Future Directions: Projects to enhance learning and teaching in Wales

Reports on the funded institutional enhancement activities 2012-14
Dr Stephen Bostock
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1. Introduction

Future Directions (FD) is the programme to enhance the student learning experience in higher education in Wales. All the universities in Wales take part and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) manages the programme. It was developed initially in 2010 to create a conference about enhancing learning and teaching, which became biennial after the first conference at Glyndŵr University in 2012. With the agreement of the universities and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), the first theme of Future Directions, Graduates for Our Future, had three workstrands: Learning in Employment; Learning for Employment; and Students as Partners. Each workstrand had members from each university. These workstrands were the focus of the first conference in 2012 at Glyndŵr University, and related publications.

For the 2012-13 academic year the Future Directions steering group (FDSG), representing the universities and other national bodies, requested the establishment of institutional teams made up of steering group and workstrand members within each institution, along with other interested colleagues. To facilitate the work of these institutional teams the HEA provided a grant of £2,500 to each institution to support internal enhancement projects and initiatives that addressed one or more of the Graduates for our Future workstrands, along with £500 to support internal dissemination events to raise the profile of FD work.

The institutional teams unanimously agreed that the provision of this funding was vital to the success of these projects. Even this small amount of funding greatly increased the motivation of staff to engage in project work, and resulted in a far greater outcome than could be purchased by the amount of funding itself. It was an important vehicle of recognition for staff involved and increased ‘start up’ projects. It provided invaluable opportunities to share the outputs from existing work among staff and students, and to link to future developments.

This publication is the collection of reports on those enhancement activities, written by the institutional FD teams in Spring 2014, with a little editing for consistency. It is part of the record of higher education enhancement work in Wales. The projects and activities supported were later presented at the biennial conference at Aberystwyth University in April 2014. Many of these can be found in the record of the conference on the HEA Wales website. After that conference, this theme and its workstrands were replaced in a further phase of FD.

Dr Stephen Bostock
Future Directions Strategic Lead
2. Aberystwyth University

The institutional team

The composition of the team:
Graham Lewis (lead and Learning in Employment workstrand member);
Sian Furlong-Davies (Learning for Employment workstrand member);
Sam Reynolds (Students as Partners workstrand member).

With the team representing staff development, students’ union and the careers service, it offers a balanced focus and approach to decision making and to the tasks being undertaken. The team further aims to include as much student participation as possible with all activities. The funding was used to support all the workstrands.

The nature of the project

The project was to produce a series of sound bites / vox pops that will show students and academics how a broad range of activities can support the development of employability skills. These video clips will support and enhance careers and employability information already on offer to students and staff via the university website, but will bring life and meaning to the often inanimate advice offered on the web pages. The clips focus on the following student-led perspectives:

- development of graduate level skills from casual work opportunities;
- development opportunities from positions of responsibility in clubs and societies;
- benefits of volunteering to future jobs prospects;
- skills developed from course representative role;
- relevance of input to curriculum development and learning to the broader workplace;
- advantages of Year in employment scheme (YES) / GO Wales opportunities and work-based placements/modules.

Plus there is the academic perspective in terms of how students develop as a result of involvement in the above activities and the impact of this involvement on their academic performance.

Students are the driving force in the initiative as they have responsibility for:

- selecting participants and sound bite themes;
- addressing all the focus areas of the project;
- co-ordinating the timing of the filming and the selection of venues;
- organising the students and staff to attend;
- conducting the filming and audio recordings;
- editing and refining the clips;
- arranging for dissemination and promotion.

Impact: raised awareness and increased understanding

It is anticipated that involvement in the project will heighten the awareness of the participants with regard to the skills they are gaining and have gained as a result of their current involvement, as well as from other activities. It is also anticipated that staff will gain a greater understanding of how important such activities are to the intellectual, as well as employability-related, development of students.

Impact: changed practice/ policy

The inclusion of academic participation is aimed at creating greater awareness amongst colleagues of
the benefits of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and that this initiative will drive changes in curriculum development to create more inclusive learning environments.

**Internal dissemination**

This will be as broad as possible and include:

- formal dissemination via the employability action group, learning and teaching enhancement committee, Institute of Education, graduate and professional development, and student academic executive committee;
- informal dissemination via institute-based employability working groups, employability coordinators, link careers advisers, students’ union colleagues, Aber News, website promotion, weekly bulletins, academic representatives, and student ambassadors.
3. Bangor University

The institutional team

The Bangor University Future Directions steering group (FDSG) was set up in September 2013 with formal terms of reference approved at its first meeting in October 2013. The stated aim of the group is:

“To provide a consultative and decision-making group for the monitoring and dissemination of HEA Future Directions initiatives and their impact on teaching and learning enhancement at Bangor”.

A key need addressed by the group is to create a forum for dissemination of outcomes from the Future Directions (FD) workstrands and create an important internal network to inform channels of communication running between the University and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) Wales FDSG.

