Student Engagement Case Studies

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Deliverable 3 for the Higher Education Academy Student Engagement Project

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(all web addresses cited were last accessed on 28.7.2010)

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Introduction

The case studies below, all from the UK, have been chosen to highlight different aspects of Student Engagement in action. Not all of these examples are success stories: the last case study did not achieve its objectives. It is included because we recognise that while much may learned from observing "best practice", at times failed initiatives can shed valuable light on latent structural or environmental factors or untested assumptions which can have a significant, if unanticipated, effect.

The case studies selected include interventions inside the classroom (cases four and six), outside the classroom (cases one and five), as well as both inside and outside the classroom (case study two) and the classroom itself (case three). They represent a range of approaches to fostering engagement, and different 'takes' on what engagement is.

For consistency and ease of reading and comparison each case study is presented within the same template of headings:

Location
Background to the Intervention
Nature of the Intervention
Lessons Learned
Further Information

Case Study 1: Community Engagement at Salford University

Location

The University of Salford is located in Greater Manchester, in the Northwest of England, UK.

Background to the Intervention

The University of Salford has a strong widening participation mission, with a high percentage of "non-traditional" students. In addition, the staff and student body is very diverse, with over 100 nationalities represented. Student engagement is central to the Salford mission. With a higher than average proportion of underprepared students, Salford recognises the compensatory effects of student engagement (see Carini, Kuh & Klein 2006; Cruce, Wolniak, Seifert & Pascarella 2006; Kuh 2009; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie & Gonyea 2008; NSSE 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini 2005) and appreciates that engagement can make the difference between disappointment and success for these students. Student engagement both within and outside of the classroom is strongly supported.

But student engagement is not only inward-looking: Located in a less affluent area, the University is outward-looking, participating as a partner in local community regeneration projects and engaging with the local community in a number of ways to enhance the quality of life for the Salford community and improve the life prospects of young people in the area. By both offering its expertise, facilities and energy to the local community, and encouraging its students and staff to participate actively in activities and projects within the community, the University facilitates benefit to both its students and the community.

Nature of the Intervention

Social responsiveness and community engagement occur in multiple ways at the University, championed at all levels from the Vice-Chancellor down. The following examples are discussed by way of illustration:

SIFE

Students In Free Enterprise (SIFE) is a global not-for-profit organisation that encourages university students to run projects that bring economic benefit to communities. These projects are designed to improve the quality of life in communities through matching the skills, interests and knowledge of student participants with needs identified in the community. In the process, students develop their leadership, project management and business skills as well sharpening their sense of civic engagement and community responsibility.

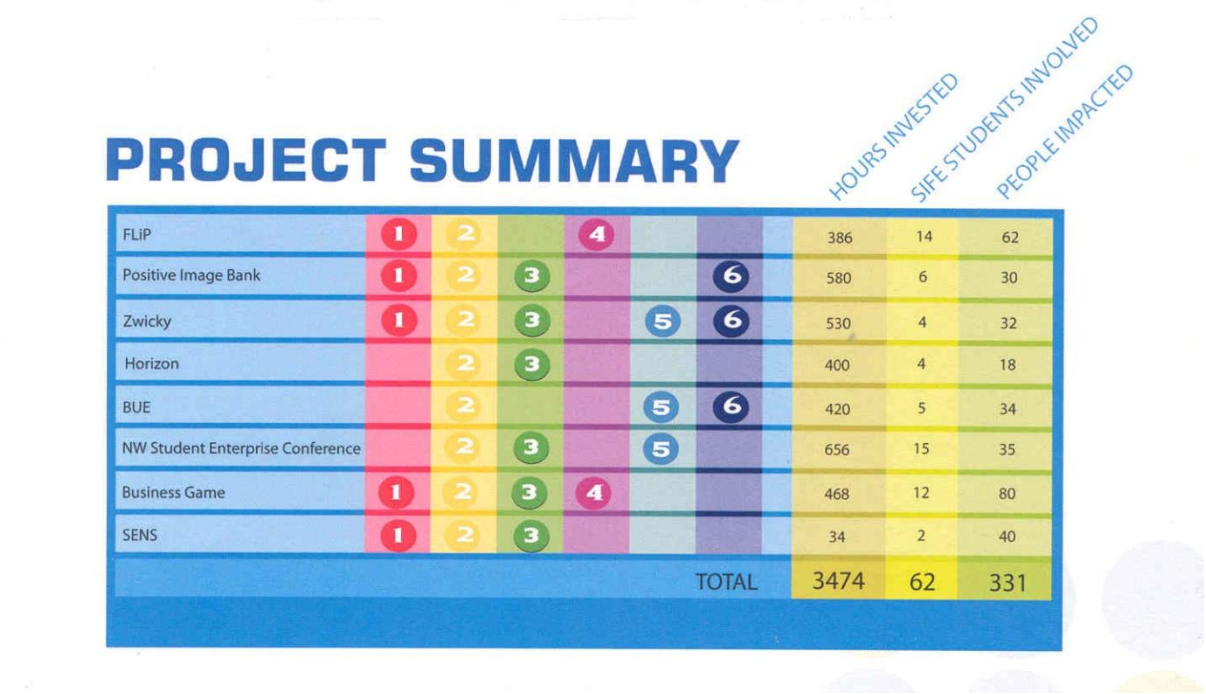

Figure 1 (case studies): SIFE at Salford Activities 2009-2010

Key: 1= Market Economics; 2= Personal Success Skills; 3= Entrepreneurship; 4= Financial Literacy; 5= Environmental Sustainability; 6= Business Ethics

Column 1 – Hours Invested; Column 2 – No of Students Involved; Column 3 – People Impacted

Salford students participated in 8 projects in the 2009-2010 year, as shown in Figure 1. These projects were:

FLiP, a Financial Literacy project for children, teens and young adults;
Positive Image Bank, to counteract negative perceptions and image of Salford;
Zwicky, teaching entrepreneurial skills alongside the BBC's creative activities;
Horizon, to assist unemployed people towards employment;
BUE, addressing software piracy through Open Source alternatives;

NW Student Enterprise Conference, inspiring students about employment prospects;
Business Game, improving delivery, quality, and sustainability of the game; and
SENS, sessions to motivate and enhance entrepreneurial skills.

Volunteering

The University maintains a database of volunteering opportunities for students at over 100 local organisations, and currently has around 140 students actively engaged. Student engagement in volunteer work has been very positively received by local organisations, leading to a waiting list of potential opportunities for students.

Volunteering activities Salford students have been involved in include:

Make a Difference Day - http://staff.salford.ac.uk/news/details/1292

WYTSC - http://www.salford.ac.uk/news/details/937

Garden Needs- http://staff.salford.ac.uk/news/details/1674

Muhammad Ali Scholars - http://www.salford.ac.uk/news/details/1125

Manchester 10k - http://www.salford.ac.uk/news/details/1129

Red Rose Forest - http://www.salford.ac.uk/news/details/1086

The profile of volunteering at the University is expected to rise, following the appointment of a Community Engagement Manager.

SSLA

The Salford Student Life Award is a structured programme designed to encourage engagement and to improve students' skills, enhance their personal development and boost their career prospects. By providing recognition for extra-curricular activities and attendance at skills development sessions, the SSLA encourages and supports students in building a portfolio of engagement in a range of educationally purposive activities.

Students attend an induction and planning session, a session on compiling a CV and applying for a job (or, alternatively, starting their own business) with an accompanying practical task, and compile a portfolio of "active engagement" activities which can include:

Running a student society;
Being a student representative;
Being a community representative;
Taking an active role in a student-led volunteering activity (like SIFE);
Volunteering in the community;
Active participation in International Society activities;
Student mentoring;
Working s a student ambassador;
Working as a university tour guide;

Participating in Salford Young Persons University summer schools;
Paid work experience; and
Work placement which are optional on academic programmes.

Additionally, they develop skills they have identified a need for through attending workshops in career management, entrepreneurship & employability, study skills, computer / information literacy, foreign language skills or postgraduate research skills. Towards the end of their Award Programme, students deliver a presentation on their engagement activities, reflecting on their experience.

