



**MINUTES OF THE STEERING GROUP MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2008 AT 10.15AM (UNIVERSITY OF WORCESTER)**

ATTENDEES

Mr Mike Rookes (Vice Chair)	Director, Open University (West Midlands)
Mrs Debbie Lambert	Manager of the LLN for H&W
Mr Ian Peake	Principal, Herefordshire College of Technology
Ms Gail Rothnie	Head of Outreach, University of Birmingham
Miss Donna Obrey (Secretary)	Project Officer for LLN for H&W

1. Apologies

Professor Geoffrey Elliott (Chair) Director of Regional Engagement, University of Worcester
Mr Chris Morecroft Principal, Worcester College of Technology

2. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting & Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record. DL reported that following the previous Steering Group meeting:

- the LLN has received clarification regarding the queries raised about the Clarity and AMSPAR projects, and these projects have been subsequently approved.
- she has spoken to Union Learn regarding their project submitted to the previous meeting and is hoping to involve them in the Employer Engagement Action Plan (to be discussed later in the meeting).
- the LLN has not yet received an individual response from HEFCE regarding the Monitoring Report submitted in October. However a draft summary of all of the monitoring reports has just been received and will be discussed at the next Steering Group meeting.
- the date of the 2nd Annual Conference has been changed to Tuesday 27 January 2009.

A written update on the matters arising was received.

MR enquired regarding the date of the Aimhigher Area Partnership Board.

Action: GE to notify MR of the date of the next Aimhigher APB meeting.

3. Chair's Business

There was no chair's business.

4. Budget Update

DO reported that, in consultation with the Finance Department, they have projected the LLN's expenditure to the end of the project. They have estimated expenditure of

£700,000 in 2008/9 and £750,000 in 2009/10 based on the assumption that any projects approved prior to this financial year will be paid in this financial year and any projects approved this financial year will be paid in 2009/10. In light of this an early carry forward has been arranged of £450,000 to the 2009/10 budget to reflect a more realistic under spend in this year's budget.

The current under spend is predicted as £67,510 this financial year which includes £42,752 LSC funding. MR requested clarification on what the LSC money could be used for, DL reported that to date it has been used to fund projects associated with the 14 – 19 Diplomas however she will seek clarification from Sarah Tulk (LSC) to see whether this funding can be used to support the Employer Engagement Action Plan (to be discussed later in the meeting).

The current balance remaining to fund capital items is £65,328, DL has received confirmation from HEFCE that although they would prefer the capital be used to fund capital items, they are happy for it to be used as revenue if this is necessary.

The amount remaining to approve projects in 2008/9 is £160,250. The Group questioned whether there would be sufficient projects to use the funding allocated this year. DL suggested that the Group assess this at Easter.

5. Projects

DL thanked the Steering Group for reading the lengthy papers sent out for this meeting.

Project approved via Email Correspondence since the Previous Meeting

Production of Proposals for the Development of HE in Herefordshire

DL explained that this project had been approved via email correspondence prior to the meeting due to the timescale for the tendering process. In response to a request, DL has clarified that HEFCE are comfortable with this expenditure.

The interviews are being held on Thursday 4 December and the panel members will include a representative from the LSC and Herefordshire Council.

Projects for Consideration/Approval

Work Placements for Undergraduates with a Visual Impairment (RNCB)

This project is around IAG, student support and working with employers and universities. The group acknowledged that this was a worthy project but were concerned that it had a narrow focus that would only benefit a small number of learners. The Group made the following suggestions:

- It could be extended to say it is about creating opportunities for people with visual impairment in to Higher Education (HE).
- It could look at barriers to progression for Level 3 visually impaired students going onto HE.
- Amend the outcomes of the project to include the production of some written guidelines on how to find work placements. These guidelines could then be used by students at all colleges who are struggling to find a work placement.

- The project could be extended so that it doesn't just cover visually impaired learners but also those with other disabilities. It was suggested that they link with the Disability Office at the University of Worcester to broaden this out.

This project was not approved in its current format.

CPD Activities for those Delivering HE (Worcester College of Technology)

This project is looking to get HE and Work Based Learning staff engaged with the CPD system at WCT as many are not currently using it. The project would look to find out why those staff are not engaging with it and also develop content for the system.