The challenge facing the group at that time was to align FD initiatives with institutional strategy priorities and projects in order to maximise resources and increase mutual impact and value. We also sought to increase engagement with HEA Wales and FD workstrands and the presence of Bangor University at the FD conference in April 2014. This has been achieved, with Bangor University staff and students now involved in all three new workstrands, plus ongoing work in Students as Partners. Bangor University has conference proposals accepted in all three workstrands and student representatives both presenting and attending the conference as delegates.

The nature of the projects/initiatives and their key outputs

The formation of the Bangor University FDSG is seen as a positive feature in itself to report in that it has already had impact in increasing engagement with the HEA and FD activities. The group used the funding to stimulate development and engagement through two projects.

The funding received was awarded internally by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC) Teaching and Learning through a process of invitation and assessment of internal bids. The projects awarded were as follows:

- Dr Sheila Hughes’ video project;
- Dr Fran Garrard-Cole’s PoPPs Project.

Dr Garrard’s project is due to be rolled out University-wide in the next academic year (2014/15), as a key project in the new Centre for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (CELT) in the process of being established by the PVC Teaching and Learning.

“These activities are helping to build and support a momentum for change within the organisation which is being actively directed at Executive level.”

Sue Clayton, Bangor University
Dr Yvonne McDermott’s Law work Placement project

The funding was used to supplement support for students who wanted to do work experience with solicitors, barristers or in other fields related to the legal profession, but would otherwise have been unable to do so as these internships are usually unpaid.

Key outputs:

- students have gained practical experience of professional life, and awareness of what life would be like in their chosen profession;
- some students have been offered paid employment as a consequence of their work experience an enhanced employability for the school;
- students have enhanced their skills;
- the school has now set up a placement programme that helps students who cannot find relevant work experience.

Internal dissemination

These projects have been/will be widely disseminated across the University, and in particular to the new network of College Directors of Teaching and Learning, facilitated by the PVC Teaching and Learning.

Sheila Hughes is a member of the new Learner Journeys workstrand and this project contributed to the work of that strand and to her FD conference session delivered in April 2014. This project was widely reported in the Bangor University staff newsletter and on the website.

The funding for dissemination of FD work was spent on:

- A University-wide event in September 2013 to introduce the FD themes and discuss links with enhancement. Dr Mark Langan (National Teaching Fellow from Manchester Metropolitan University) was invited to present his current research into the National Student Survey funded by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and HEA surveys for enhancement project.
- A keynote speaker for the Bangor Academy of Teaching Fellows Conference held in November 2013. The theme of the conference – Flexible Teaching/Flexible Learning – was chosen to reflect FD themes and parallel session themes were: Inspiring Teaching; Students as Partners, Flexible Curricula; Employability and Learner Journeys. The keynote speaker was Professor Steve Wheeler from Plymouth University, an internationally renowned expert in creativity in learning and teaching.

The Bangor University FDSG will be considering how to integrate dissemination of these projects into the new CELT operations and website during 2013/14. With respect to the levels of impact we are asked to reflect upon: whilst we can confidently say that these activities have greatly increased understanding and behavioural impact within the spheres of influence of the project participants, we can’t yet fully measure the impact in terms of behavioural and organisational change at this stage. We would be interested in any methodology other institutions are using in this respect. These activities are helping to build and support a momentum for change within the organisation which is being actively directed at executive level.
4. Cardiff Metropolitan University

The institutional team

The institutional team to date has been:
Colleen Connor (steering group member and workstrand leader);
Ruth Matheson (Learning for Employment workstrand member);
Sue Tangney (Students as Partners workstrand member);
Nic Poole (Students as Partners workstrand member);
David Lloyd (Learning in Employment and Learner Journeys workstrand member);
Sophie Leslie and Loretta Newman-Ford (both have participated in Future Directions (FD) events).

Moving forward it is intended that the group will expand to include other institutional members on the new workstrands and to have greater representation from schools and representation from the students’ union. The group operating to date has been confined to those participants above for pragmatic reasons and, although not representative of all interested parties, team members have actively sought the views of others, including students.

The greatest challenges facing the team have included staff time to focus specifically on FD, especially in the context of a number of other initiatives and an imminent institutional review. However, it has been recognised by the team that the themes of FD are relevant to a large number of enhancement activities undertaken across the University, i.e. they are integrated into many initiatives. Whilst this makes any separation for reporting purposes somewhat artificial it also demonstrates the relevance of FD themes. It also provides opportunities to highlight FD activity in the normal course of events.

The integrated nature of this work, combined with the difficulty of allocating additional staff time, has also influenced funding decisions. Thus funding has been used to support existing projects for an additional year and to part-fund new projects where a staff resource had already been allocated.

The nature of the projects/initiatives funded and the key outputs.

The projects supported by FD funding have been:

1. An extension to a peer learning network for Speech and Language Therapy students where two student interns have been employed to co-ordinate the network and work with learning developers. This will ensure a firm foundation and additional resources for the network prior to its ‘handover’ to the school. Students participating in this network have made contributions to the Students as Partners workstrand output and will be contributing to Student Stories.

2. A contribution to the funding for a project to capture what students needed from feedback. This project resulted in a student focused poster that was widely welcomed. Funding allowed the production of additional posters.

