resulting

from the projects. We will welcome input from colleagues in the HSLT subject area in these activities.

Details of ICs can be found at:

www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/themes/ResearchTeaching/committee.asp

Details of the teams and their work can be found on the enhancement theme website.

www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/themes/ResearchTeaching/activities.asp

Scotland's Skills Strategy: Improving Graduate Skills

Mark Batho, *Director of Lifelong Learning, Scottish Government*

As in other parts of the UK, the skills agenda in Scotland has moved right up the, Government's (in this case, of course, the Scottish Government) list of priorities. Last September, within 100 days of its appointment, the new SNP administration published 'Skills for Scotland: a Lifelong Skills Strategy' and it is committed to establishing 'Skills Development Scotland' by April this year. This is a new body tasked specifically with delivering a step change in the skills capacities of the whole population and, importantly, in the way in which those skills are then employed in the work place. All this is driven by the Government's overriding purpose – to deliver sustainable economic growth.

The new strategy is truly about lifelong learning, from early years to retirement and beyond. Its aim is to deliver a cohesive system of learning – learner focused and built around pre-school provision, schools, colleges, universities, private training providers and employer-delivered training. It is about ensuring that skills acquisition is demand led – improving the capacity of employers and individuals to have the ambition to improve skills; and about having a supply side fully geared to meeting demand side requirements.

Some of you who have read this far may be wondering what relevance this has to the Scottish enhancement theme programme and specifically to the theme "research-teaching linkages: enhancing graduate attributes". However, the 'fit' between these two pieces of work is a close one. The development of enhanced employability skills among our graduates is critical to the delivery of sustained economic growth in Scotland and the Skills Strategy gives an important context to the enhancement theme.

How so? Well, the strategy identifies a number of the core employability skills that employers are looking for:

- Effective time management
- Planning and organisation

- Effective oral and written communication skills
- Ability to solve problems
- Ability to undertake tasks or make submissions at short notice
- Ability to work with others to achieve common goals
- Ability to think critically and creatively
- Ability to learn and continue learning
- Ability to take responsibility for professional development
- Having the skills needed to manage or be managed by others.

You will all be able to map those requirements on to the principles which already underpin undergraduate teaching. However, I believe that there can be further refinement and improvement of these skills precisely through the kind of cross-fertilisation between research and teaching that this particular enhancement theme is seeking to encourage such as:

- Development, to a high pitch, the skills of analysis, synthesis and creativity through exposure to new ways of thinking
- Development of different and sophisticated problem-solving skills
- Gaining experience of a research environment – the laboratories or libraries, of course, but also the skills of working in collaboration, team working and addressing challenges in new and different ways

The challenge is to give practical reality to this. And that means not only looking at ways of developing what is taught but also considering how it is taught. Also examining the current interaction between the supply side institutions and demand as expressed by the end users of skills – individuals and their employers. That in turn requires us all to ask some challenging questions.

First of all, are we good enough at telling students what skills they are or should be acquiring during the course of their degree studies? If not, how can they be expected to know clearly just what it is that they have learned? And how are prospective employers to be expected to know what they are likely to be getting by way of skills from a prospective employee who comes in front of them waving a degree certificate? If we are to improve the quality of our undergraduate degrees by developing their research content (and there seems to be a general agreement that this is a good thing to do) then we need to ensure that everyone with an interest knows about this and can reflect on its implications for them.

Picking up on this point, what more can be done to help employers understand better what having a degree actually means? How many employers fully grasp what skills our graduates acquire? And therefore, how many would notice a difference and, importantly, translate that difference into improved business performance, if we were to improve the research element of undergraduate degrees? If we are to achieve an efficient level of knowledge transfer through the mechanism of graduates moving from our universities into the work place, and if we are to ensure that the right people with the right skills end up in places where those skills will be fully utilised, it is essential that employers can and do recruit people into their business with the right level of qualification for that business and then make maximum use of that person's capacities.