It was felt that this was a single college staff development issue that could link to the Three Counties PDP. It was also suggested that WCT could link with the University of Worcester, the Open University or University of Birmingham as they already have expertise in HE. This project was not approved.

Development of a Foundation Degree in Fashion & Surface Pattern (Worcester College of Technology/University of Worcester)

This project would link with employers but it was noted that there is some overlap with a similar programme at Hereford College of Arts (HCA). DL reported that Colin Wood has shown this project form to HCA who say there is some overlap but have confirmed that they did not object to its continuation.

This project funding was approved on the condition that they speak to HCA and that there are some progression opportunities.

e-Learning for Mature, Part-Time HE Students at Levels 4-5 (Worcester College of Technology)

This is looking to change some course delivery to blended learning. DL also informed the Group that this is one area that the Leadership & Management Group have been looking at to better support the mature and part time learner.

The Group noted that a similar project has been submitted by Herefordshire College of Technology and discussed the possibility of linking these two projects.

The Group questioned the costs and requested that the actual daily rate of the staff involved be used.

This project was approved on the condition that WCT and HCT collaborate to either share the development or at least discuss and share ideas, and that the daily rate be amended to reflect actual cost.

Action: DL to request the actual cost of staff time to form the basis of the amount of funding provided.

“Reach Out” Taking Higher Education into Local Communities and Employers (HWSTPA)

The objective of this project is to take information on HE out to the community and to employers/employees in the workplace. DL described how she'd had early discussions with Mike Smith and Annette Wright regarding this but when the form was received there were concerns regarding the Level of the learners and whether the IAG Advisor should

be properly qualified. DL further reported that Bob Parker had met with Mike Smith prior to the Employer Engagement meeting and it was decided to withdraw this from discussions at the Employer Engagement meeting and instead it had been agreed that elements of this be incorporated in to the Employer Engagement Action Plan.

The Group questioned whether this links to the Adult Careers Service that the Government want to launch. It was reported that this will have professionally qualified people who will link with private training providers. GR advised that if the project is to go ahead then it shouldn't be named 'Reach Out' as this is already being used for a big project.

The Group agreed that they were unable to approve this project funding, however it was important to keep Mike Smith fully involved in employer engagement. IP also recommended that the Chamber of Commerce (Mike Ashton) be involved.

Action: DL to invite Mike Smith to become part of the small group steering the employer engagement action plan

e-Learning - HE Management Blend (HCT)

This was previously discussed in conjunction with the WCT project. This project is taking 3 Leadership & Management courses and turning them into e-learning.

The project was approved on the condition that WCT and HCT collaborate to either share the development or at least discuss and share ideas. The Group took the decision to class this as a project under the Leadership & Management strand rather than an e-Learning project, as was WCT.

e-Learning - Assessing the impact of a blended learning approach using DVD films specifically to enhance student learning (University of Worcester)

The funding has been requested to undertake research in to the effectiveness of a particular sort of e-learning. The Group were very supportive of this.

It was stated that the recommendations resulting from this project must be shared around the partners of the Network, it was also suggested that this information may also be of use to schools.

This project was approved.

e-Learning – Veterinary Nursing Formative Assessment Question Database/Bank (Pershore College (Warwickshire College))

DL summarised that this project is looking to develop formative assessment questions for those students doing Veterinary Nursing which can be marked automatically.

This project was approved.

e-Learning - Digital Library for HE (Worcester College of Technology)

This project is requesting funding to buy ebooks for staff to incorporate into their teaching at WCT.

The Group suggested that it would be more beneficial to the Network if the LLN asked the Head of Libraries Group to discuss which ebooks would be appropriate for the

majority of partners. The LLN could then look to store these centrally for access by all partners.

The Group requested that Viv Bell discuss the project with Peter Kilcoyne and the Head of Libraries Group to produce a collective list of useful ebooks for purchase, the Steering Group will then use this to inform their final decision and any subsequent amount of funding.

Actions: VB to speak to Peter Kilcoyne and the Head of Libraries Group to request a list of possible ebooks. DO to investigate whether ebooks can be classed as Capital items.

Big Projects for Consideration/Approval

Transition into Employment in the Creative Sector (Hereford College of Arts)

This project is looking at encouraging progression and producing bridging materials.