Lessons Learned

Salford is located in a community where, historically, university study has not been widely considered as an option, which led to a sense of it being in, but not of, the community. Through outward-facing engagement activities, the University has sought a partnership with the local community that benefits both the community and the University, in particular those students who take up the opportunities for engagement and develop their own skills and improve their own prospects for success as a result.

By linking into international organisations like SIFE, the University is able to harness an existing successful model to promote student engagement, as well as linking that into its own structured programmes which provide support, social networks and recognition for student engagement outside of the classroom.

Further Information

Contact details:

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Southern Region: Tom Saunders, tsaunders(at)sife.org ,tel: 07984 579253

Student Life Awards:

Studentlife-award@salford.ac.uk

Telephone: (+44) 0161 295 0464

References:

Carini, R.M., Kuh, G.D. & Klein, S.P. 2006, "Student Engagement and Student Learning: Testing the Linkages", *Research in Higher Education,* vol. 47, no. 1, pp. 1-24.

Cruce, T., Wolniak, G.C., Seifert, T.A. & Pascarella, E.T. 2006, "Impacts of Good Practices on Cognitive Development, Learning Orientations, and Graduate Degree Plans during the First Year of College.", *Journal of College Student Development,* vol. 47, pp. 365-383.

Kuh, G.D. 2009, "Afterword" in *Student Engagement in Higher Education*, eds. S.R. Harper & S.J. Quaye, Routledge, New York & Oxon, pp. 313-318.

Kuh, G.D., Cruce, T.M., Shoup, R., Kinzie, J. & Gonyea, R.M. 2008, "Unmasking the Effects of Student Engagement on First-Year College Grades and Persistence.", *Journal of Higher Education,* vol. 79, no. 5, pp. 540-563; pp. 24.

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) 2007, *Experiences that Matter: Enhancing Student Learning and Success.*, Indiana Center for Postsecondary Research, Bloomington.

Pascarella, E.T. & Terenzini, P.T. 2005, *How College Affects Students: A Third Decade of Research (Vol. 2),* Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

University of Salford (n.d.) *Community Home*. Available: http://www.community.salford.ac.uk/

University of Salford (n.d.) *A Great Location*. Available:

http://www.salford.ac.uk/about/special/location/

University of Salford (n.d.) *Engaging Communities*. Available:

http://www.salford.ac.uk/about/special/engaging_communities/

Other Related Initiatives or Useful Links:

http://www.careers.salford.ac.uk/jobs/volunteer/

http://www.sifeuk.org

http://www.studentlifeaward.co.uk

On Facebook, join SSLA

On Twitter, follow SSLA

Case Study 2: Research-Informed Teaching at the University of Central Lancashire, UK

Location

The Centre for Research-Informed Teaching is located in the Learning Development Unit, at the University of Central Lancashire, UK. Its main base is in Preston.

Background to the Intervention

The Centre for Research-informed Teaching was established in 2007 and manages a number of projects which explore, support and promote the teaching-research nexus at the University of Central Lancashire.

The Centre aims to support and encourage the link between research and teaching, to give undergraduate students experience of research, and to support pedagogic research, using a definition of research which includes traditional, discipline-based research, practice-as-research, applied research and pedagogic research.

Research-Informed Teaching, according to the Research-Informed Teaching website at http://www.uclan.ac.uk/information/services/ldu/research/rit.php, offers academics and students the opportunity to engage in a discovery-oriented research culture, generating a more coherent and integrated academic identity and promoting

> *an active engagement with research which focuses on innovation in curricula and on using research-like, enquiry-based learning so that students are active* participants *in research, not just passive recipients of it.*

Nature of the Intervention

The Centre's work draws its inspiration from the various writings of Mick Healey, Alan Jenkins and Angela Brew on the Teaching-Research Nexus, and in particular Healey's model of curriculum design and the teaching-research nexus, below:

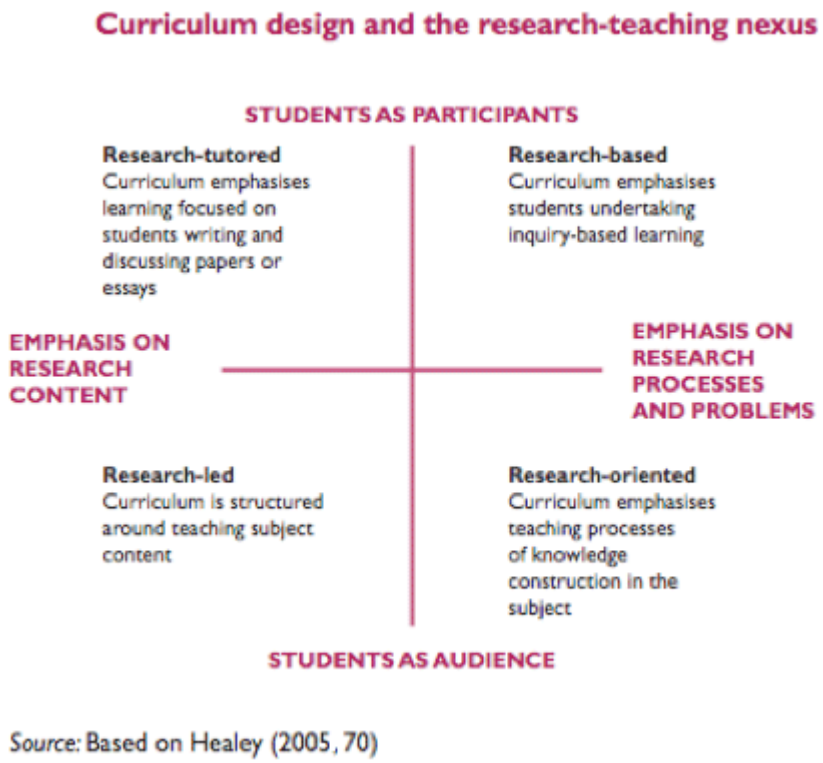


Figure 2 (case studies): Healey's model of Teaching-Research Nexus

(adapted from: http://www.uclan.ac.uk/information/services/ldu/research/rit.php)

Aiming to engage students and academics as partners in a dynamic research culture, Schools at UCLan have conceptualised Research-Informed Teaching in four dimensions, namely:

Learning to Research (research skills and methodology for students)

According to Bacon (2009, 13), "students engage in various modes of research as they learn", including the research they conduct when composing essays, designing presentations, reviewing books or writing reports. These require a range of generic research skills, such as identifying, selecting and indexing relevant information, reading and taking notes, solving problems and referencing, in order to build evidence-based arguments. In addition to those skills, students also research skills more specific to their discipline, to enable them to plan and conduct empirical research of their own. The vignette below (Bacon 2009, 14) illustrates an example of an academic using her own research practice to engage students in learning the skills to conduct their own research:

> *Learning to do Social Research*
>
> *KATE BACON, SOCIOLOGY*
>
> *'Doing Social Research' is a Second Year social science module which teaches students some of the thinking skills and practical skills associated with conducting social research. Importantly, students are encouraged to practice their abstract, theoretical understanding by (amongst other things) evaluating questionnaires, practising interview skills, conducting*

observations and using data-analysis software. My experience of doing sociological research with children and young people adds a 'real-life' perspective to this learning process and challenges students to reflect on how far doing social research with children is the same or different from doing social research with adults.

Throughout my research, I have used a range of approaches (including quantitative, qualitative and a mixture of both) and a variety of data collection methods including structured questionnaires, unstructured- and semi-structured interviews, drawings, photos and vignettes. I show students examples of these from my own research. Students therefore have the opportunity to learn about and visualise some quite specialised methods of data collection which might be less 'talked about' in the social research methods text books. In addition, students use my own research-information leaflets to evaluate and reflect upon the ethical challenges of obtaining informed consent from participants.

My research practice has enabled me to feel confident about training other students in the theory and techniques of research. Importantly, it has demonstrated that the practice of doing research can often feel quite different from the abstract accounts provided in the textbooks. The practical seminar workshop tasks help students to gain some first-hand experience of this and I also hope my personal accounts of doing research help to communicate this to the students too. Through our own research experiences, the students and I are empowered to discuss some of the 'messier' sides of social research and the practical and ethical dilemmas we might come up against.

