

Project Name: Exploring the Partner College Student Experience: Achieving an Outstanding Student Experience

Amendment History:

Version No.	Date	Reason for Amendment
1	December 2008	New proposal

Name of Project Manager & Contact Details

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Document Distribution

Name	Location	Responsibility	Action/Information
Louise Martin	UW	Project manager	Project leader
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Donna Obrey	LLN	Project Officer for the LLN	To track and monitor project

Background

The Institute of Sport & Exercise Science (ISES) at the University of Worcester (UW) works in partnership with Stourbridge College, Worcester College of Technology and Holme Lacy College to provide HND and degree level sport-related courses. These programmes are valuable to the ISES in relation to widening participation, working with the wider community and progression onto the institute's degree and Master's programmes. A key strategic aim of the University of Worcester (UW) is to provide an outstanding student experience and inclusive higher education: these are demanding remits since courses that are provided in collaboration with partner colleges may face greater challenges, as the student experience involves two distinct institutions in different locations, each with their own facilities, resources and staffing. Students on these courses are taught in dual locations by staff from both institutions, and whilst the diversity of this dual provision is attractive and positive in many respects, it also provides challenges, for example with respect to facilities, resources and

transport. This project seeks to explore how partner college students perceive their overall experience in relation to the following broad themes:

- a) facilities and resources;
- b) learning and teaching;
- c) employability;
- d) personal development;
- e) recommendations for enhancing student experience.

The involvement of the three partner colleges will not only enable a wider consideration of partner college collaborations to be made, but also enable the sharing of good practice and those aspects of provision that students identify as leading to a positive experience. The project will also seek the views of partner college staff in relation to how they feel they provide an outstanding student experience, in order to provide an indication of the congruence of staff and student views. Project findings will have valuable benefits for the future development and enhancement of partner college courses, with the aim of maximising student retention, satisfaction and recruitment.

Objectives of the Project

- 1) To explore partner college students' views on their experience;
- 2) To explore partner college and ISES staff views on the partner college student experience;
- 3) To share good practice across the three partner colleges in order to further enhance the partner college student experience;
- 4) To identify areas for development that will further enhance the partner college student experience;
- 5) To disseminate findings with other institutes at UW who work with partner colleges.

Project Approach

Participants

Approximately 90 partner college students in the ISES will participate in the study. These will include 15 students from each year of partner college programmes representing each partner college. Partner college staff and ISES staff teaching on partner college programmes will also be invited to participate in the research.

Research design

A cross-sectional research design will be used to qualitatively assess student perceptions of their experiences at different time points within the course (i.e. semester 1, semester 2, semester 3 and semester 4).

Preliminary procedures

Ethical approval is currently pending for the project and has been sought using ISES ethics procedures. Project staff will develop the focus group questions based on literature and key internal and external documentation relating to the 'outstanding student experience'.

Procedure

All partner college students will be invited to attend a focus group to talk about their course experience under the previously identified broad themes (see above). These will take place at the end of semester 1 (February 2009) and at the end of semester 2

(May 2009) for all year groups. Staff will be invited to participate in a similar focus group at a single time point (April 2009) to talk about how they provide an outstanding student experience under the same broad headings as listed above.

Data analysis

Qualitative data from the focus groups will be thematically analysed using NVivo 8. Comparisons between staff and student groups will be made to indicate areas of agreement. Similarly, comparisons between partner colleges will be made to indicate areas of commonality and identify appropriate aspects for sharing.

Timetable

Date	Action
December 2008 - January 2009	Discuss and refine project with key partner college staff; Seek ethical approval; Develop focus group questions; Letters of invitation to students re focus group 1.
February 2009	Student focus group 1 to take place.
February – March 2009	Thematic analysis of student focus group 1 data
April 2009	Staff focus groups take place; Letters of invitation to students re focus group 2.
May 2009	Student focus group 2 to take place.
June – July 2009	Thematic analysis of staff and student focus group 2 data.
August 2009	Report writing.
September 2009	Share key findings with partner college and ISES staff to consider ways to further enhance the student experience.
Beyond September 2009	Project dissemination internally at UW and preparation of external outputs (see below).

Scope:

A Key Products from the project

- 1) Report for LLN and ISES of key findings from the project;
- 2) Conference presentation at the UW Learning & Teaching Conference;
- 3) Guide for enhancing the partner college student experience, through highlighting the considerations for the development and delivery of courses;
- 4) LLN seminar;
- 5) UW Academic Practice and Development Unit (ADPU) seminar.

B Out of Scope

Constraints

- Data protection issues: UW ethical guidelines have been followed and form part of the ethical approval process;
- Participants' informed consent: this also forms part of the UW ethical approval process. In particular it focuses on the rights of students and staff to withdraw at

any time, to view data being held about them, the anonymity of data and its destruction at the end of the project.

Initial Project Case

This project has already been awarded a Learning and Teaching grant by the UW ISES Learning Advisory Group (LAG) and started in December 2008. The project manager has liaised with partner college staff and meetings are taking place during the week beginning 15th December. It is expected that at these meetings relevant students will be identified and times for focus group meetings agreed. Initial student focus group questions have been produced by the project team. It is envisaged that the project timetable is realistic and no problems are foreseen at this stage in maintaining it.

Benefits of the Project

It is anticipated that this project will provide valuable data that will improve the overall experience of partner college students. This will be important for student retention, student satisfaction and potential student progression upon completion of their course and student recruitment to these programmes. The project will also have potential benefits for the professional development of staff via the exchange and sharing of ideas and good practice that students have identified as positively contributing to their experience. Project findings are also expected to be valuable for the future development of partner college programmes.

Key Assumptions

- Availability of staff in partner colleges to undertake project-related activity;
- Student willingness to participate.

Timescale

Please see 'Project Approach' above.

Costs

This project has already been awarded £2000 by the UW ISES LAG. This money has been allocated to internal project costs, for example equipment and dissemination costs. Further funding is sought in order to cover other vital areas of the project. These are:

- travelling costs for staff, both partner college staff to attend meetings at UW and for research staff from UW to visit partner colleges;
- teaching cover for partner college staff in order to be able to attend meetings and the focus group;
- meeting expenses, such as minute taking and refreshments.

It is expected that these costs will total about £1000.

How will the project be evaluated?

Against the project objectives, through:

- the internal ISES report;

- the usefulness of the findings to inform UW and partner college actions;
- the guide for enhancing the partner college student experience;
- the UW Learning and Teaching conference.

How will the project be sustained?

Primarily through the production of the guide for enhancing the partner college student experience. It is also expected that the project will be sustained not only through the embedding of good practice into the institutions involved, but also through increased understanding and empathy with the cross-institutional issues relating to the broad themes previously identified.

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
Student involvement	L	H	Will be managed by partner college representatives to encourage student participation as stakeholders in enhancing their own experience
Staff availability	L	M	Once project has started, alternative staff could be utilised
Data collection and analysis	L	H	This aspect of the project is to be undertaken by the Learning & Teaching Research Assistant, a full-time UW post. This post is fully funded beyond the end of the project
Production of project outputs	L	H	Drafts prepared by the Learning & Teaching Research Assistant (see above) with final versions to be prepared by the project manager, a senior lecturer at UW

Project Team

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