



Application to the Big Projects Fund

Project Name: A model for enhancing and embedding employability and supporting progression in curricula for the humanities.

Application for LLN Big Project funding Criteria 1: 1-4

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<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Action/Information</i>
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1 Background

“We are not living in easy economic times. The class of 2009 will be leaving university and entering the labour market at the worst time for many years.” Richard Lambert, Director-general CBI, 2009.

Humanities’ students (including those studying media subjects) face an extended transition from study to ‘graduate level’ employment (Allen, R 2006). They also tend to receive lower salaries than more numerate graduates (De Coulon et al 2006). The pressures of the recession argue the need to equip humanities students with tools to enable them successfully to navigate what will now otherwise become an increasingly ‘longer and more complex’ (British Academy, 2004) transition after graduation.

Many humanities students enter higher education due overwhelmingly to interest in their subject (Purcell and Pitcher, 1996) and, when considering future destinations, students will often select sectors such media, publishing and teaching, which appear to offer a continuation of that personal interest. However, the sheer variety of potential career choices means that many students will need to gain sector-specific training or experience before entering the competitive creative industries or other potential fields of employment.

The University of Worcester graduate destination figures show that, in fact, humanities students enter a very wide range of careers and (in line with national trends) many have to undertake ‘bridging’ activities such as temporary or part time work, unpaid placements or further study before entering full- time employment. In order to enable humanities students to manage and develop these non-linear career paths, it is vital that we equip them with appropriate employability skills and help them to recognise the vocational attributes of humanities degree programmes.

Previous initiatives to support employability taken by UW's English department, such as lunchtime careers sessions or the opportunity to take an accredited module in students' final year, have had limited success due to low take-up. A questionnaire was consequently sent out to all English students to ascertain their perceptions of their future employability. The results show that students have a high level of anxiety about their employability, which is heightened in the final year; at the same time however, students are ambivalent about attending 'add on' optional activities. Nor do they wish to see compulsory 3rd year modules introduced, which they view as restricting their subject options.

Therefore, we have concluded that any approaches to enhancing employability among humanities students will be most successful if they are embedded within the existing curriculum, and targeted at students during all stages of their higher education journey, including the pre-entry stage when choices are made. This application to the Big Projects Fund, if successful, will enable us to develop a framework and materials designed to embed employability within all levels of the curriculum, but with particular emphasis in the scope of the project on testing this with years 1 and 2 and later engaging students on vocational courses (eg 14-19 Creative and Media Diplomas) in partner colleges.. It will also allow us to test some of those materials through piloted introduction of revised modules in some subjects. We consider it essential to include employers at both the planning and delivery stage, and we will take note of work already undertaken by HCAT on developing employability skills in arts students – especially when developing processes and approaches to engaging with employers.

2 Objectives of the Project

- To research and develop a model for embedding employability and supporting progression within the curriculum across humanities subjects in the Institute of Humanities & Creative Arts (IHCA).
- To develop a pilot programme that tests the model across two subject areas in IHCA, with a view subsequently to rolling out the programme across all humanities subjects and, through dissemination of the project, to supporting employability and progression in other HE and FE educational contexts, especially with partner colleges.

This will involve:

- Establishment of a project steering group to include: Head of Institute, Head of Division (English and Cultural Studies), 'champions' from each subject team, UW's Employability Development Worker, and student and employer representation.
- Surveys, building upon consultation already achieved, to evaluate student / staff attitudes to employability and progression.
- Research to compare local and national graduate destinations of humanities students and to identify UK best practice and innovation from which UW can learn.
- Staff awareness-raising and training, including provision of bespoke training sessions and development and production of supporting printed and web-based materials.
- Development and delivery of student activities and materials for use in Induction Week to raise students' awareness of issues related to progression and employability.

- Development and delivery of employability and progression activities and materials to be used in level 4 Study Skills modules and level 5 Preparation for Independent Study modules. These to include input from local and national employers.
- Development and accreditation of a level 6 optional Employability module open to all humanities students.
- End-of-project survey to assess the impact of work achieved in terms of both student and staff perceptions and attitudes.
- Dissemination of results to include Institute Away Day, UW Learning and Teaching conference (to which partner colleges are invited) and via the Higher Education Academy relevant subject associations.

3 Project Approach

An initial IHCA Away Day will raise awareness and identify ‘champions’ from each subject team, including Media & Cultural Studies, English, History, Sociology, Politics, American Studies, Drama, and Film Studies. These champions will form the basis of the steering group, along with employer and student representatives. The full steering group will meet on a quarterly basis to drive the project forward.