Learning through Research (discovery through application and doing)

Marshall (2009, 17) claims that the School of Education and Social Science's educational philosophy "encourages students to learn as researchers within a curriculum that is structured around inquiry based learning," with opportunities for students to become research-active in various ways. These include their final year dissertations, through internships funded by the Centre for Research-Informed Teaching, and through working as research assistants on projects led by academic staff.

Learning in research mode, according to Marshall (*ibid*., 20) offers several benefits to students, including engaging with and critiquing staff research, conducting their own primary and secondary research, viewing knowledge as dynamic and contested, developing transferable skills and gaining confidence in their own critical capacity.

The vignette below (*ibid*., 17) provides an example of a research internship:

Undergraduate Research Internship Scheme

CHRIS WILLIAMS, POLITICS

I worked with Dawn Archer (Linguistics) to facilitate and co-ordinate two student intern projects for students of politics and linguistics. The aim of these projects was to actively engage students in the process of learning and to develop their subject-specific and employability skills through conducting research. The first project, 'Framing terror, the British press and 7/7 bombings' enabled undergraduates to develop their knowledge of how the UK

press analyses / (re)presents terrorism. The second project was called 'Linguistics & ethnic revival in the Udmurt republic, Russia'. Interns collected materials on the Tatar and Udmurt languages and extended their knowledge of language and ethnic identity issues. Both projects helped students to practice a variety of research skills such as data collection, data analysis and policy evaluation and provided them with the opportunity to use specific technological research tools (e.g. Lexis-Nexis). Importantly, students were encouraged to use their own initiative: to practice time-management, task-allocation and teamwork.

These skills helped students to prepare for and extend their ideas relating to their dissertations. For instance, the intern on the 'Framing terror' project was a recent UCLan Criminology graduate who used his internship to build on his undergraduate dissertation work, strengthen his research skills and prepare for postgraduate study. The internships also help students to gain experience of writing for publication: our first interns were given the chance to co-author an article with academics on the findings from the two projects.

Learning from Teaching (pedagogic research, exploratory and reflective practice)

Barrow (2009, 21) celebrates the growing recognition of the importance of research into effective teaching, learning and assessment and its potential to improve student engagement in their learning. The vignette below (*ibid*., 27) reflects on the application of pedagogic research in curriculum design in a new discipline:

Inclusivity and innovation for Deaf Studies students

MARTIN ATHERTON, DEAF STUDIES

As a new academic discipline, the original syllabus of Deaf Studies and the introduction of further programmes at a variety of levels have been strongly based on pedagogical principles which place diverse learners at the centre of their learning experience.

A multi-disciplinary approach to learning and teaching across the programme is employed in order to engage students, using newspapers, film, literature, art, poetry, theatre (both mainstream and signed), television, and advertising as source materials. As part of the learning process, students present case studies in the form of dramatic performances, and compare folklore with the signed folklore of the deaf community. Examples such Red Riding Hood are used to illustrate cross-cultural similarities and differences.

The Deaf Studies team employs a diverse range of assessments which allow students to work in creative, non-written or partly written formats to demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes and enable inclusive assessment practices. Assessments include interviews, presentations, video portfolios, reflective practice journals, research projects, poster presentations, website development, annotated bibliographies, and practical projects such as exhibitions, deaf awareness training or other live events. As a current student commented, 'The Deaf Studies modules are more than fantastic. Assignments can be anything from an essay to an interview with someone immersed in deaf culture'.

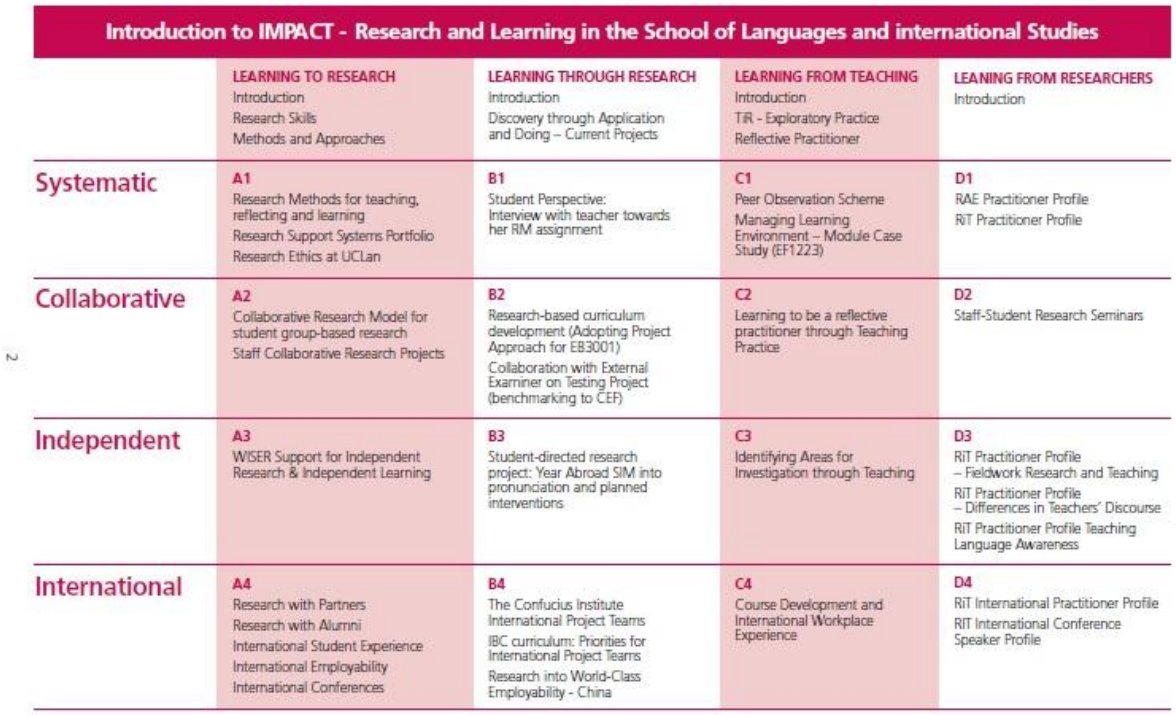
Learning from Researchers (learning about others' research)

Research and teaching can have a dialogical relationship, where research both shapes what is taught and, in turn, is shaped by what is taught. According to Monk (2009, 5) this affects staff (whose research informs module content, shapes reading lists and influences the design and composition of programmes) and students (engaging them in the shaping of the curriculum and immersing themselves in areas of interest in a curriculum that is current and evidence-based).

The vignette below (*ibid*., 8) provides an example of the influence of research on curriculum development:

> *An interview with Stephen Meredith, Politics*
>
> *My second year module, 'Radical Politics and Political Ideas in Modern Britain' (PO2400), is a particular product of my research. It is available to BA (Hons) and Combined Honours Politics students and students in cognate disciplines as an elective. The module explores the character, development and limitations of the radical or 'progressive' tradition of British politics from early twentieth century New Liberalism to 'New' Labour.*
>
> *I believe that the relationship between the roles of teacher and researcher is almost symbiotic. There are obvious benefits to students in the sense that they are introduced to very contemporary material and debates in the subject, and they are offered new perspectives and 'hot off the press' learning materials. At an even more fundamental level, the enthusiasm and passion (and of course breadth and depth of understanding) generated by teaching which is underpinned by particular research interests shines through to students and is consequently also reflected in their own work.*

These four facets can be operationalized at various levels, as shown in the figure below:



Introduction to IMPACT - Research and Learning in the School of Languages and international Studies

	LEARNING TO RESEARCH Introduction Research Skills Methods and Approaches	LEARNING THROUGH RESEARCH Introduction Discovery through Application and Doing – Current Projects	LEARNING FROM TEACHING Introduction TiR - Exploratory Practice Reflective Practitioner	LEANING FROM RESEARCHERS Introduction
Systematic	A1 Research Methods for teaching, reflecting and learning Research Support Systems Portfolio Research Ethics at UCLan	B1 Student Perspective: Interview with teacher towards her RM assignment	C1 Peer Observation Scheme Managing Learning Environment – Module Case Study (EF1223)	D1 RAE Practitioner Profile RiT Practitioner Profile
Collaborative	A2 Collaborative Research Model for student group-based research Staff Collaborative Research Projects	B2 Research-based curriculum development (Adopting Project Approach for EB3001) Collaboration with External Examiner on Testing Project (benchmarking to CEF)	C2 Learning to be a reflective practitioner through Teaching Practice	D2 Staff-Student Research Seminars
Independent	A3 WISER Support for Independent Research & Independent Learning	B3 Student-directed research project: Year Abroad SIM into pronunciation and planned interventions	C3 Identifying Areas for Investigation through Teaching	D3 RiT Practitioner Profile – Fieldwork Research and Teaching RiT Practitioner Profile – Differences in Teachers' Discourse RiT Practitioner Profile Teaching Language Awareness
International	A4 Research with Partners Research with Alumni International Student Experience International Employability International Conferences	B4 The Confucius Institute International Project Teams IBC curriculum: Priorities for International Project Teams Research into World-Class Employability - China	C4 Course Development and International Workplace Experience	D4 RiT International Practitioner Profile RIT International Conference Speaker Profile

Figure 3 (case studies): Research-Informed Teaching in LIS

(From Impact)

Lessons Learned

Student Engagement is founded on the constructionist principle of learning being influenced by participation in educationally purposeful activities (Coates 2005, 26). Learning as the co-construction of knowledge is most fully exemplified in situations where students are not merely recipients or observers of research, but are themselves research-active.