A final thought, not actually far removed from the teaching/research enhancement theme; are we missing a trick in developing employer understanding – both of graduates' capabilities and of the work that goes on in institutions to develop those capabilities – by not doing more to integrate the world of work with the world of study in higher education institutions? In Scotland, often for understandable practical reasons, there is currently little provision of sandwich courses, assessed work placements or other forms of work-integrated learning. Experience from other parts of the world suggests that students, institutions and employers can all benefit from the mutual understanding

of each others' worlds that this learning can bring. So if we are to improve the 'research' content of degrees, could this usefully be complemented, at least in some disciplines, to improving linkages with business?

In this article I have ranged rather beyond the quality enhancement themes, but I hope that in doing so I have been able to suggest just how inter-dependent the development of graduate capacities and the wider agenda of developing lifelong skills are in the eyes of the Scottish Government. Graduate skills are going to be a critical motor in delivering the Government's overriding purpose of sustainable economic growth, and the more effectively those skills are developed the greater will be the opportunities for long term economic prosperity. Government and higher education have, in recent years, developed a healthy capacity to work effectively together in Scotland, and there seems to be an optimism that in the field of developing graduate capacities this can continue and grow.

Scottish Higher Education Employability Network (SHEEN)

Margaret Lawson,
*Education Consultant
with the Higher
Education Academy
in Scotland*

As many of you will be aware, employability has long been a focus of individual HEIs, although, it was given sector wide recognition in Scotland when it was introduced as an enhancement theme in 2004/05. In 2006, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) announced a four year programme of strategic funding to enable HEIs to continue to develop graduate employability.

The Scottish Higher Education Employability Network (SHEEN) was established by the Higher Education Academy, QAA Scotland, SFC and Universities Scotland in 2006. The Network supports institutions in implementing their employability strategies through providing a forum to share approaches and practice. Each HEI is represented on the Network by a senior member of staff with responsibility for employability, and an Employability Co-ordinator. Reports from previous meetings can be found on Academy Scotland's website. Furthermore, Academy Scotland has also been asked by the Funding

Council to focus its work in 2007/08 on three areas, one of which is employability. The majority of HEIs intend to use the employability funding to appoint new staff, or second existing staff, to embed employability within learning and teaching. Many staff have now been appointed, and are based either in institutions' careers services or educational development units.

The work of SHEEN will also involve collaboration relating to the implementation of PDP in Scottish HEIs and the Research-Teaching Linkages Theme concerned with graduate attributes and skills. For example, Scottish HEIs have been working to develop and embed Personal Development Planning (PDP), and this is increasingly being viewed as a tool to complement employability, as it involves students reflecting upon their own learning, performance and achievement, to plan for their personal, educational and career development. The Academy, the Centre for Recording Achievement and QAA Scotland have established a PDP forum which will support institutional implementation of PDP.

Sector Skills Councils and Employer Engagement

Margaret Lawson has been contracted by Academy Scotland to develop contacts between Sector Skills Councils, HEIs and, where appropriate, with the Academy's Subject Centres. Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are independent employer led organisations which work to promote workplace training. In Scotland, many SSCs have produced separate Sector Skills Agreements while others have included a Scottish section so the information is relevant to Scottish institutions.

If you would like to be added to the quarterly HE Employability Scotland mailing list, or would like to include any items of interest to employability staff in Scotland in future editions of the newsletter, please contact Una Bartley:

una.bartley@heacademy.ac.uk

Summary of the SHEEN Keynote "Employability: the next phase..."

Mantz Yorke, Honorary Professor of Education at the University of Lancaster, 30 November 2007, Dundee West Park conference centre

Professor Yorke began by defining some notions of employability, emphasising the key point that employability is not the same as employment. Rather it suggests: workforce development, employer engagement, work-based learning

and entrepreneurship. ESECT's definition is that employability is what 'make[s] graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations': in other words, graduates' capability to act effectively, achieve their aims, work with others and continue to learn.

The USEM model tries to capture this: Understanding (one's subject), Skilful practices, Efficacy beliefs (self-theories), and Meta-cognition (self-reflection), all of which combine leading to 'effectiveness in the world'. He suggested that much of this model is already tacitly consistent with current practice, but work can be done to make it more overt, for example by building it into curricula rather than as an 'add-on'. USEM's strengths are that it is permissive not prescriptive, and is not just a knee-jerk response to employer demand.