3. Art and Design graduates and employers are being interviewed and filmed to provide an opportunity for graduates to express their views on Learning for Employment. Funding has enabled us to provide a token reimbursement for their time.

Internal dissemination

Dissemination of FD activity takes a number of forms in the institution, the principle ones being: information is given to managers in boards and committees for further dissemination in schools and
units; the activity is highlighted in workshops organised by the Learning and Teaching Development Unit where it is relevant and use of the resources produced through FD (e.g. workstrand case studies) for enhancement initiatives allows further dissemination.

This approach probably reflects the integration of the themes with institutional initiatives but the team has also discussed taking a more explicit approach and going to school meetings to inform school managers of the opportunities to get involved in FD activities and of the contributions already being made. This is to be scheduled for the summer term 2013/14.
5. Glyndŵr University

The institutional team

The team in 2012-13 was:
Dr Stephen Bostock, Head of the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Assessment (CLTA) (Future Directions institutional contact and Learning for Employment workstrand co-ordinator);
Trish Reid (Learning in Employment workstrand co-ordinator);
Sally Harrison (Students as Partners workstrand co-ordinator).

The nature of the project and key outputs

The funding to support internal enhancement was used for Student Stories – Sharing Success, a project to create a ‘media toolkit’ for use with student representatives and in staff development activities for all three Future Directions (FD) workstrands. Engaging students at every stage of the project, we will produce a collection of short video clips of professional quality, to be used as a toolkit in sharing successful academic experiences and overall experiences of current students, and of alumni in employment. The clips will be indexed against the three FD workstrands and made publicly available. One goal of the Student Stories project is aimed at engaging students in strategic retention activity, in order to raise awareness of retention challenges at institutional level, amongst staff (academic and non-academic) and students. Another goal is improving staff awareness of work-based learning initiatives, employability skills and ‘learning in and for employment’.

Student Stories – Sharing Success
production and feedback loop

HEA retention Research and institutional knowledge

Students interpret our brief in context of own institution

Toolkits used in staff development and published online

Students work with staff and other students to identify stories

Project leader assembles ‘toolkits’ for staff development

Students film and record identified stories
The toolkit will be produced for institutional purposes and will then be available as a product and as a process for all Welsh institutions to adopt and reproduce – for direct use or as a guide for gathering and sharing success stories locally. This diagram demonstrates the feedback loop of how we’re going to use our stories, once they are gathered (captured on video). National Union of Students (NUS) Wales has agreed to host the final products.

Student Stories have been captured using the mediums of video, audio and social media in order to capture, in their own words, the best experiences of students. There has been a particular focus on positive accounts of work-based learning, employability and personal and professional development, as intended.

The funding supported purchase of simple video cameras for a team of students, one day's professional video shoot (working with Glyndŵr University graduates – and student led), and some professional video editing.

Some of the Student Stories media content was presented at the institutional e-learning conference on 8 January 2014. This is available to Glyndŵr University staff as a captured lecture. Edited materials and elements of the ‘toolkit’ will be shared with colleagues, NUS Wales and other members of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) at the next FD conference in Aberystwyth, April 2014. To further increase understanding of the project and its outcomes, Sally Harrison is hosting a workshop at the conference entitled – ‘Student Stories – Engaging Students in Staff Development’. A Glyndŵr University student will co-present with Harrison to ensure the student voice feeds into the entire process; including the dissemination of the work. This workshop will end with a discussion on the wider outcomes of the student stories project, including the topics of student satisfaction, staff development, feedback and quality enhancement. Slides and materials (i.e. Student Stories toolkit) will be shared with conference delegates.

While the impact of the Student Stories initiative cannot yet fully be assessed, we do already know that this work has raised awareness (within our own institution at present) of the potential benefits of gathering student-led feedback; both in the process itself and the potential outcomes of bringing positive feedback to life, using the student voice.

**Internal dissemination**

The funding to support internal dissemination was used to support a Glyndŵr University teaching symposium at Wrexham on 17 July 2013. The theme of the symposium was Learning for and in employment and the speakers were chosen with this in mind. The funding contributed to the cost of travel and accommodation expenses for speakers, small honoraria for two speakers, and the catering on the day.

The programme had three presentations by Glyndŵr University staff and five presentations by invited speakers including:
- Marina Orsini-Jones National Teaching Fellow from Coventry University;
- Richard Osborne, from his JISC project on work-related assessment at Exeter University;
- Matthew Wyman from Keele University;
- a local employer, Chris Taylor.
Photographs of the event and the presentation slides have been made available to Glyndŵr University staff within the institutional virtual learning environment (VLE), and these were promoted through the institutional newsletter. The programme is attached. The symposium raised awareness of enhancement activities and of FD within the institution.
6. Swansea University

The institutional team

The team at Swansea University consisted of:
The Swansea Academy of Learning and Teaching team (SALT)
  Jane Thomas, (Director of SALT);
  Chris Hall;
  Matthew Allen;
  Phil Maull;
  Helen Davies.

Contributors
  Darren Oakley (Engineering);
  Mike Draper (Law);
  Kasia Szpakowska (Arts and Humanities);
  Jane Thomas (Health and Human Sciences);
  David Gallimore (Human and Health Sciences).