The Group agreed that this project had some interesting ideas but needs to be more focussed and clearer in terms of the key products resulting from the project. It was also unclear how they were going to be talking to employers. The Group agreed to a suggestion that Bob Parker should talk to the 3 progression and support project leaders to work to collaboratively produce a project which would:

- follow on from the first major progression project
- eliminate overlap
- provide a strategic approach in this area
- include all interested colleges

The project was not approved in its current format.

Action: BP to submit a project proposal to the next meeting for a 2nd year of progression research to be undertaken across the Network.

Performing Arts Pathway (Ludlow College)

The Group were unable to approve this project as it has a Level 3 focus. The Steering Group agreed that they would be happy to consider future projects that were at Level 4 or above.

Development of Foundation Degrees in Beauty and Spa Management and Public Services (NEWC)

This project links into the 14 – 19 Diplomas with possible employer engagement. The Group noted that they had already funded an FD in Beauty and Spa Management at Gloucestershire College.

This project funding was approved subject to the team discussing the project with UW and Gloucestershire College. The Group also sought clarification that the daily rate quoted was for the staff team, not per individual.

Action: DL to check that the daily rate quoted is for all staff.

Land Based Studies Progression Routes (Pershore College)

This is trying to get more people into HE and looking at both Access and HE Courses. The Group noted that Worcester Sixth Form College had already had a project funded in a similar area and DL informed the Group that a mapping exercise is already being undertaken by the LLN Team.

The Group were unable to approve this project at this meeting, but asked that it be incorporated into a bigger project by Bob Parker (see above).

Developing a Framework for Work-Based Learning (University of Worcester)

This funding was requested to employ a consultant to produce handbooks for employers and students, to produce materials to promote Work Based Learning (WBL) to employers and to write the framework. DL noted that this links to both the Employer Engagement Action Plan and the Herefordshire bid.

DL clarified what is meant by the WBL framework and informed the Group that it is structured so that courses can be linked more into work. She hoped that employers would prefer this as it enables students to find solutions to real problems in the workplace.

This project was approved.

Web 2.0 e-Learning for HE (Worcester College of Technology)

This project is looking to make courses more accessible via Web 2.0 and working with employers to make courses more relevant.

There were concerns regarding the use of Wikipedia as students are asked not to reference this. The Group questioned how this differs from Moodle/WebCT.

They suggested that Viv Bell should facilitate the working of WCT staff with those from other colleges to create a project around regionally maximising the use of this learning, sharing best practice, benefits for students, research and staff development.

Vocational Progression Research and Enhancement (Worcester Sixth Form College)

The Group felt that they had already funded a similar project and would prefer a cross college group rather than individual ones. IP suggested a cross county staff development event about trying to support learners into HE. GR agreed that this could be supported by the University of Birmingham.

The Group discussed how advisors will know which institutions will accept the new Diploma students. The Group agreed that discussions need to be held at subject level as it was felt that this will not only vary from institution to institution but also at subject level. This could be a cross LLN project for the West Midlands. They did not approve the project, but referred it to Bob Parker's group as with the other two projects earlier in the meeting.

Project Closure Forms

The Steering Group received the Project Closure Forms for the following projects:

Developing Performing Arts FdA and Top up (Hereford College of Arts)

DL summarised that this project was looking at whether the way in which HCA were running the course was appropriate. HCA have made some changes as a result of this project.

MA Art Therapies (University of Worcester)

This project has resulted in a new course. DL drew the Group's attention to the 'Lessons Learned' section of the Project Closure Form.

Market Food related Foundation Degrees (Worcester College of Technology (& Pershore College)

DL tabled the Project Closure Form as a previous version had been circulated in error with the papers. WCT have produced an employer friendly leaflet to promote the FD, a copy of which is available under the 'Projects' section of the LLN website.

Bridging Support for BTEC Business Students (Worcester Sixth Form College)

This project concluded that the BTEC already includes sufficient information on careers and HE. The results of this will be fed into the next round of student support research.

Following the consideration of a high volume of projects at this meeting the Group discussed the alternatives for the LLN funding if the number of appropriate projects decreases in the future. It was suggested that the LLN could look to commission projects rather than request project bids.