More emphasis is needed on the E and M parts of the model, as skills in themselves are not enough: the workplace involves not only routine but also 'messy' problem-solving, and working within unforeseen limitations or with incomplete information, where a 'good enough' result is often the only possible one. Problems set in academe, in contrast, are often formulated, well-defined, have all information available, have a right answer, and are detached from reality.

Challenges arising from this more holistic approach suggest that over-assessment could be a problem; there is a need for it to comprise judgement, not measurement, and it should be context-related and more individualised. There is often an awkward fit between assessment and programme structures, and there is a need to see how this can work across whole programmes.

HLST Resources Linked to the Enhancement Themes

A range of resources relevant to the Enhancement Themes are available via our website and we are always looking for more contributions. A quick and easy resource are the case studies: they give brief examples of ideas that have worked in teaching and provide examples of including employability, innovative assessments, and linking teaching and research, amongst others. If you think you have a case study to add to our collection then please let us know – you will receive £30 of book tokens as a thank you.

Responding to student needs

Development of Blended Learning PDP Materials for Industry Based Foundation Degree Students

The aim of this project was to develop materials to support PDP in blended learning foundation degree programmes, to ensure that appropriate support is provided to develop students' underpinning knowledge and skills, and help them to progress successfully to employment or further study. Current provision for PDP modules in HEIs has been researched and information gathered used to inform the development

of materials for both blended and e-learning delivery.

www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/ourwork/heinfo/teachingexchange

LINK 15 Supporting Student Learning

This edition of LINK considers the support of students as individual learners within the context of mass higher education and provides examples of how HLST staff are effectively supporting students.

The report on the latest HLST Network Benchmarking exercise included as the Network Focus in this issue of LINK summarises the current state of play regarding the implementation of PDP in HLST subjects.

Assessment

Assessment Standards Knowledge exchange (ASKe)

ASKe has launched a series of '1,2,3' leaflets which highlight some practical ways in which teaching staff can improve their students' learning. Each leaflet focuses on a piece of assessment-related research and clearly states how that research can be applied to teaching practice in three easy steps. So far, there are four leaflets which can be downloaded from their website:

- pre-assessment intervention (which aims to improve student understanding of feedback and assessment criteria)
- ways of reducing plagiarism in assessed work
- feedback: how to make your feedback work
- feedback: how to give generic feedback.

www.business.brookes.ac.uk/learningandteaching/aske/123.html

On-line Assessment for Sports Science Students: Sprinta

The project developed a range of online self-assessments and tutorial guidance for Sports Science students. Resources available through their site include example multiple choice questions and guidance for staff writing multiple choice questions

www.essex.ac.uk/sprinta/

The Review and Standardisation of Assessment Criteria within Foundation Degree Programmes offered by the 'SALTs' Consortium

The *standardisation of assessment marking* is of vital importance to any institution, but even more so where the programme is being delivered at the same time across a number of institutions. The aim of this project, funded by HLST, was to review and standardise assessment/marking criteria within a consortium. The purpose of reviewing and developing a standardised assessment grid was to ensure that all lecturers, regardless of their geographic location, would mark to exacting standards.

www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/hlst/documents/projects/heinfe/quigley_finalreport.pdf

Towards Learning Creatively

This project investigated the use of creative assessments for students and provides examples that will enable staff to provide their students with Inclusive assessments, which do not solely rely on written evidence, and include for example the use of video, oral, practical presentations and exhibitions.

www.creativeassessment.org.uk

An article in JoHLSTE which considers oral assessments:

Oral Examination Assessment Practices: Effectiveness and Change with a First Year Undergraduate Cohort – Ben Oakley and Clare Hencken

Employability

The E-Evolve project has developed learning materials that can be used to enhance employability in a variety of contexts such as PDP and placement preparation.

The following materials are freely available to UK HEIs:

- An Introduction to Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)
- Making Effective Business Phone Calls
- Understanding the Competitive Business Environment
- Time Management
- Reading and Writing Effective Business Emails
- Working Creatively
- Managing Performance: Quality and Project Management
- Agenda Setting and Minute Taking
- Understanding Income Statements
- Understanding Balance Sheets

www.employability.org.uk

The **Enhancing Graduate Employability project** investigated how the

employability skills of students could be enhanced via curriculum interventions.

The project focused on hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism (HLST).