The nature of the project and key outputs

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) funding was provided to enable us to embed a resource for teachers made up of case studies/scenarios of innovative teaching and/or assessment designed and delivered by inspiring teachers.

Case studies were sought which showed an innovative approach to authentic assessment practices, which while subject specific to a point also demonstrated a general approach which was actually applicable to many other areas of study. Particular care was taken to look at student involvement in the development of the approach.

Each teacher involved was interviewed by a member of the SALT team, with a range of topics and questions in mind, and then the actual case study was built up. Student feedback was also gathered and the way that the feedback had been used by the teacher to produce a more appropriate approach in the future was considered.

Preparing the case studies also gave the academic staff the opportunity to review what they had done and re-evaluate their approach.

Preparing the web resources: The web resources will be made available to internal and external audiences by inclusion on the pre-existent SALT website and also by putting them on their own dedicated site. They will consist of richer, fuller versions of the case studies in the publication including, where appropriate: video interviews with the lecturer involved recorded in our media studios; links to resources; further examples of student feedback and evaluation and; literature searches around both authentic assessment in general and also subject specific material when available.

It is envisaged that the range of resources held on the website will grow and develop with time, as more case studies are produced and added to it.

Producing the booklet: The booklet will be produced from shorter versions of the case studies and has been designed to be an accessible resource that links to, and in with, the web site to appropriately showcase some of the range of innovative approaches taken at Swansea University. The booklet will be produced bilingually in Welsh and English. The booklet will also be made available on the website in PDF format, adhering to the sustainability agenda followed by the University by
keeping the number of printed copies required down. The booklet and the website will play a part in
the dissemination.

There will also be an extended seminar event held in February 2014. This event will include some of
the teachers involved in the case studies talking about and elaborating on their approach. It will also
look at the concept of authentic assessment and at the role of student involvement and engagement
with developing the assessment process. The event will be largely internal, to spread the good
practice round our community of teaching practitioners, but it will also be promoted to external
attendees through the HEA website.

**Raised awareness**

The exercise has heightened awareness amongst contributors, their colleagues and website users of
the range of good practice across the institution and accessible to them. The peer to peer style is
intended to encourage and empower colleagues in their approaches to learning, teaching and
assessment.

**Increased understanding**

The case studies are designed to provide both ‘knows how’ and ‘shows how’ support for fellow
teachers, building knowledge and skills.

**Changed practice/policy**

The participants who contributed their case studies experienced an enhanced sense of contribution
in so doing and take a reflective approach to the application/change in teaching styles which follow.
The dissemination event will give a greater opportunity to assess the potential impact more widely.
The institution is currently revising its approach to peer observation and it is expected that this
development can underpin that change in a positive and andragogic way.

“What the teacher is, is more important than what they teach.”

Karl Menninger

**Impact**

- process impact has been achieved in terms of changes in the activities of the exemplar
teachers, focusing them on their practice and the benefits of making explicit how they
improved their teaching;
- systems impact is being achieved as we use the SALT website more interactively, encouraging
teachers to use the scenarios/case studies as a developmental resource – changes in
procedures;
- Swansea University is in a process of transition with regard to organisation on several levels
as it continues the planned move to a two campus structure. With this in mind the structural
change impact of this project has remained deliberately low;
- the institution is also undergoing a cultural change with regard to the prominence and value of
teaching and the processes of reward, recognition and progression. This project is timely
within that change as we move towards more supportive means of developing teachers,
enabling our best to excel and those still developing to sustain improvement. Respect for
teachers and teaching is increasing and SALT is keen to use opportunities such as this to enrich institutional values, relationships and policy.

**Dissemination**

Internal dissemination has been undertaken as the project has evolved, to an extent as the team have worked with individual teachers to summarise key exemplars of good practice. External and internal dissemination will occur from the SALT event in February 2014. This is planned to include as many of our own teachers as possible but also to welcome colleagues from collaborating organisations (International College Wales, our further education colleagues and other higher education institutions). The team take a reflective approach to developmental processes and feel that this style of engagement and dissemination is particularly effective in terms of raised awareness, increased understanding and lasting changes in practice and policy.

The project was intended to enable inspiring teachers at Swansea University to reflect on their contribution and to share their practice in the form of web-based case studies. It enables us to work with what our teachers are, what they can develop to become and to recognise their skills beyond the constraints of subject.
7. University of South Wales (Pontypridd and Cardiff)  
(formerly Glamorgan University)

The institutional team

The institutional team consisted of:
Haydn Blackey (Future Directions steering group (FDSG) member and institutional representative - Students as Partners workstrand);
Dr Karen Fitzgibbon (FDSG member and workstrand Leader – Learning in Employment);
Lesley Long (institutional representative – Learning for Employment);
Sarah Valkenborghs (students’ union representative – Students as Partners workstrand).

The team met monthly throughout the period to update one another on the progress of each of the workstrands. Institutional engagement with the workstrands was monitored by the team who actively promoted the Welsh enhancement theme: Graduates for our Future’. The team took a lead in disseminating the theme through institutional channels including reporting to the institutional learning and teaching enhancement committee and the student success project group and feeding into faculty level learning and teaching committees. The faculty Head of Learning and Teaching were briefed monthly on the workstrands.