The relationship between research and teaching has been the subject of widespread attention over recent years as universities sought to position themselves and their missions in ways that best allowed them to capitalise on their resources (the orientations and specialisms of their staff, and the distinctive nature of their student body) and optimise the opportunities available to improve reputation, increase funding and attract the "right" calibre of staff and students. The explicit frameworks developed by CRIT at UCLan have enabled academics to approach their teaching, their research and their students in a more conscious way, mindful of the need to engage students as partners in a community where all are creating knowledge and all are learning.

The Centre was established with a £1.1 Million grant in 2007, which has been used to support this work across the University through grants and project funding. Clearly this has helped the Centre achieve its success – although smaller scale interventions of this nature can be implemented as part of regular, routine curriculum review in other universities.

Further Information

Contact details:

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Telephone: +44 (0)1772 201 201 ext. 2758

References:

Bacon, K (2009) Learning to do Research, in *Impact: Linking Teaching & Research: School of Education and Social Science*, available http://www.uclan.ac.uk/information/services/ldu/research/ess.php

Barrow, C (2009) Pedagogic Research, in *Impact: Linking Teaching & Research: School of Education and Social Science*, available http://www.uclan.ac.uk/information/services/ldu/research/ess.php

Centre for Research-Informed Teaching: http://www.uclan.ac.uk/information/services/ldu/research/rit.php

Coates, H. (2005) "The Value of Student Engagement for Higher Education Quality Assurance", *Quality in Higher Education*, vol 32 no 2, pp121-141

Healey, M. (2005) Linking research and teaching to benefit student learning. *Journal of geography in higher education,* 29**,** 183-201

Jenkins, A. & Healey, M. (2005) Institutional strategies to link teaching and research. York: The Higher Education Academy

Marshall, J (2009) Learning in Research Mode, in *Impact: Linking Teaching & Research: School of Education and Social Science*, available http://www.uclan.ac.uk/information/services/ldu/research/ess.php

Monk, H (2009) Learning about Others' Research, in *Impact: Linking Teaching & Research: School of Education and Social Science*, available http://www.uclan.ac.uk/information/services/ldu/research/ess.php

Other Related Initiatives or Useful Links:

Healey, M, Jenkins, A, and Zetter, R (2007) *Linking Teaching and Research in Disciplines and Departments* York: Higher Education Academy

Healey, M. and Jenkins, A. (2009) *Developing Undergraduate Research and Enquiry* York: Higher Education Academy

Case Study 3: Using "Creative Space" at Bridges CETL, University of Bedfordshire, UK

Location

The "Bridges" Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), located at the University of Bedfordshire in Luton, UK, was set up, according to Jankowska & Atlay (2008, 271)

> *to support the Personal, Career, and Professional Development of undergraduate students. The name 'Bridges' is not accidental as the centre aims to bridge the gap between students' learning experiences and the world beyond university, smoothing transitions into the workplace and opening opportunities.*

Background to the Intervention

The relationship between learning and space was foregrounded in the work of Bridges, and the intervention described was particularly inspired by the work of Goodall (2003) on the relationship between innovation and physical space. According to Jankowska (2006, 4),

> The idea of developing the Innovation Lab derived from the notion that delivering an applied curriculum in the context of an institution committed to widening participation and employability required an alternative approach to teaching other than merely traditional lectures and seminars. Furthermore the development of virtual learning environments further supports a move away from a didactic approach to curriculum delivery. Employers value higher order problem solving, creativity, and critical thinking skills that undergraduates need to develop. The learning environment and the way in which it is used can have a significant impact. Investigations and visits to similar resources which suggested that designing a creative environment could be of high value for the University, its staff and students.

The need to engage students and their teachers was central, as noted by Jankowska & Atlay (2008, 276):

> *Students need to become more active, self-directed autonomous learners, responsible for the development of their knowledge and skills. Teachers, on the other hand, become partners, facilitators and often co-learners in a lifelong learning process.*

This was in part necessitated by the increasing diversification of the student body and the rapid environmental changes in other areas of life, which left more traditional teaching methods and spaces ill-equipped for current learning and teaching requirements.

Nature of the Intervention

The Bridges Learning Space comprises three different learning areas:

A Social Learning Space (the “S-Space”), designed to enhance engagement in a relaxed, informal setting:

Figure 4 (case studies): Bridges Learning Spaces: S-Space

(From Jankowska & Atlay 2008, 272)

Figure 5 (case studies): Bridges Learning Spaces: S-Space

(From http://www.beds.ac.uk/bridgescetl/about/learningspaces)

A Formal Learning Space (“F-Space”) used for seminars and lectures, containing a range of learning technologies:

Figure 6 (case studies): Bridges Learning Spaces: F-Space

(From http://www.beds.ac.uk/bridgescetl/about/learningspaces)

> A Creative Learning Space ("C-Space") including white, writable walls; collaboratively arranged furniture, and laptops with specialised networking software (FacilitatePro):

Figure 7 (case studies): Bridges Learning Spaces: C-Space

(From Jankowska & Atlay 2008, 272)

Figure 8 (case studies): Bridges Learning Spaces: C-Space

(From Jankowska & Atlay 2008, 273)

Figure 9 (case studies): Bridges Learning Spaces: C-Space

(From http://www.beds.ac.uk/bridgescetl/about/learningspaces)

The space is characterised by its physical characteristics, which include its confidential atmosphere (with minimal external distractions through lack of external windows, and remote location), its flexible layout, writable walls and technology. Its modus of use is based collaboration and cooperation, facilitated by technology which allows anonymous brainstorming, which are in turn supported by facilitation techniques designed to stimulate creative thinking while capturing practicable outcomes.

The element of novelty, the facilitative teaching style and the range of tasks aimed at different learning styles were designed to engage students , enhancing their learning and developing their independent critical thinking. The anonymous, collaborative software was intended to enhance freedom of speech, minimise inhibition, and facilitate the contributions of non-native students and those whose cultural backgrounds are less oral. Its value for gaining consensus and making decisions was deemed useful in a learning context.

The space, and the learning design it embraces, favours interactivity and allows students to work at their own pace, focusing on particular aspects that interest them before sharing their views with others. Given its size and design to focus on small-group learning and teaching, the facility intended to foster intimacy and effective communication.

Lessons Learned

If "learning is a 'joint proposition'… which also depends on institutions and staff providing students with the conditions, opportunities and expectations to become involved" (Coates 2005, 26), then the teaching environment can play an important role in Student Engagement. Initial evaluation findings indicated that students and staff found working in the creative space enjoyable. Respondents commented favourably on the aesthetics, on the atmosphere, and on the flexibility and range of uses to which it could be put. In particular, comments were made about feeling stimulated to think more widely and to participate more freely, more engaged through enjoyment, playfulness and activity, more alert, safer and more respected. Universal involvement, increased creativity, enhanced productivity and better problem-solving emerged as themes in feedback given, and the wider range of learning styles and needs supported was noted with appreciation.

Most responses were suffused with excitement and enthusiasm. Negative feedback related to the lack of natural light and air – a trade-off of a design intended to minimise exposure and distraction.