A range of strategies have been developed, implemented and evaluated.

The resources generated will enable HE providers to engage in low-risk, high gain activities that will improve student's skills for employment. Resources include a curriculum audit instrument and will include a good practice guide to be published in 2008.

www.enhancingemployability.org.uk

Flexible Delivery

There are a good number of articles published in JoHLSTE which provide examples of flexible delivery, for example:

- Learning Technology and its Potential to Support Student Placements in Hospitality and Tourism Education – Stuart McGugan
- Designing Personal Development Modules for Leisure Studies: a Discussion of the Adoption of Flexible Teaching and Learning Approaches – Ian Gilhespy
- Using problem-based learning in sports related courses: An overview of module development and student responses in an undergraduate Sports Studies module – Michael J Duncan and Yahya Al-Nakeeb
- An Analysis of Blogs as a Teaching Tool as Perceived by Hospitality Management Students – Cihan Cobanoglu
- Strategies for Using Podcasting to Support Student Learning – Crispin Dale
- Towards a Theory of e-Learning: Experiential Learning – Colin Beard, John Wilson, and Richard McCarter
- A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing? An Analysis of Student Engagement with Virtual Learning Environments – Crispin Dale and Andrew Lane

Research Teaching Linkages

Various resources are available via the HLST website. There is great potential to enhance the links between teaching and research in HLST subjects. For example, through problem based learning, support given to production of final year projects/dissertations, inclusion of academic research within student courses, student assistance to staff undertaking research, teaching by postgraduate students and research-based enquiry. It is vital that the maturing of research within HLST is further supported by identifying and promoting the possible links between research activity and learning and teaching, particularly at a time when resources and time are so scarce.

A good starting point is the case study examples:
www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/resources/casestudies

the project area of our website:
www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/ourwork/ourprojects

and an article from JoHLSTE:
Student Perceptions of Research in Teaching-led Higher Education by Martin Johnes

The First Year

Two projects funded by the HLST Network:

Using Flexible Learning and Online Resources to Enhance Student Support and First Year Student Experience

A pilot study into the introduction of flexible learning into the syllabus has enabled two first year groups of students to study at their own pace, build up expertise in finance and develop the necessary numerical and IT skills to complete satisfactorily the Principles of Business Finance module at Leeds Metropolitan University.

www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/projects/detail/ourwork/online_resources_to_enhance_student_support_and_first_year_student_experience

Student Participation in an Integrated Retention Strategy

Through a process of extensive consultation with first and senior level students, this project investigates ways in which first level students can help themselves to gel as a cohort, and senior students can provide more of an active reference point for them, in order to enhance retention.

www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/hlst/documents/projects/round_5/r5_hughes_report.pdf

Articles from JoHLSTE including:

- Listening, Understanding and Responding to Leisure and Tourism Undergraduates – Eugenia Wickens, Alastair Forbes and John Tribe
- Approaches to Studying, Academic Achievement and Autonomy, in Higher Education Sports Students – Derek Peters, Gareth Jones and John Peters

HLST Network Benchmark Survey: Implementing Personal Development Planning (PDP)

This survey was the third in a series of Benchmark Surveys carried out by HLST (the first two were on dissertation supervision and assessment practice). This survey is a little different from the previous two: practice in delivering PDP is not established and there are a number of uncertainties regarding interpretation and implementation. This survey was therefore more concerned with identifying and highlighting how institutions are tackling PDP.

In essence, the objectives were to establish:

- An overview of the PDP systems being used
- What makes them work
- What issues are still to be overcome

The survey took place during 2007 through telephone interviews with staff from 26 institutions. The data collected were mainly qualitative and attempts were made to capture the philosophy and purpose of PDP in each institution, as well as features of each approach and perceptions of impact to date. This article reports the findings of the survey.

Background

Of the 26 institutions which took part, one was an FE College delivering HE programmes in hospitality, one was an HEI and the remainder were universities, of which five were pre-92 universities. The following subject groupings were represented:

Hospitality	4
Leisure and sports management	3
Sports Development/recreation	2
Sports Science	5
Tourism	4
Hospitality and tourism	2
Leisure and tourism	2
Hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism	4

Perceived Role of PDP

The responses contained a range of purposes for PDP although there was some resonance with the QAA Guidelines (2001) which suggest that PDP has two main outcomes:

1. A record of learning experiences including reflections and plans; and
2. Enhanced self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses and directions for change.