Given the institutional Change Academy project Learning through Employment which provided resources to support the Learning in Employment workstrand and a significant investment by the institution in the development of Students as Partners the team agreed that the funding should be allocated to support the work of the Learning for Employment workstrand at the University. The institutional representative on the Learning for Employment workstrand met with those who had been supporting the initiative internally and recommend the expenditure which was agreed by the institutional team.

The projects/initiatives

Learning in Employment workstrand

The Learning through Employment Change Academy project led to a revised and enhanced version of the Lecturers and employers learning through employment toolkits (including Welsh language versions - http://celt.southwales.ac.uk/resources/lte/). The project also created six case studies for the Learning through Employment toolkits. Through engagement with faculty academic staff, 65 modules were redeveloped and rewritten to include Learning through Employment.

The impact of the Learning through Employment project has affected all faculties and has seen a cultural change in the approach of academic staff to engaging with learners in their workplace.

Students as Partners workstrand

The University and its’ Students’ Union built on the long history of partnership and working together to develop an academic manifesto for the enhancement of the student experience. The Sabbatical Officers at the University of South Wales Students’ Union (USWSU) in collaboration with the institutional Students as Partners representative developed the University Students Want (USW) academic manifesto. This was compiled using data from the Student led teaching and staff wards from across all campuses of the University of South Wales and relates to the things students would like to see implemented as part of their University experience.
The Manifesto has been formally agreed between the University and the Students’ Union and is the basis of policy and practice changes at institutional and faculty level. The learning and teaching enhancement committee and its faculty sub-committees have the task of reporting on the impact of the manifesto throughout 2013-14.

Learning for Employment workstrand

The institutional representative on the workstrand identified a number of student-facing initiatives that would be enhanced by the use of the funding as seed-corn for further institutional enhancement. It was agreed that the resources be provided for this purpose. The resources were used to purchase MTa Learning Kits¹ which provide experiential learning materials that help tutors and facilitators develop the employability skills of their learners. These kits are reusable and scalable and have been used extensively in undergraduate and postgraduate employability modules.

The impact of the use of the learning kits has been immediate as it has allowed students to engage with a reflection on their practice in relation to employment and employability. In particular the use of the kits has supported the learners in their preparation for graduate level employment as the kits focus learner minds on the things employers identify as critical skills for their employees.

Internal dissemination

The primary means of internal dissemination were:

1. Staff Development Activities:
   - four Learning for Employment seminars;
   - two Students as Partners seminars;
   - three Learning in Employment seminars.

2. Institutional committees with responsibility for policy and practice in these areas including:
   - learning and teaching enhancement committee;
   - faculty learning and teaching enhancement committee;
   - executive student success group;
   - Change Academy steering group;
   - Change Academy operational group;
   - departmental staff meetings in all faculties.

¹ http://www.mtalearning.com/resources-and-activities-to-develop-employability-skills
8. University of South Wales (City & Caerleon Campuses)  
(Formerly University of Wales, Newport)

The institutional team

The significant impact of merger of the University of Wales, Newport with the University of Glamorgan in April 2013 and subsequent large scale change in staffing led to the decision to focus on two workstrands; Learning For Employment and Learning in Employment (and the new Learner Journeys workstrand). Our intention was that the Students as Partners approach would be reflected within the work done, thereby demonstrating an embedded approach reflected in the new workstrands of the Future Directions (FD) 2013-2015 initiative.

Learning for Employment

The merged institution has meant that work experience support receives even greater exposure through the GradEdge Award. This is new to the University of South Wales (USW) Newport campuses and staff can now use the award as the foundation to launch a new drive on work experience and work related learning. A focus to encourage students to explore avenues for work experience outside of the curriculum has been supported by a new bursary system. It has been important to identify areas where students as partners initiatives have led to work experience (through work with the Students’ Union and the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching) in the past, as well as courses where work experience is not an integral part, to work with staff and students on awareness raising and engagement of this new approach.

Learning in Employment/Learner Journeys

Linking the workstrands together has provided a seamless progression opportunity to ensure outputs² from the Learning in Employment workstrands continued to be used and embedded in subsequent Learner Journey developments. Reflecting the newly merged systems of the new University, the newly created student-led academic manifesto from the University of South Wales Students’ Union (USWSU) reflected the themes from the two workstrands providing an ideal background to support ongoing work. This is now being progressed by the USWSU, linking with student representatives across the University.

Two student internships were scoped and progressed in 2013 with their work continuing into 2014. These are focusing on the development of student-centred bite-sized “Learner Journeys” providing a reflective “window” on learning during work-experience. These experiences will be used in USW GradEdge promotional developments to encourage USW students to demonstrate the learning from their work-focused experience. It will also provide the students on work-experience with direct contributions for their USW GradEdge portfolios. The outputs from this development will also be included in the outputs from the Learner Journeys workstrand.