While initial evaluation findings appear overwhelmingly positive, outlay costs need to be considered in the current straitened economic climate. Further evaluation may help establish whether benefits in terms of engagement gains and enhanced learning and teaching outcomes justify the investment required.

Further Information

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T: +44(0)1582 743063

http://www.beds.ac.uk/bridgescetl

References:

Coates, H. (2005) "The Value of Student Engagement for Higher Education Quality Assurance", *Quality in Higher Education*, vol 32 no 2, pp121-141

Goodall, R. (2003) *Learning the Habit of Innovation: Harnessing technology for strategic planning*. Available: http://www.uea.ac.uk/lhi/lhireport.pdf (currently unavailable: contact Gurpreet Gill, (01603 456161) ext 2951, g.gill(at)uea.ac.uk)

Jankowska, M. (2006) *Use of Creative Space in Enhancing Students'Engagement*. Available: http://www.beds.ac.uk/bridgescetl/dissemination/findings/0606Use-of-C-Space.doc

Jankowska, M. & Atlay, M. (2008). Use of Creative Space in Enhancing Students' Engagement. *Innovation in Education and Teaching International* 45(3) 271-279. (Presentation Available: http://www.beds.ac.uk/bridgescetl/dissemination/presentations/sociallearningspaces.ppt)

Other Related Initiatives or Useful Links:

Joint Information Systems Committee (2009). *E-Learning Innovation programme*. Available: http://www.jisc.ac.uk/elearning_innovation.html

Joint Information Systems Committee (2006). *Designing Spaces for Effective Learning: A Guide to 21st Century Learning Space Design*. Available:

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LearnHigher Learning Development CETL (2010). *LearnHigher Learning Spaces*. Available: http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/spaces/learnhigher/home.htm

Learning and Skills Council (2005). *World Class Buildings: Design Quality in Further Education.* Available:

http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/2005/research/commissioned/world-class-buildings.pdf

Case Study 4: "Developing Inclusive Curricula in HE" to engage students with disabilities at LearnHigher CETL, Worcester, UK

Location

The Project, "Developing Inclusive Curricula in Higher Education", was conducted at the University of Worcester, UK, by the "Learning for All" Learning Area Coordinator of the LearnHigher Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). LearnHigher (2010(a)) is:

> *…a partnership of 16 Universities, led by Liverpool Hope University, committed to improving student learning through providing excellent resources to support students' learning development, and through practice-led research to inform the effective use of those resources.*

Learning Development focuses on the empowerment of students through enhancing their academic practices to maximise their benefit from Higher Education and beyond.

Background to the Intervention

The project's aim was to increase the engagement of students with disabilities and to improve their learning experiences through the embedding of effective inclusive practices in learning, teaching, assessment and curriculum design within the university. Widening participation initiatives, together with the Disability Discrimination Act (Part IV), have resulted in increased institutional awareness of the diverse needs of an increasingly diversifying student population and the requirement to make learning and teaching more accessible and inclusive.

According to LearnHigher (2010 (b)),

> *An inclusive approach to learning and teaching avoids a viewpoint which locates difficulty or deficit within the student and focuses instead on the capacity of the university to understand and respond to individual learners' requirements. It moves away from labeling students towards creating an appropriate educational environment… where learning, assessment and the organisation's practices have been redesigned and/or adapted to become more flexible in order to meet the learners' needs; for example, introducing new content to courses, adapting access or changing delivery styles. This approach is quite different from offering courses and then giving students with difficulties some additional human or physical aids to enable them to participate.*

Nature of the Intervention

The project yielded three deliverables:

A Step-by-Step Guide to using Appreciative Enquiry

The Appreciative Enquiry methodology, which was developed by Professor David Cooperrider in the 1980s, has been used throughout the world for organisational and for community consultation and

development. Its distinctive feature is that it focuses only the positive, asking positive questions, looking at potential rather than problems, and is conducted in four stages (see Figure 10, below).

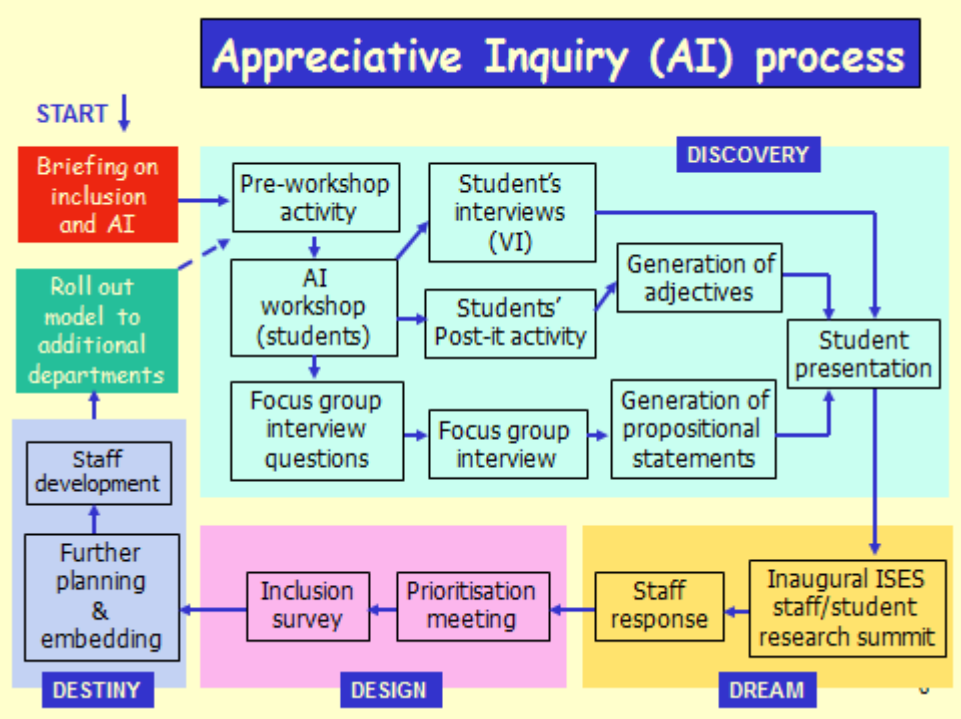


Figure 10 (case studies): Appreciative Enquiry Roadmap

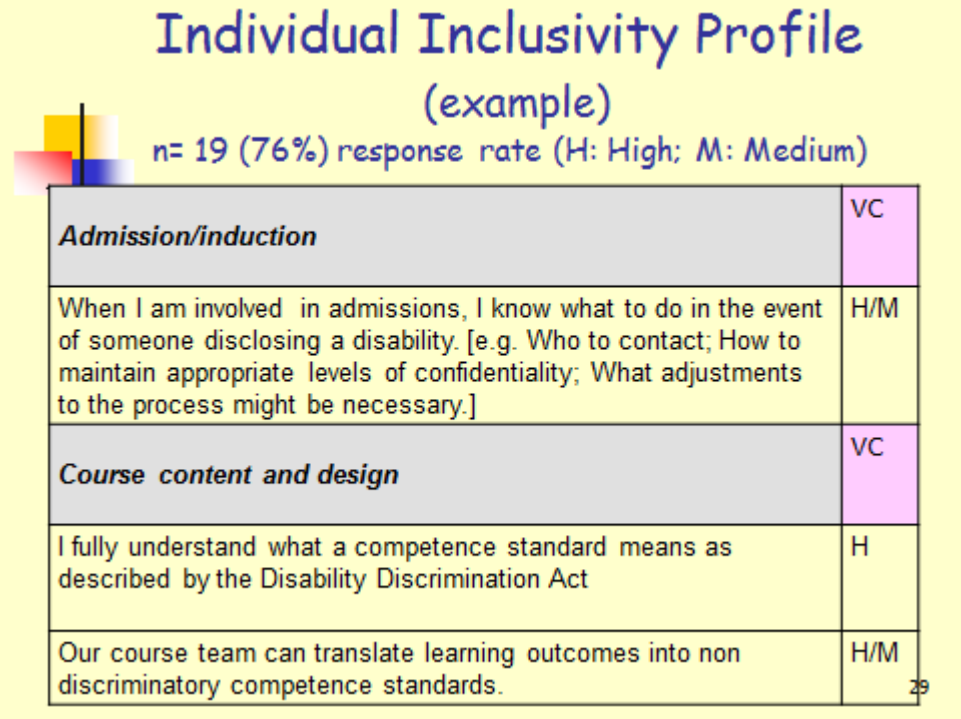
(From: http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/learningareas/learningforall/)

The "Discovery" phase involves the collection of data, while the "Dream" phase requires thinking in aspirational terms. Action planning takes place during the "Design" phase, and the "Destiny" phase focuses on establishing sustainable solution-oriented approach.