The most common perception pointed to reflective learning and the development of self-awareness, with two respondents suggesting that it was concerned with students understanding and managing their own learning. A number also identified recording or "capturing" students' learning as an important purpose of PDP. Several referred to the context of lifelong learning and the need to develop employability skills but, interestingly, only two saw the benefits to student retention in PDP and its wider support role. Not all respondents were able to offer a clear purpose or sense of direction for PDP in their institution, and the survey demonstrates the differences in understanding and implementation which exist across the HE sector at present. These are documented by the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA). As bodies like the QAA, the HE Academy and the CRA promote the principles and benefits of PDP to senior managers in HEIs, they might wish to highlight the potential impact of PDP and self-managed learning on improving retention rates and, of course, the employability skills of students.

The Purpose of PDP

- It is the way to build bridges between past experiences and their subject, their outside activities and employment. All making links within the curriculum.
- An approach to help students develop an awareness of their learning, development and employability. Helps students to learn how to learn.
- It has the potential to be a useful tool for students who are sufficiently committed to learning, because it can serve as a sort of thinking space, and a useful record of what has been done. But, and this is a very large but, it also requires a certain level of intellectual maturity.
- It allows students to identify and reflect on both academic and occupational skills development.
- Charts the development of students through university life. Allows them to see their strengths and weaknesses and to provide evidence and action plans that identify strengths and show how they are demonstrated.
- It is a very long term process without any easily quantifiable benefits, so it's very hard to get the sort of student who sees HE as a ticket to a job to engage in it.
- It's additionally showing students that they have learned and matured.

Policy: Institutional/ Faculty/ Departmental

It was found that PDP policy was generally devolved to schools and departments, with some central direction guidelines, but with an acknowledgement that it should be subject-based and therefore adaptable. For example, in one institution:

“There is a set of guidelines within a CETL developed web site. The University sets a minimum requirement for implementation. Everyone has to embed PDP within the curriculum, but there is flexibility within this”.

There were several cases of prescription – ‘where we have to do it’ – but also seven institutions where there was no policy or no awareness of such a policy, although in a couple of these cases the departments had been proactive and developed their own policy and approach, and one where it was policy not to have a policy:

“We have deliberately avoided an institutional policy because different disciplines have different epistemological orientations and we think we can do more harm than good if we tried to impose a central, policy on them”.

Another institution had no policy because:

“...we are seen as a research-led institution with responsible and self-sufficient students”.

In another two instances there was no institutional policy or coordination but the provision of a centralised web based system or PDP tool to help support implementation of PDP. One institution had produced its own publication on PDP principles and practices, and departments were required to select and implement at least one activity from the publication. Another institution required departments to produce a departmental plan for PDP to demonstrate how PDP was being implemented and developed.

Stage of Implementation of PDP

Most institutions were two years into implementation, following the statutory requirement from 2005/06, but others had introduced PDP at least four or five years earlier and had attached considerable significance to the place of PDP in students’ learning.

Indeed, in one case, the use of progress files had been developed over fifteen years and several others had well-established practices in recording student reflective learning. On the other hand, several felt that they were very early in their development of PDP processes and a couple of institutions were a little unsure about the institutional commitment to PDP.

Finally, many pointed to substantial changes and developments which were under way or planned:

“A lot of changes going on here.”

“To introduce a new personal tutoring system and a mentoring suite for students.”

“PDP will predominate here.”

“PDP is at the forefront of all plans for learning and teaching and the student experience.”

Organisation of PDP

This is based on models of PDP outlined by Mark Atlay, University of Bedfordshire, which range from a ‘bolt on’ to a fully embedded provision for PDP. Some institutions felt that they embraced more than one approach, so the numbers listed below reflect this. Several institutions had aspirations to develop a fully embedded approach to PDP but were still facing constraints and challenges in achieving this. Furthermore, a discussion point was what constitutes a fully embedded approach. Indeed, perspectives ranged from a concern that the essence of PDP could be lost within a fully embedded model, to a view that fully embedded means that PDP is much more at the heart of the student learning experience. This approach involves a spine of dedicated modules to cohere and coordinate PDP, but which also link with all other modules, and even unmediated learning experiences like volunteering and part time work.