A further student internship was progressed which focused solely on the Learner Journey aspect. This was to carry out student-centred market research to gather views from students at all levels on technological motivation to encourage retention, achievement and success during their learner journeys. As well as guiding continuing developments, this information is being disseminated across the University as part of a cross-institutional initiative to enhance retention, achievement and student during the learner journey.

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² Learning in Employment case studies and impact of Learning in Employment information
Internal dissemination

Learning for Employment

CELT has been a useful forum for running the sorts of engagement events needed to introduce staff to this new approach to work experience and the associated award procedures. This has been done in conjunction with e-Portfolio projects run across USW and has provided staff with much more than just the work experience agenda, but also the opportunity to look at resources they can use to attain broader skills reflection. In addition to this, work has had to be done on a bespoke basis (one-to-one meetings with academics and deans) and programme basis in terms of finding inductions to meet and talk through with both staff and students.

Learning in Employment/Learner Journeys

Dissemination has involved working closely staff on the USW GradEdge initiative to link with established marketing communication channels – this reflecting an embedded Students as Partners approach. Employing students to progress the work ensured that a student perspective was reflected in the production and reflected a student viewpoint throughout. Such perspectives were valuable to guide market positioning as well as content.

The student-centred market research from various learner journeys will form the basis for an internal seminar to staff in January 2014 and another seminar to course leaders in April 2014, in conjunction with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, focusing on developments to progress retention, achievement and success. The outcomes from this work will also be presented as a paper at the HEA Wales Future Directions conference in April 2014.
The institutional team

The institutional team for this project consisted of:
Dr Nick Potter (Dean of Learning, Teaching and Enhancement);
Karen Jones (Assistant Dean (Quality) of the faculty of Business and Management);
Lucy Griffiths (a member of the academic staff within the same faculty (currently seconded to the central team). Lucy Griffiths undertook the research work under the guidance of the broader team).

The nature of the project

This project was proposed in response to rapid advancements in learning technologies and the widespread discussion within the higher education (HE) sector of the potential impact of massive open online courses (MOOCs) and other open educational models on HE globally and locally. The project aimed to review the level of strategic response to this by higher education institutions (HEIs) in Wales through an analysis of their strategic planning documents as mapped against the series of five models for future delivery of HE described in the Institute of Public Policy Research’s paper ‘An Avalanche is Coming’ (Barber et al, 2013) and proposed new models of delivery from the Welsh Government’s HE policy statement (Welsh Government, 2013:32). The content of each strategic plan was analysed to map the strategic intent against the IPPR and Welsh Government models, and to present a pan-Wales picture of strategic intent.

Impact

The project work is on-going and initial findings are highlighting some significant trends in the future plans of the current group of Welsh HEIs. The insights may be useful at both a local level within the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, as the merged and transformed University develops, but also from a pan-Wales policy perspective, in identifying potential strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in terms of the nation’s HE provision.

Raised awareness

The project has increased the awareness of participants in terms of the role strategic plans play in determining the focus of institutions in Wales, and the potential impacts in terms of teaching, learning and enhancement. Strategic plans provide important indicators of intent, and this project showed a level of commonality in approach across the institutions in Wales in areas such as the development of partnerships, and employability, whilst also highlighting the major differences between institutions (for example, those who clearly identified themselves as research-led, and those who did not). The picture of Wales’s HE sector that is emerging may be of interest to a wide range of institutional leaders and policy makers.

Increased understanding

For the research team, the project has provided a valuable learning opportunity in understanding the HE sector within Wales, and will inform the participants’ professional practice within their roles in the organisation as they relate to the development of institutional strategies for the institution. From a personal perspective, Lucy Griffiths was able to develop research skills and a potential area for future research focus. Disseminating the findings across the institution will, it is hoped, highlight the institution’s position within the Welsh HE environment to members of staff at all levels of the organisation, and at senior management level in particular, it is hoped that this research may be useful in informing decision making.
**Changed practice/policy**

For the project team, this will inform future decision-making within their roles, and offers the potential to become a broader and deeper research project. For the staff involved in the dissemination activity, it may also inform their thinking and practice in relation to the University’s position within HE in Wales. It is intended that the senior management team will be presented with the findings, and it is hoped that they will be used to inform institutional policy and the development of future strategic plans.

**Relationship to themes and work-strands**

In looking back at the Graduates for Our Future themes, the project has highlighted a number of areas where Welsh institutions have made strong commitments to action. Working in partnership with students was highlighted in the majority of the strategic plans, and learning for employment was also a key feature, however learning *in* employment was far less prevalent. In light of the issues around the need for flexible and work-based learning opportunities raised by the IPPR paper (Barber et al, 2013), this could be perceived as a significant gap to be addressed, and presents an opportunity for institutions in Wales. In identifying and communicating that this gap exists, this project has the potential influence institutional policy and practice in relation to work-based learning and the ‘unbundling of higher education’ (Barber et al, 2013).

Looking forward to the future Higher Education Academy (HEA) strategic theme, Global Graduates: Enabling Flexible Learning, this project has the potential to inform strategic planning at institutional and national level, as it helps to identify, based on existing strategies where there are further gaps in provision and opportunities to take the lead.