An "Individual Inclusivity Profile"

The "Individual Inclusivity Profile" involves aspects such as admission and induction; course content and design; course delivery; teaching styles; assessment; feedback to students; physical environment; technology; learning resources; course monitoring; staff development; academic support; and work placement.

The figures below illustrate this:



Individual Inclusivity Profile

(example)

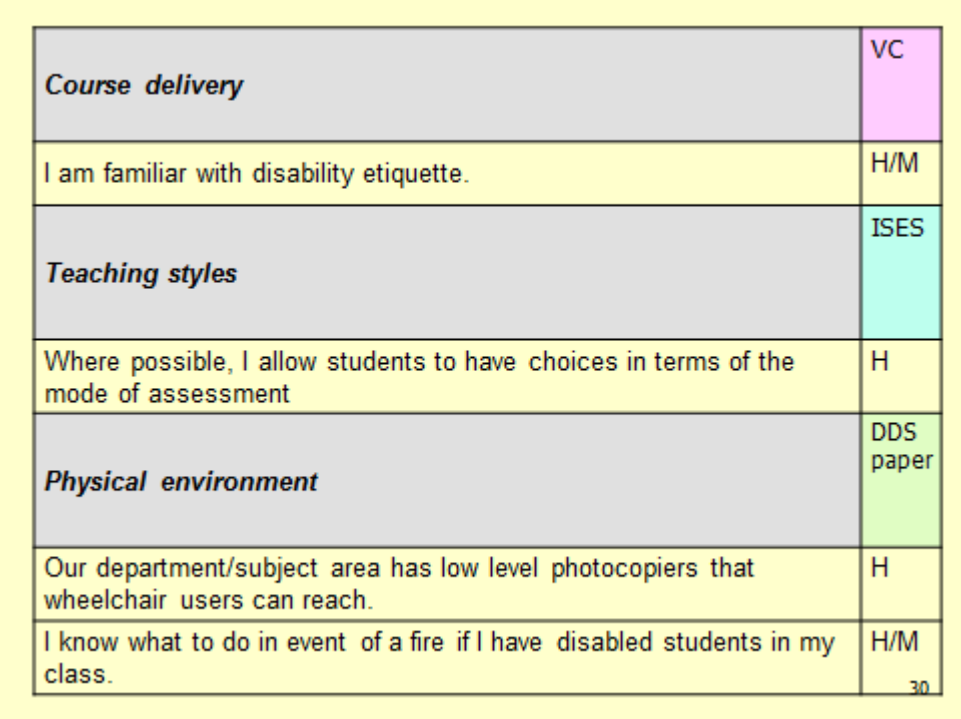
n= 19 (76%) response rate (H: High; M: Medium)

Admission/induction	VC
When I am involved in admissions, I know what to do in the event of someone disclosing a disability. [e.g. Who to contact; How to maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality; What adjustments to the process might be necessary.]	H/M
Course content and design	VC
I fully understand what a competence standard means as described by the Disability Discrimination Act	H
Our course team can translate learning outcomes into non discriminatory competence standards.	H/M

29

Figure 11 (case studies): Individual Inclusivity Profile

(from: http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/learningareas/learningforall/)

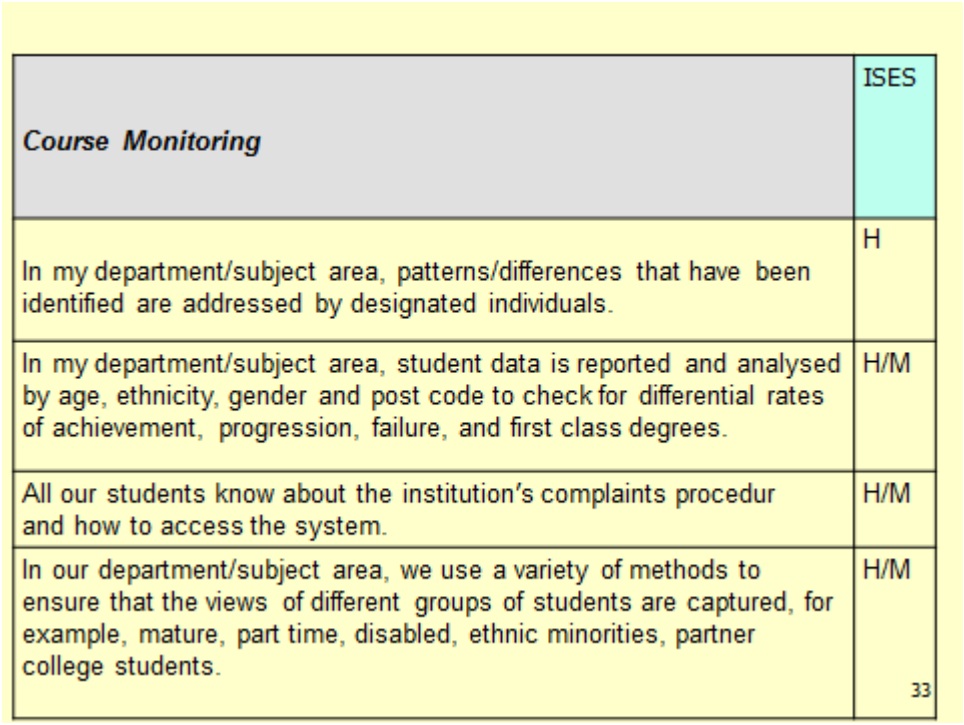


Course delivery	VC
I am familiar with disability etiquette.	H/M
Teaching styles	ISES
Where possible, I allow students to have choices in terms of the mode of assessment	H
Physical environment	DDS paper
Our department/subject area has low level photocopiers that wheelchair users can reach.	H
I know what to do in event of a fire if I have disabled students in my class.	H/M

30

Figure 12 (case studies): Individual Inclusivity Profile

(From: http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/learningareas/learningforall/)



Course Monitoring	ISES
In my department/subject area, patterns/differences that have been identified are addressed by designated individuals.	H
In my department/subject area, student data is reported and analysed by age, ethnicity, gender and post code to check for differential rates of achievement, progression, failure, and first class degrees.	H/M
All our students know about the institution's complaints procedur and how to access the system.	H/M
In our department/subject area, we use a variety of methods to ensure that the views of different groups of students are captured, for example, mature, part time, disabled, ethnic minorities, partner college students.	H/M

33

Figure 13 (case studies): Individual Inclusivity Profile

(from: http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/learningareas/learningforall/)

An Extended Version of the Web-Based Resource SCIPS

SCIPS (Strategies for Creating Inclusive Programmes of Study),was originally developed during 2003/04, covering a few pilot disciplines. Further funding enabled its expansion to its current 22 disciplines, and it has been culturally adapted and translated into versions which are now "live" in Bulgaria, Greece, France, and Poland. In addition, the resource has been extended beyond Higher Education, and now has versions designed for use in Further Education and in Adult Education.

The resource is available at: http://www.scips.worc.ac.uk .

Lessons Learned

This intervention directly addresses Harper & Quaye's call (2009, 6) that:

> *…administrators and educators must foster the conditions that enable diverse populations of students to be engaged… (W)e deem it essential for educators to view engaging diverse populations as "everyone's responsibility", including their own.*

Inclusivity does not only facilitate the engagement of students from these marginalised groups: it holds benefits for all students, as argued by Harper & Quaye (*ibid*.):

> *Interactions with diverse peers inside and outside of class has been positively linked to benefits and outcomes in the following domains: self-concept (intellectual and social), cultural awareness and appreciation, racial understanding, leadership, engagement in citizenship activities, satisfaction with college, high post-baccalaureate degree aspirations, and readiness for participation in a diverse workforce.*

While this intervention is targeted at staff rather than students, and thus outcomes in terms of effects on Student Engagement cannot be directly gleaned, the observed effects on changed practice within pilot departments suggest significant positive changes to the teaching environment to facilitate engagement. However, the ultimate agency for engagement lies with the students themselves.