The figures reflect the early stage of many institutions’ development of PDP and the quite common perception that PDP is outside the subject curriculum and also closely linked to career planning and development.

Bolt-on (additional but parallel part of student experience)	3
Bolt-on (but with some links between PDP and curriculum)	9
Embedded in some modules	14
Embedded across the whole curriculum	7
Embedded across the whole curriculum PLUS link with unmediated activities like volunteering and part time work	3

Progression Through the Levels

Few institutions appeared to have explicit progression in PDP through all levels. The focus in most appeared to be at level one, particularly in study skills type modules. Several used the dissertation at level three, and employability and career planning became more significant in levels two and three in some programmes, but there is clearly a discontinuity at present in most institutions in developing students’ skills of PDP and self-managed learning. As one respondent revealed, “there is a gap between the central system and what we can do to interface and articulate PDP in our

programmes". Another institution had a very clear progression through the levels:

At Level 1, the focus is on operational skills in terms of generic business occupational pathway studies. The 'communication and personal development' module is the home of the PDP, which is supported by all first year modules. This is a taught module with seminar and tutorial support. It is designed to enable students to appreciate internal and external factors that affect business decisions and the operational occupational skills required by personnel in the hospitality industry. In addition, students will develop generic business communication and study skills. The main part of the assessment is a personal portfolio and plan for the development of their skills.

Level 2, has a departmental focus which develops on the skills focus of Level 1. The home of the PDP is the Events Management module which is supported by the other Level 2 modules. Students are required to run an event as part of this module and complete a reflective journal on the development and application of their academic and occupational skills.

Level 3 has a strategic focus and the dissertation is the home of the PDP which is again supported by other Level 3 modules. The focus here is on future development of skills.

This section also highlighted the issue of how progression possibly depends on a structured programme of methods, learning theory and, increasingly, self-regulated and self-managed learning. One institution has:

"a very clear objective of developing self-awareness in students as the key to developing the skills of PDP and employability".

Links to Personal Tutoring

Only three institutions did not have a personal tutor system, with one of these planning to introduce a system. In responses, the extent and effectiveness of personal tutoring in general and its links to PDP was rather patchy. Personal tutoring was confined to the first year in two instances and focused on level one in another, whilst a fourth had personal tutors in the first two levels only. However, there were also a number of concerns about how well personal tutoring was working and how it related to PDP. A reasonably large proportion of institutions did not integrate personal tutoring with PDP. Interestingly, one HEI calls them personal and academic tutors and, although there are timetabled sessions, these were not directly linked to personal tutoring and PDP. However, they were considering a:

"move to linking personal and academic tutors and PDP, but there was resistance from staff and the whole thing was controversial".

Particular problems appeared to occur in a number of institutions where all staff were obliged to become personal tutors and in

several cases where personal tutors were selected, there were indications of strain on both them and the system.

Coordination and support for students comes predominantly from academic staff, with several cases referring to links with careers and support staff. It was very clear that most respondents saw PDP as an academic process, although they were less clear about what made up this process.

The Learning Process: Assessment

PDP is assessed in 19 of the 26 institutions (73%) in variety of ways, many of them at Level 1 or in relation to work experience. Some approaches were more explicit than others, but in a number of cases, the assessment was hidden to some extent, or it was not clear as to what constituted PDP for assessment purposes. One respondent stated:

"Students complete a personal statement at the end of each year and at the end of their course where they reflect on their journey and their CV. This is not assessed. Skills development goes on within the curriculum and is assessed as part of the intended learning outcomes of the module but reflection and meta-learning takes place outside the curriculum using the PT [personal tutoring] system."

It was also clear that some respondents were not sure whether the focus of assessment should be the student process or the outcomes. Furthermore, there was some ambivalence expressed about the impact of assessment on the learning experience as evidenced by one response:

"I have always felt that assessing PDP was a bit of a contradiction in terms. If PDP is assessed, then it becomes less of a personal development plan, and more of a learning activity. On the other hand, I can see the value of assessment in encouraging students to engage with it. But to do this is to risk encouraging students to see PDP as something else to be "got out of the way" rather than a lifelong commitment, which is what it should ideally be. I think this paradox goes to the heart of why introducing PDP is such a problem."