A consultant from Transition Tradition Limited, who has particular expertise in working with arts and humanities students on employability and career development, will be engaged. She will help with some of the staff and student sessions and the creation of supporting materials. She will also assist us to identify and secure input from national and local employers, agencies and organisations to the steering group and will deliver certain sessions to students.

The Employability Development Worker will support the project by working with staff to embed employability sessions into the existing curriculum and to achieve liaison with internal partners such as the Business Partnership Office, Careers Service and Alumni team, thereby maximising the potential of resources offered by alumni and employers.

4 Scope:

A Key Products from the Project

- A transferable model for the embedding of employability and progression into the humanities curriculum, which can be shared with internal and external partners, eg partner colleges and other Institutes within UW.
- Materials and a framework for staff development to raise awareness of employability and provide for future development, and potential use by partners.
- Materials and a framework for the development of student employability and progression, which can be adapted and used in other UW Institutes and in other contexts external to the University.
- The revision of course promotional materials to emphasise the vocational attributes and progression opportunities offered by the humanities degree programmes; clarifying the progression opportunities for students with vocational qualifications such as the new Diploma.

B Out of Scope

- The project could be extended to include development of an approach to, and information on, progression and career destinations for pre-entry students. In addition, working in partnership with the University’s careers service or

Graduate Advantage, postgraduate activities such as career management seminars could be developed. Funding may be sought from other sources such as the Higher Education Academy for these possible extensions to what is being proposed in the current application.

- Partnership working with Skillset and, for example, NEW college's student academy to raise understanding of the relevance of humanities subjects as progression opportunities for vocational students and the attributes of humanities degrees in terms of employability.
- A survey of the longitudinal impact on students' and graduates' career aspirations and destinations would be valuable but, due to the time span, outside the scope of the project.
- The development of web-based materials for both students and staff.

5 Constraints

- Resistance/apathy from either students or staff to engage in the activities could weaken the impact of the project.
- The worsening graduate employment market could impact unfavourably by increasing student disaffection or willingness to face up to employability issues.

6 Initial Project Case

See Background. In particular,

- The worsening regional and national graduate employment market.
- Humanities students can be disadvantaged due to lack of clear career direction on entry.
- There is relatively little regional or national research into the employability of humanities students.
- Retention and employability are key drivers of the University's strategy.
- The need to forge links with diverse groups of employers due to the very broad range of career destinations of humanities graduates.
- Humanities students have tended to prove resistant to conventional, tried and tested approaches to enhancing student employability.
- Students from non-traditional backgrounds and those with vocational qualifications may be deterred from progressing to HE study in a number of humanities subjects for want of any clear understanding of how their employability will be developed and, moreover, of understanding the extent and diversity of humanities graduates' employability.

7 Benefits of the Project

Benefits to the student:

- The opportunity to become aware of employers' needs and expectations, and of their own employability 'status' and of how this can be developed, from the very beginning of their HE journey (including pre-entry).
- Learning to become proactive in making use and understanding the benefits of capitalising on previous employment and upon development opportunities on and off campus, and of developing and planning effectively for future progression. The opportunity to achieve the above within embedded and assessed programmes of study, giving increased status and validity to the activities.
- The opportunity to benefit from new links with employers through guest lectures, work placement opportunities and the embedding of employer experience into the curriculum activities.

Benefits to the institution:

- Enhanced student satisfaction, supporting student progression, recruitment and retention.
- Enhanced graduate destinations ultimately.
- The sharing of good practice with other institutions.
- A newly-knowledgeable academic staff base with enhanced commitment to, understanding of, and engagement with, student employability.
- The development of national and regional employer links.

Benefits to the LLN:

- An interesting model of good practice involving employers and educational establishments, in the key area of media and cultural studies, amongst other subjects.
- The promotion of the employability benefits of target subject areas leading to enhanced progression to Higher Education
- The enhancement of partnership working by the IHCA and local FE colleges and the dissemination of materials developed through the project. Further engagement with 14-19 Diploma consortia and NEW College Student Academy.