Further Information

Contact details:

Dr Val Chapman, University of Worcester, Henwick Grove, Worcester, UK, WR2 6AJ.
v.chapman(at)worc.ac.uk

References:

Chapman, V. (2008) *Learning for All: Developing Inclusive Curricula in Higher Education through Appreciative Enquiry*. Available: http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=668&Itemid=1

Harper, S. R. & Quaye, S. J. (eds) (2009) Student Engagement in Higher Education: Theoretical Perspectives and Practical Approaches for Diverse Populations. New York & London: Routledge

(2010 (a)). *LearnHigher Home*. Available: http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk

LearnHigher (2010 (b)). *Learning for All (Inclusivity).* Available: http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/learningareas/learningforall/home.htm

Other Related Initiatives or Useful Links:

Cooperrider, D. L. & Whitney, D. (1999) Appreciative Enquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change. In P. Holman & T. Devane (Eds.), The Change Handbook (pp. 245-263). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Case Study 5: The "GetAhead" Conference at London Met University, UK (LearnHigher, Write Now and Reusable Learning Objects CETLs)

Location

Three CETLs were based / represented at London Metropolitan University: LearnHigher Learning Development CETL; Write Now, the Academic Writing CETL; and RLO-CETL, the Reusable Learning Objects CETL.

Background to the Intervention

The three London Met CETLs worked together on a number of projects to support and encourage a range of learning activities, and to drive the learning and teaching activity throughout the university. One such activity was the annual Get Ahead student conference, which was aimed at engaging and showcasing student energy and motivation. Besides directly engaging and developing the participating students, the conference also exemplifies to academics and university management creative and innovative ways of engaging students, and demonstrates benefits of engaging students rather than ignoring them.

Nature of the Intervention

Organised by and for students, the conference was supported by the CETLs through the provision of lunch and "goody bags" containing materials. Conference sessions included various aspects of writing, reading and note-making, as well as more technological sessions. Many sessions were presented by students, including the writing mentors attached to the Write Now CETL. Students unsure of their presentation skills or confidence were trained in presentation strategies by CETL staff and helped to develop engaging sessions in their own voices. Some sessions were co-presented by students and an academic staff member as collaborating partners.

A number of deliverables emerged from the conferences:

The Conferences themselves:

More than 200 students attended each of the annual Get Ahead Conferences, which have been hailed as "a great success" (see, for example, http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/news/latest-news/student-get-ahead-2008-conference-hailed-as-great-success.cfm):

> *Andy Mitchell, one of the conference organisers, said: 'It has been a great day. I think this sort of focus event really helps and motivates students. The feedback we have had from student delegates was very positive and a lot of interest has been shown in whether we will be organising conferences like this in the near future.'*
>
> *One student delegate said: 'This event has been really useful and I'm grateful to everyone who organised it.'*

A short video clip about the conferences can be viewed at:
http://www.youtube.com/user/adm111#p/u/0/n1wHOQZyHn0

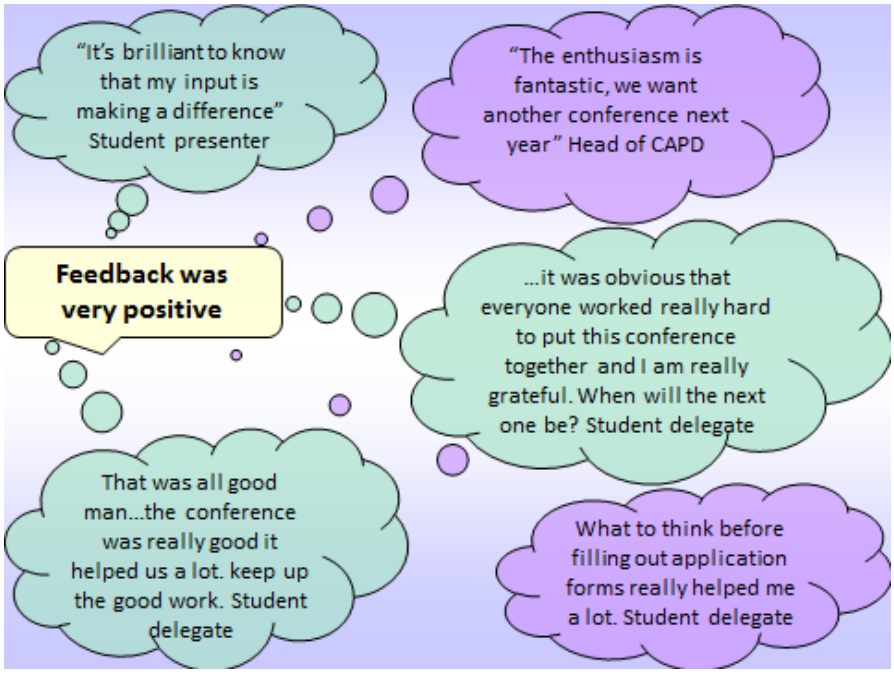


Figure 14 (case studies): Student Feedback on the GetAhead Conferences

(From: "Raising the Student Voice" Powerpoint presentation http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk)

Resources produced from the Conferences:

Aimed at students who missed the 2010 conference, or those who attended but were unable to attend every session (several sessions ran in parallel throughout the day), a Flash resource is being produced and is available online at: http://www.catsconsulting.com/getahead2010/#

This resource contains clips and Powerpoint presentations from many of the sessions, as well as keynote speakers, some feedback from students who attended the conference and the student organisers, and a selection of photos taken throughout the day.

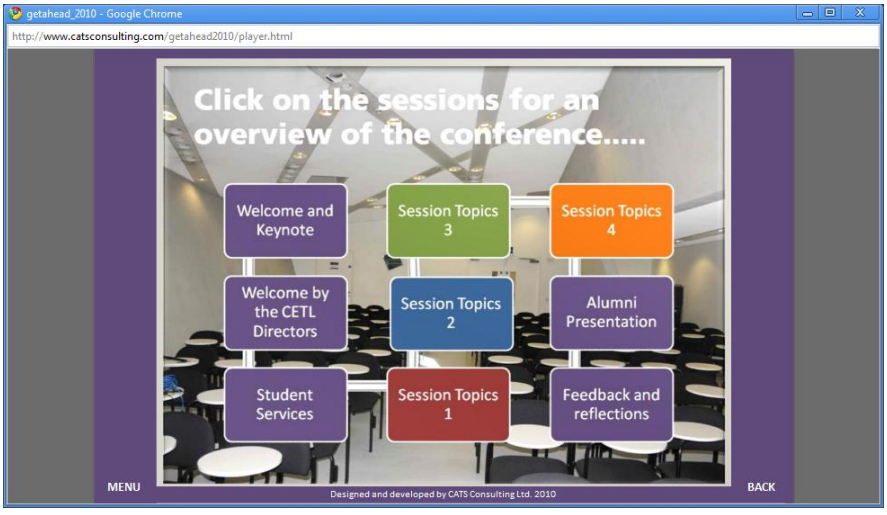


Figure 15 (case studies): The 2010 GetAhead Conference Resource

(From: http://www.catsconsulting.com/getahead2010/#)

The resource, in its final form, will be linked to the legacy websites of the three CETLs.

A Conference Planning resource:

A laminated A3 poster, which can be seen in Figure 13, below, was produced to support the 2008 conference. The resource, which can be written on with an erasable whiteboard marker, proved very popular when displayed at the national CETL Student Network conference.