The methods of assessment used varied but many involved reflective exercises, either linked to modules or to industrial placements. There was a mix of exercises employed in many instances, with slightly more using web based tools than paper based exercises, and with a number using both media. In three cases, there were between ten and a dozen specific tasks which were assessed through the programme, while about a quarter of institutions did not have evidence of a clear set of tools and exercises. Many used portfolios or web site tools and almost half of the respondents felt that the process was driven by technology.

The following were identified as the key methods and approaches of assessment:

Reflective exercises in general	Action planning/goal setting
Critical storytelling	CVs
Skills audits	Personal tutoring driven exercises
Assessment of study skills	Linked to dissertations
Work diaries and logs	Cottrell exercises plus trialled blogs
Employability related exercises	A toolkit on how to survive and to reflect critically
Career planning	

The Focus of the PDP Systems Investigated

This section of the survey asked respondents about their involvement in the three strands of PDP, as defined by the QAA, together with their focus on what we suggest are the main elements of the PDP process. We can see several patterns in the figures:

1. They confirm how the emphasis on PDP generally tails off after level one;
2. Career development, overall, does not feature very highly, and although its presence increases in institutions from 54% to 62% through the levels, we might expect it to be a very significant element in the final year;
3. Similarly, there is no manifest commitment to helping students present themselves to prospective employers, a key component of employability;
4. There are also quite dramatic reductions in the perceived importance of the processes of recording, self-assessment, reflecting and goal-setting; again, a progressive approach to PDP might be expected to focus more on these elements through the levels of a programme.

PDP Strands	Level 1 %	Level 2 %	Level 3 %
Personal development	92	54	54
Educational/academic	81	50	62
Career development	54	42	62

PDP Processes	Level 1 %	Level 2 %	Level 3 %
Recording	77	69	50
Self assessment	73	62	46
Reflection	65	62	38
Goal setting	69	65	50
Articulating achievements	54	54	58

Recording

In the sample, 46% of the programmes required students to compile a formalised portfolio as the Personal Development Record. A clear 27% did not have a formalised portfolio, but in a further 25% of cases students were asked to complete exercises and records which, whilst not constituting a formalised portfolio, were beginning to require students to provide and possibly reflect on their achievements and experiences.

Where there were portfolios, they were divided equally between paper-based and electronic versions. 58% were centralised ones and comprised a mix of 'off-the-shelf' packages like Pebble Pad or Blackboard or, in a couple of cases, systems developed by the institution. Significantly, many of those using paper-based systems and indeed those programmes without any portfolios, were moving towards or considering the use of electronic portfolios (again particularly Pebble Pad and Blackboard).

Institutional Awards

Only two institutions offer an additional University Award which accredits experiences and skills outside the formal curriculum, although four others are considering developing such awards at present. A number offer short course and coaching awards, but without accreditation, as well as volunteering and mentoring opportunities. This development is an important one in fully embedding PDP in both the curriculum and unmediated learning experiences outside the formal curriculum, for example part-time work and volunteering.

Impact to Date: Barriers to Implementation

The perceived barrier	Number of responses	Types of responses
Students	10	Students can't see the value Waste of time Its relevance? Students' understanding and acceptance Benefits not always clear to students or they do not see them to begin with Student engagement
Staff	11	Staff engagement Staff antagonism Staff attitudes Staff perceptions Staff-uneven feedback Inconsistency in staff marking and their role as personal tutors
Senior management/policy	5	
Systems	3	

We know from work conducted by the CRA that the implementation and impact of PDP across the HE sector has been variable to date and the responses in this survey appear to reflect this national picture. As can be seen in the table below, the fragmentation of approaches and the lack of progression and continuity of the system, or the lack of a formalised portfolio, were seen as barriers in several cases. A number of respondents also cited the constraints caused by senior management not understanding PDP, or failing to give a lead, coupled with the lack of policy or clear policy from the top. However, the two main sets of barriers inevitably

concerned students and staff in equal numbers (in almost half the sample) and many of the responses highlighted the problems of engagement and attitudes by both staff and students. However, it might be argued that if some staff do not see the value, relevance and academic merits of PDP, then it is unlikely that students will either.