8 Key Assumptions

- The project is supported by the Head of Institute
- The project achieves 'buy in' from academic staff
- The project achieves buy in and engagement from students Employer support/input is achieved
- The Careers Service supports the project
- The external consultant is available

1 Costs (This should include the commitment of the organisation to pay 20% of the costs)

Double click on the table below to detail the costs of the project (to insert another row, highlight the row after where you would like the row to be inserted and go to 'Insert' & 'Rows')

Project Leader release from other duties (undertake preliminary research; project management)	1,800.00
External consultancy (staff training; employer liaison; events delivery etc.)	6,000.00
Teaching release for six project 'champions'	1,800.00
Release from other duties for UW Employability Development Worker	800.00
Institute special Away Days (catering x 2)	800.00
Away Days: 3 external speakers (travel plus one fee) x 2	600.00
Staff training; student focus-group events; steering group meetings (catering)	250.00
Development of web-based materials and print	3,500.00
Organisation, management and analysis of student surveys	600.00
Dissemination of results (travel costs and partners meeting)	800.00
Contingency (10% of budget)	1,695.00
Sub-Total of Revenue Costs	18,645.00
Capital Costs:	

2 Project Timescale

Activity	By Date
Institute Away Day	June 09
Identification of Steering Group	July 09
Initial student /staff perception activity	September 09
Induction activity	September 09
Further Staff Training activity	December 09
Production of initial web/print based materials	December 09
Validation of level 6 module	October 09
Development and delivery of employability activities in level 4 module	September – December 10
Development and delivery of employability activities in level 5 module	September – December 10
Delivery of level 6 module	January – May 10
Student perception survey	January 10
Meeting with Partners (FE)	January 10
Institute staff Away Day/staff focus groups	January 10
Evaluation and final report	January 10

3 How will the project be evaluated?

- Baseline student/staff perception survey in September 09 will be compared to similar in January '10 (time-scales artificially constrained by time-scale of LLN-funded activity; in addition, this project will also be evaluated over a 4-year time span, following the 09 cohort of new students to measure effectiveness as they participate in full range of activities over the 3 years.)
- Students focus groups to ascertain effectiveness of employability activities.

4 How will the project be sustained?

Having developed and evaluated the activities and materials, the Institute will seek to embed this model as core to its curriculum delivery.

5 Which aims, outcomes and/or targets will the project achieve for the HWLLN? Please also state which funding criteria this project meets and how.

This is an application for the Big Projects fund, as it is linked to curriculum development, has sustainable outcomes, and involves new links with employers for humanities students. In particular, the bid meets the LLN big project criteria as stated below;

1. *Does the project provide new links, or strengthen existing links with employers, resulting in new modules or courses or accreditation of existing courses?*

The project will forge new links with employers, for example in the delivery of specific sessions and employers will contribute to the project steering group. It is anticipated that 2 national employers and 3 regional employers will be involved. A new level 6 module will be validated and there will be significant revisions to the curriculum in Humanities subjects as an outcome of the project.

2. *Will the project result in more students with vocational qualifications entering HE, by introducing new learning progression opportunities, or by providing newly developed IAG?*

New course pre-entry information will make employability a key feature which could attract new applications from students with non traditional backgrounds and students with vocational qualifications through an emphasis on the progression opportunities afforded in humanities subjects. Specific partnership working to articulate the progression from 14-19 Diplomas will further articulate the relevance of the progression opportunities offered.

The bid meets the HWLLN aims as below:

- To involve employers in the development, design and delivery of curriculum in H&W to meet needs of target groups.
- To help the target groups of students succeed in higher education.
- To facilitate a change in the design and delivery of curriculum in H & W to meet the needs of the target students.
- The project is focussed upon media and cultural studies students, alongside addressing other humanities student groups within the Institute of Humanities & Creative Arts.

14 Initial Risk Log

The following table summarises the risks that have been identified that may prevent the project being completed to the required quality, budget and timescale. The probability and impact of each risk has been graded as low, medium or high to indicate the relative importance attached to each element of risk.

Risks	Probability	Impact	Containment Plan
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Resistance/apathy from either students or staff to engage in the activities.	M	M	Institute Away Day and subsequent training events aim to challenge and break down barriers to engagement. Strong lead from Head of Institute, to support this. The embedding of activities into assessed modules to ensure participation of all students.
The worsening graduate employment market could impact unfavourably by increasing student disaffection or willingness of students to face up to employability issues.	M	M	By 'front-loading' much of the input with students into first two years, opportunity to energise students at early stage.
Inability to engage employers or external agencies to sit on the steering group, or deliver sessions.	M	H	Use external consultant to contact local and national employers / agencies.
External factors such as illness prevent the project team or external consultant being able to complete the work.	L	H	Steering group should be able to share the load.

6 Project Team

Professor Antonia Payne, Head of Institute of Humanities & Creative Arts, UW

Dr Jill Terry, Head of Division, English and Cultural Studies, UW

Rose Watson, Employability Development Worker, UW

Samantha Smith, Consultant, Transition Tradition Limited.