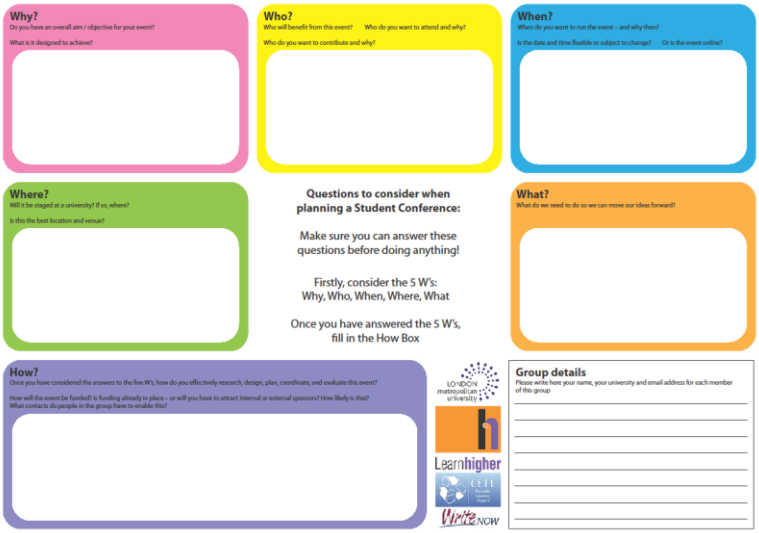


Figure 16 (case studies): Conference Planning resource

(From: http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk)

A Powerpoint presentation, "Raising the Student Voice", was drawn up as a case study to use to encourage other institutions to organise student conferences.

Lessons Learned

"Enriching educational experiences" have been found to rank among the "more powerful contributors to learning and personal development", as benchmarked by both AUSSE (the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement) and NSSE (the National Survey of Student Engagement, in the US and Canada). Kuh (20009) describes activities such as participating in student-led initiatives such as conferences as "high-impact activities" which confer significant benefits to students, and thus an important dimension of Student Engagement.

By all indications, this intervention was very successful. Repeated annually, the model has been shown to work well, and the expectation exists for it to continue beyond the life of the CETLs. However, with the three CETLs falling away, financial sustainability is in question. Given the financial

situation, taking over an externally funded non-core activity, however successful, is not within the university's means, and so scaling down will be required to allow it to be run with existing resources.

Financial sustainability is not the only concern – given its reliance on student leadership and input, success also rests on the continued availability of high-calibre student participation from an ever-changing student body. With a high proportion of those involved being senior students, leadership renewal becomes critical and without the ready resource of CETL funding to nurture and develop a network of students to draw from, broader engagement strategies within the institution become more significant. Attracting students and publicising engagement opportunities within a resource-constrained environment is one of the challenges CETL host institutions will face in this post-CETL period.

Further Information

Contact details:

Sandra Sinfield: s.sinfield(at)londonmet.ac.uk

Andy Mitchell: a.mitchell(at) londonmet.ac.uk

References:

Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) Available at: http://ausse.acer.edu.au/

Kuh, G. D. (2009) "Afterword" in Harper, S. R. & Quaye, S. J. Student Engagement in Higher Education: Theoretical Perspectives and Practical Approaches for Diverse Populations. New York & London: Routledge. pp313-317

LearnHigher (2010): http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Available at: http://nsse.iub.edu/

South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE) Available at: http://sasse.ufs.ac.za/

Other Related Initiatives or Useful Links:

AHRC "Beyond Text" Student-led initiatives:

http://projects.beyondtext.ac.uk/StudentLedInitiatives/index.php

"Am I Bovvered? Engaging Students in the Learning Process, through a Student-Led Conference" :

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/hlst/documents/case_studies/am_i_bovvered.pdf

Student-led conferences at the University of Leicester:

http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/sd/pgr/events/student-led

Roundhouse student-led conference on Critical Theory and Education (response):

http://joss.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/2010/03/31/roundhouse-student-led-conference-on-critical-theory-and-education/

Case Study 6: Developing an Online Community at the University of Gloucestershire, UK

Location

This case study is located within a first-level module of an undergraduate course in management for students studying community development at the University of Gloucestershire, based at Gloucester and Cheltenham.

Background to the intervention

If students choose not to engage fully in a community of practice, they lose out on learning opportunities. Thus, teaching staff should design engaging online discussions to encourage early engagement by student. In order for students to benefit optimally from the course, they need to participate in the online discussions.

The course is structured with two later assignments in the first year requiring participation in online discussion, increasing the importance of fostering student engagement in online communities early in their course.

Skinner (2009, 90) argues that:

> *Participation in a learning community depends first on a student being present and secondly on the student interacting with others by making a contribution to discussion… However, simply being present in a group setting [such as online "lurking"] is not enough if people are to develop individual skills and confidence and contribute to the welfare of a community.*

This case study discusses an example where the design of the online discussion failed to engage students, leaving them poorly motivated to participate.

Nature of the intervention

"Management at Work" is a first level module requiring participation in an online community. There were 25 students, from three streams, taking the module. Skinner (2009, 92) notes that:

> *Five discussion tasks in 'Management at Work' were originally designed using Salmon's five-stage model (Salmon 2000)[see below], introducing students gradually to knowledge construction using the WebCT discussion tool. The activities were expected to extend classroom discussion, help the students get acquainted and develop cooperation based on shared interests. Students taking the same subject would build a group identity and apply general management ideas to their discipline.*

The assignment carried 50% of the assessment marks for the module, with marks being given for responses that were thoughtful and that stimulated discussion, as well as for peer support.

Salmon's five stages and the corresponding task, as outlined by Skinner (2009) are listed below:

Access and Motivation – students were required to give an account of a personal experience of management;
Online Socialisation – students were required to suggest their goals for the module and to discuss motivation as a management tool;
Information Exchange – students were required to share subject-related resources and to discuss current issues in their field;
Knowledge Construction – students were required to apply management ideas from their reading to management roles in relevant professions;
Development – Students were required to reflect on performance and evaluate the discussion experience.

Generic feedback was provided after each of the first two tasks, and individual feedback after tasks three to five by the teacher, in order to build confidence and to suggest improvements.

However, a high proportion of students only entered the discussion after the published deadlines, leading to concerns about latecomers dragging the discussion backward. Previous research had shown that the failure of some students to engage in a similar module had "severely damaged the experience of community for those keen to participate. Participating students are upset by the absence of others…" (Skinner 2009, 91). Additional support had thus been introduced to boost skills and confidence before the assignments, based on an audit of attitudes, skills and confidence levels within the first week of study, and followed up by a later audit to detect changes in these levels and identify any students who may need additional assistance. At the end of the module, seven students were interviewed about their experiences on the course.

Lessons Learned

Quoting Dalziel, Hewitt and Evans (2007, 26), Skinner (2009, 96) notes that:

> *…the rewards of participation "are somewhat intangible and it is likely that people will be unaware of these benefits until they take part".*

Thus, motivation is central to students' optimisation of the opportunities offered by online learning communities. In the case study, the students' professed lack of motivation (as reported in the first audit) was not immediately picked up – the module was compulsory, and many students had no interest in management. By designing the very first task to focus on management, some students felt alienated from the outset and the opportunity to engage them was compromised.

As an alternative approach, one student suggested in his feedback that using students' enthusiasm for their subjects may be a way in, introducing management through their passion for their discipline. Skinner (2009, 97) notes that:

> *The extrinsic motivation of assessment is not enough to encourage students to participate in a timely and effective manner in an online discussion,*

...particularly where there is a lack of excitement about the topic. She argues (2009, 98-9) that

> *The teacher's task, therefore, is to spark engagement by striking a personal chord, making contact with students and, if necessary, reaching out into a space where students are at*

ease… If online discussion is to be successful as a tool for building a strong sense of community, it must motivate each individual student to engage from the outset.

While successful interventions can shed an inspiring light of potential on opportunities for replication or adaptation in one's own context, sometimes the "lessons learned" from less successful, or failed, interventions expose critical dynamics or structural factors that need to be taken into account when planning a similar intervention, thus producing case studies of enormous potential benefit.

Further information

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skinner(at)glos.ac.uk

References:

Dalziel, D., Hewitt, E. & Evans, L. (2007). *Motivations and barriers to citizen governance*. London: Communities and Local Government.

Salmon, G. (2000). E-moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online. London: Kogan Page.

Skinner, E. (2009). Using Community Development Theory to Improve Student Engagement in Online Discussion: A Case Study. *ALT-J Research in Learning Technology* 17(2) 89 - 100

Other Related Initiatives or Useful Links:

Association for Learning Technology (ALT) "What research has to say for practice" wiki: http://wiki.alt.ac.uk/index.php/What_research_has_to_say_for_practice

Association for Learning Technology (ALT) Open Repository: http://repository.alt.ac.uk/736/

JISC publication on The Learner Experience of e-learning: http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/programmerelated/2009/respondingtolearners.aspx