**Internal dissemination**

As the project develops, findings are being disseminated via blogs and discussion items/groups on the University’s online collaborative network for staff (iCAN). This reflexive approach has enabled staff to discuss the project findings and their potential impacts in an open online environment. This has resulted in ideas and suggestions for further avenues for the project to explore, and ways in which both individuals and the institution can act upon the findings and use them in its decision-making processes.

On completion of the first phase, the senior management team will receive an overview of the findings with a view to this providing them with useful information to support their decision making regarding the future positioning of the University within a Welsh context.

**References**


Welsh Government, 2013 *Policy Statement on Higher Education*  
http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/highereducation/policy-statement/?lang=en
10. **University of Wales**

**Background**

For the 2012-13 academic year the Future Directions steering group (FDSG), through the Higher Education Academy (HEA), requested the establishment of institutional teams made up of FDSG and workstrand members within the institution along with other interested colleagues.

To facilitate the work of the institutional teams the HEA provided a grant of £2,500 to support internal enhancement projects and initiatives that address at least one or more of the Graduates for our workstrands along with £500 to support internal dissemination events to raise the profile of Future Directions (FD) work.

In accord with the grant funding, the University of Wales is here reporting to the FDSG on the use of this funding and highlighting the activities and outputs achieved. This report will also be submitted to the University of Wales degrees and awards board.

**Institutional team**

The University of Wales institutional team comprised:

1. Professor Simon Haslett, Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor, who is the University of Wales representative on the FDSG. Between February 2012 and August 2013 he was Chair of the University of Wales quality, standards and enhancement board.
2. Dr Gavin Bunting, Senior Lecturer, who represented the University of Wales on the Learning in Employment and Learning for Employment workstrands.
3. Ben Gray, Student Engagement Officer, who represented the University of Wales on the Students as Partners workstrand. Until July 2013, he was also the Chair of the University of Wales student affairs board.
4. Jessica Williams, Administrative Officer at the University of Wales.

The institutional team was established by the quality, standards and enhancement board at its meeting of 5 March 2013. The institutional team met on 23 April 2013 and was chaired by Professor Haslett. The minutes were submitted to the University of Wales degrees and awards board. Subsequent meetings were planned but due to institutional restructuring over the summer 2013 all but one team member has now left the University of Wales.

**Themes and initiative funded**

Activity relating to the two FD workstrand themes was planned:

a) Learning in/for Employment

It was recognised that a number of University of Wales collaborative centres are well-placed to focus on employability, some offering career placement opportunities. It was suggested that University of Wales moderators might be engaged in order to share good practice and examples of employability they have seen across centres they have visited, which might be used in the development of an action plan for sharing best practice. It was agreed that this information might be collected through moderator’s reports and would not require project funding, and was submitted as a suggestion to the degree and awards board.

b) Students as Partners
Themes identified in the National Union of Students (NUS) manifesto for partnership launched in November 2012 required dissemination in order to realistically develop partnership approaches across the University of Wales collaborative centres. It was agreed that the NUS manifesto be distributed to stimulate debate which would encourage partnership development and would not require project funding. The NUS manifesto was submitted to the University of Wales degrees and awards board for this suggested purpose.

The University of Wales has academic expertise and developed a reputation in the field of ‘linking research and teaching’, including undergraduate research, scholarship of teaching and learning, pedagogic research, and research-informed teaching. University of Wales organised and hosted the Research-Teaching Practice Conference at Gregynog in 2011 and research-informed learning is also at the heart of the current University of Wales learning and teaching strategy 2010-15. It was agreed to apply the project funding to develop this area through inviting both institutions in Wales and collaborative centres to share best practice through a keynote workshop and conference at Gregynog in July 2013.

Given the distributed nature of the University of Wales and that staff teaching on programmes leading to its awards are based at both institutions in Wales and at collaborative centres in the UK and abroad, it was decided that this two-day event act as a combined theme and dissemination event. However, within the context of institutional restructuring taking place over summer 2013, the event was delayed and took place on 9-10 September 2013.

The enhancement theme and details of the event were presented to all institutions in Wales and collaborative centres through the University of Wales Quality News3, which raised awareness of the enhancement theme and generated considerable interest both from institutions that currently (and formerly) deliver(ed) programmes leading to a University of Wales award and others. Colleagues from the following institutions attended:

Institutions in Wales

- Cardiff University
- University of South Wales
- University of Wales
- University of Wales: Trinity Saint David (including Swansea Metropolitan)

Collaborative Centres

- Hereford College of Art
- Kaplan Holborn College, London
- Newcastle College

Others

- University of Gloucestershire
- University of Southampton.

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Dissemination

The resources of the event have been disseminated publicly, with the agreement of all participants, through the University of Wales Quality News. For each presenter a blog page has been compiled that, as a minimum, includes a slidecast (synchronised Powerpoint and audio), an abstract and a photograph of the presenter(s). Other resources, such as video and documents, are also included with some presentations. The blog allows comments to be posted to encourage discussion. The presentations and keynote workshop are as follows:

Keynote workshop
Rethinking the dissertation: avoiding throwing the baby out with the bathwater
Mick Healey (University of Gloucestershire).