Reaction to PDP

The overall view was that reaction by both students and staff has been a mixed one to date. The consensus of views confirmed the earlier comments about the patchy nature of student and staff engagement, and their attitudes to PDP and student-centred learning. There were very positive reactions to PDP, but many either pointed to a mix of positive and negative or apathetic responses, or, in some cases, suggested that students during the course of their programmes begin to view it more positively. For example, "some students take a pride and see the purpose, others are more sceptical". There seemed to be no pattern between staff and student reactions with instances of one party being positive and the other negative and vice-versa. It is encouraging to see, in some cases, positive responses by students as they become exposed to some clearly defined and well designed student learning experiences and can also see the purpose for them – "some students begin to take responsibility especially of the file" and "the keen ones react well through their programme". There may also be a correlation between negative staff attitudes and the disinclination of students to engage. A challenge perhaps not so much to inspire and motivate students as to inform and educate colleagues about the principles and benefits (including retention!) of PDP processes and outcomes.

Many respondents reiterated earlier claims that PDP is a positive move in supporting student learning although many (about a third of respondents) indicated that there was no hard evidence to support their views. They did, however, point to several perceived benefits to student learning:

- The ability to reflect on learning was the most commonly cited outcome of PDP processes, although several highlighted the difficulties that some students encounter in developing reflective thinking skills;
- A concomitant point related to self-awareness ("makes them look at themselves" and "understand themselves better"); although
- The ability to manage one's own learning (development of students as responsible and professional individuals) was only identified by a few respondents, as was;
- The need also to be reflexive and to translate reflections into action – an important outcome of PDP- "to get them to be reflective and reflexive and to move then forward".

More specifically, some respondents pointed to related outcomes, such as:

- fewer drop-outs
- added value to a CV
- helping to refine the link between academic and support staff
- enabling students to demonstrate their achievements

Issues/questions for further discussion and research:

- Constant struggle with students
- Engagement at level one
- Need for clear expectations
- There are many questions for curriculum design
- The need to engage senior managers
- Should it be student directed or staff driven?
- How are personal tutors involved? Should all tutors be involved?
- Should PDP be compulsory?
- Should it be assessed?

The survey was conducted by John Buswell, University of Gloucestershire, and Jacqui Gush, University of Bournemouth.

We would like to thank all those who contributed to this exercise. HLST will be publishing a number of case studies from institutions which took part in the survey and were willing to highlight particular features of their approach to PDP and student-centred learning. See www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/resources/casestudies/pdp for details.

References

Results of Previous Benchmark Surveys by HLST

www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/projects/detail/ourwork/OP_benchmarking

Centre for Recording Achievement
www.recordingachievement.org

Mark Atlay's models of PDP
www.recordingachievement.org/downloads/20070320matlay.pdf

Guidelines for LINK 22 – Employer Engagement

For LINK 22 we welcome contributions reflecting the range of current employer engagement, including:

- **Knowledge Transfer Projects** – principles and practice, benefits and limitations, effective working relationships
- **Work-based Learning** – support for work-based learners, approaches to assessment, quality assurance, examples of effective practice
- **Foundation Degrees** – models of effective practice in their development and delivery, feedback from students and employers
- **Research and consultancy** – providing a service to employers, case studies which illustrate effective practice, benefits and limitations, articulation with curriculum development
- **Employers and HE** – as advisors in curriculum development, as external examiners, as specialist and part-time lecturers, working with individuals and working with companies, examples of effective practice
- **Employers and employability** – working with employers to ensure the employability of our students
- **Employers and entrepreneurship** – working with employers to develop particular capabilities in our students
- **Funding HE** – examples of financial contributions, actual and in kind, made by employers to support curriculum development and delivery
- **Working with Sector Skills Councils, and industry and professional bodies** – example of effective practice, benefits and limitations
- **Working with Lifelong Learning Networks, Aimhigher, local college partnerships and other regional agencies** – to provide opportunities for participation and progression in higher education

See website for further details. www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/resources/linknewsletter

www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst



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