6. Research Report for Employer Demand for Herefordshire, & Proposed Action Plan

DL summarised the Draft Report entitled 'Research into the Need and Demand for Higher Education Provision in Herefordshire' and informed the Group that this was still in draft form as it needs to be signed off by the LSC. The draft report has already been presented to the Employer Engagement Group (EEG).

In response to the report, the EEG decided it wouldn't be sensible to employ more HE brokers as there are already a large number of people undertaking a brokerage role. DL reminded the Group that the LLN had already contracted the Three Counties Consortium to employ a consultant to up skill the Train 2 Gain Advisors. The EEG believes that this should be extended to all advisors in the broad sense so that when anyone is giving advice they will be able to cover the whole range of qualifications up to HE level.

There were a number of concerns about the report:

- It needed to be proof read very closely, especially if it is being submitted with the HE in Herefordshire bid
- Some College names are incorrect
- The feedback is not about HE and there are assumptions that staff development can be accredited at HE level which might be incorrect
- It doesn't really support the HE in Herefordshire bid
- There is a lot of data with very little analysis
- The report should not give the views of UW, it should be the views of Herefordshire
- Conclusions cannot be easily derived from the report

- This is a very small sample
- There are some discrepancies between some of the evidence and some of the conclusions
- The research should not have asked specific questions relating to UW and should have been all universities

In light of their concerns the Group requested that the Action Plan be put on hold until the final report has been produced, as it needs to be re-written to bring out messages that can be supported by data and include more narrative in the report. However the Group were happy for the following to be commenced:

- Identify what is available in small chunks to see if the LLN can provide more funding to develop more small packages of learning
- Develop taster sessions, online taster courses, bridging sessions/content (to involve Mike Smith from Herefordshire, Worcestershire & Shropshire Training Providers Association)

Actions: DL to talk to GE about how we make use of the data and rewrite the research report. DL to cost up any work required as part of the Action Plan prior to the work being undertaken.

7. Annual Conference

In response to feedback from the Group at the last meeting, the date of the 2nd Annual Conference has been moved to Tuesday 27 January 2009.

The Group received the draft programme together with outlines of the proposed workshops and noted that since sending out the papers a couple of amendments have been made to the workshops. Firstly, an additional workshop is being added as a follow on from the Herefordshire University Challenge Seminar to discuss HE in Herefordshire. Secondly, the Wider Horizons workshop is being adapted to incorporate the launch of the Wider Horizons website rather than holding a separate launch a couple of weeks later.

It was recommended that the local MP's are invited to the annual conference.

8. Report on Work in Progress

The Group noted the written reports submitted by the LLN Team. DL sought approval from the Steering Group to increase Colin Wood's time with the LLN from 0.3fte to 0.5fte. The Group were happy with this proposal and authorised the increase.

DL also provided the following verbal update:

- Gerry Beattie started work with the LLN on 1 November and will be working with partners to produce taster courses for Wider Horizons.
- DL explained that in response to the Steering Group's suggestion to share information across the Network, she had asked Viv Bell to look into appropriate ways of sharing the information electronically. VB submitted a paper suggesting a content repository which was suggesting that it isn't open access but is open to just the partners of the H&W LLN.

Action: VB to investigate how open we can make it without it being open to everyone.

- Liz Davies-Ward has been working with a number of teams to develop 3 courses. It was also noted that the 'Birmingham/Worcester Universities Project' also includes the Open University.
- A report was received on the Step into HE Fair held at Worcester Rugby Football Club on Tuesday 21 October. DL summarised that the event was only open to Schools and Colleges this year and was attended by more Exhibitors than last year including the West Midlands Universities and public sector employers. There were a total of 550 visitors from 6 Schools (1 from Herefordshire, 5 from Worcestershire) and 3 FE Colleges (3 from Worcestershire). DL reported that overall the LLN had received good feedback on the event and will be meeting with Aimhigher next week to receive additional feedback from the Schools/Colleges. The Steering Group noted the lack of support from Herefordshire at this year's event and requested a letter be sent from the Chair of the Steering Group to Cathy Roberts at Herefordshire Council to express their disappointment.

Action: GE to send letter to Herefordshire Council

9. Update on Progression Agreements

The Group received an update on the Progression Agreements approved to date.

10. Update on Aimhigher Activities

There was no update received on Aimhigher Activities.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.