Subtheme one: policy and strategy

- Status quo vadis? An assessment of the relationship between science, education and policy implementation. Christopher House (University of Wales: Trinity Saint David), Gavin Bunting (University of Wales) and Stephen Hole (University of Wales: Trinity Saint David)

- Developing students as researchers within College-based Higher Education. Jonathan Eaton (Newcastle College)

Subtheme two: research-informed teaching

- Bridging the theory practice gap. How to effectively integrate guest/visiting lecturers into HEI provision. Gavin Bunting (University of Wales) and Christopher House (University of Wales: Trinity Saint David)

- It’s time to ‘Face’ the truth. Is Facebook’s Survey Monkey a legitimate research and pedagogical tool? Stephen Hole and Christopher House (University of Wales: Trinity Saint David), and Gavin Bunting (University of Wales)

Subtheme three: student engagement with research in the curriculum

- The Thought Experiment: nurturing research strategies for Masters students in Art and Design. Howard Riley and Paul Jeff (University of Wales: Trinity Saint David)

- Working with international students as co-researchers: towards and inclusive educational community. Julie Wintrup and Kelly Wakefield (University of Southampton)

- A broader view of undergraduate research opportunity programmes: collaborative culture and curriculum development. Nathan Roberts and Iain Mossman (Cardiff University)

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Impact

To date only the immediate impact has been surveyed with the delegates offering the following action points regarding changes to practice:

1. Develop a “new” research methods course.
2. Suggest university adopts a CUROP for potential students that are about to start their studies and/or help students with knowledge gaps
3. Setting up paid Summer research projects, like Cardiff University’s CUROP.
4. Put together some institution-wide events on research-based teaching, potentially with a dissertation theme.
5. Use Professor Mick Healey’s exercises –line-ups, using post-its to filter down ideas
6. Open an institutional discussion regarding the forms that a dissertation or project can take. To help broaden the acceptability of different forms and embrace diversity of projects and dissertations.
7. Using the dissertation workshop in-house.
8. Disseminating the University of Southampton project and the Cardiff one. Also, discussing the Cardiff University project with a colleagues who may wish to take this forward.
9. Research internships at Cardiff University and how the experiment employed by Swansea Metropolitan University can be applied in a computer science context.
10. Pursue publication of papers.
11. Developing the idea of “research-as-practice” and “practice-as-research”, relevant to more traditional “practice placement” ideas.
12. Feedback interviews between students –may incorporate this into study skills lessons.
13. Follow up on some of the references mentioned in the presentations.
14. Look at the CUROP website.
15. Download and distribute Professor Mick Healey’s HEA report on capture project.

Several presenters have asked that full-written papers be published in a proceedings and this has been agreed.
11. Cardiff University

The funding received from the Higher Education Academy (HEA) in 2012-13 was used at Cardiff University to enable greater co-ordination of activities and roles across the University that were looking to embed a wide variety of skills within the curriculum, and to ensure excellent dissemination of the possible to our academic schools.

This stream of work began with the development of a network to co-ordinate the various strands of work relating to the development of student academic literacies. Led by Nathan Roberts in registry and academic services, the network brings together experts and individuals with responsibility for skills development, digital literacy, information literacy, enterprise and technology-enhanced education. The network has involved colleagues from careers and employability, library services, IT services, registry and academic services, student support services and the students’ union. This network has been valuable for sharing activity across the professional services, and also put into context the amount of requests or communications with our academic schools that are being sent out separately, allowing greater appreciation of the information overload and potential competing priorities being put on the schools.

Another area of activity for the network was to develop an annual learning and teaching conference with the theme for the first year focused on “Developing and Embedding Skills in the Curriculum” in alignment with the Future Directions (FD) themes. The conference was held on 3 July 2013 and was attended by over 100 delegates, which included staff and students. There were a range of presentations on the day, including presentation and panel contributions from students in support of the theme of Students as Partners. A full report of the conference, including the presentations from the day is available. The attendees completed an evaluation and the conference was well received.

“Most of it was interesting; keynote speech gave particular food for thought.”
“All presentations were relevant and interesting.”
“Every session had some very interesting elements to consider.”
“All the presentations were very well prepared and delivered and very interesting.”
“A group of very interesting people who had experience and were prepared to give a warts and all account of what they had done.”
“Ideas generated by what colleagues in other schools had done - poster presentations as well as talks”
“Interesting ideas on developing employability.”

Each year our academic schools are expected to complete annual review and enhancement report and there has been an increase in discussion of developments in employability and skills in the submissions since 2013, demonstrating the impact of this theme on the activity within schools.

The provision of funding from the HEA to support internal activities is seen as an effective way for the HEA to support the FD programme. It provides a concentrated focus to activities that can then have long term benefits to the institution as a whole. The open sharing of resources from the conference provides a resource from those across Wales, the UK and the world to access, and there were over 300 hits from outside of Cardiff. This has been an excellent opportunity to share the

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5 http://learning.cf.ac.uk/events/event-reports/conference-reports/cuskills/
good work being undertaken at Cardiff University both more widely within the University and with the higher education community more broadly.
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