

Project Final Report

Project title	PSC code:
Leader of the Land-based Industries sector	
Partner institution	
Reading University	

This report completed by: **Becky Morgan**

Date: **19th July 2011**

Please enter comments in the white boxes (which boxes will expand)

How was the project undertaken? Give details of the key stages in the development process.

The project was split into 6 sections. Each will be considered individually:

Developing tools and resources to aid students in bridging the gap between school/college and university.

A large proportion of the total project time involved developing these resources from the concept stage through to distribution. Current research and work carried out in the previous project indicated a need for numeracy and literacy skills. Resources addressing these, with a slant towards the land-based sector were developed along with more generic topics that could be used by other subjects (e.g. debating). Students and staff were consulted for ideas for resources and several were produced over the duration of the project.

The final resources are:

- Dissection of the lamb DVD
- Dissection of the piglet DVD
- Major organs of the lamb and piglet DVD and quiz
- Woodland survey
- Glucose assay
- Invertebrate sampling
- Behaviour of wild African animals DVD
- Introduction to debating (including DVD)
- Molarity calculation tool
- Good academic practice
- Ethical clearance
- Farm to Fork
- Presentation of statistics

The majority of these were produced and sent out to partner colleges and contacts at the Royal Agricultural College for feedback. Final amendments and re-branding the resources took place during May-July 2011.

Much discussion was had about how to host and distribute the resources. The majority (those that are pdf and non-video formats) are now hosted online at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/apd/ug/apd-uglearningresources.aspx> All the learning resources were successfully launched at the 2 day F.E. staff event at Reading University in July and staff who were interested in the DVDs have signed up to receive these by post as these are not currently hosted on the website (the dissection videos for ethical reasons). The aim is for these resources to be hosted elsewhere, e.g. on YouTube, or available on DVD, by the end of the project. The resources will also be filed with www.jorum.ac.uk a national database of resources for F.E. and H.E. This is a national database which will allow for greater distribution of the resources as users are alerted to the existence of a newly uploaded resource, via an email sign up system. The University student recruitment office will also alert all their school contacts of the existence of the resources web page via their newsletter and by hosting a link on the main Teachers and Advisors page of the University. Feedback from staff about the resources was very positive and some have already been used in a college setting.

Develop a training network for college staff using the University's CSTD and research facilities.

Discussion was carried out with the University's CSTD manager and places are available on University run CSTD courses for staff in partner colleges of the University, but only if there are spaces on the course. This also does not cover all the colleges who are partnered with Progress South Central. In reality this means that providing training opportunities in this way is very limited.

It was decided instead to provide bespoke training by delivering a 2 day residential event at the University designed specifically for land-based F.E. staff which counted towards their annual CPD requirements. This event was held on the 5th and 6th July 2011 and involved sessions keeping staff up to date on current research at Reading, practical teaching activities and the launch of the online resources. This event also gave the opportunity to run 2 sessions in conjunction with VETNET LLN (extending the collaboration begun in the previous project) about the transition from F.E. to H.E. and issues for teaching and learning. Delegates attended from a wide range of institutions including colleges, LLNs and the Horticultural Trades Association. It is hoped that the opportunities for networking over the two days will have been of great future benefit to the sector. Feedback from the event was very positive and requests were made for future CPD events like this.

Explore further the potential for collaborative provision between Reading University and colleges

The aim was that University students experience some teaching in the college setting and vice versa. This was partly achieved through the summer school. Collaborations are dependent on the timetable and teaching requirements of each establishment, e.g. the BSc (hons) Animal Science course at Reading University has a part 3 module taught at BCA about practical aspects of equine management to sit alongside the theory taught in an academic module at the University. Collaborations are easier to develop once an existing relationship is in place, as was the case with this example which was set up before this part of the project began. It was originally the plan to develop more partnerships like this, but this did not occur during the timescale of this project. It is hoped that more work will be developed and delivered in the future, based on the relationships formed over the last 3 years. The conclusion is that it is not always straightforward to identify and put into place collaborative provision, but collaboration should be kept in mind when curriculum development occurs. The networking that has already occurred between institutions during this project should make this more realistic and achievable. This should be viewed more as a long term goal that has been begun in this project.

Delivery of the Land-based summer school

A summer school was successfully run from the 6th to 9th July 2010 with 5 students from NESCOL. Sessions involved an introduction to University study, surveying woodland, animal behaviour studies, survey of river life and farming and the environment. Students also gave a presentation at the end of the summer school on their work. Due to the low uptake of student numbers it was decided not to run this event in 2011 but to focus instead on the staff CPD event which was judged to be of greater impact.

Explore, via market exploration, the establishment of a regional and national land based leadership foundation

This report was undertaken to see whether there was a need for greater interaction between education and industry in the land-based sector, whether this needed a new leadership forum to oversee the provision of resources and to investigate the long term application of the educational tools being developed. From this initial investigation it was realised that there were factors that might influence the decision as to which teaching resources to develop and how to distribute them so this part of the project was brought forward to early 2010. A survey was prepared and issued online to key stakeholders in May 2010 and a report of the findings issued to PSC. The findings from the survey were also shared with the Institute of Agricultural Management. The report concluded that it was not felt appropriate to put into place the basis of such an organisation before the end of the project.

Evaluate the possibility of an 'industrial' or professional higher degree programme via direct engagement with employers and college staff

Informal discussion with college staff indicated an interest in this area, but with time constraints being listed as the primary reason for not pursuing this further. It was decided to build on existing work in this area run by the Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) office at the University which in some ways already partly meets this need via an alternative methodology. Individuals are employed by a company/the University for a fixed period of time on a specific project and can study for a higher degree alongside this work. An event was run with the KTP office to investigate whether there were relationships with employers already in existence within the University that could be expanded on in this way. The event was open to academic staff and industry contacts. The lack of attendees at the event from industry indicated that uptake for this programme would be poor from an industry perspective. The engagement of employers in this process is key, so it was decided to utilize one of these existing relationships where the employer is very keen to work with University to look at accreditation of an existing CPD program (see further work, below). It is concluded that establishing a professional higher degree programme may not be an appropriate route to follow at this time but could be a potential area of development in the future to meet changing industry needs if the employer engagement and support is present.

Have the overall aims of the project been achieved?

Yes. See above.

Did some aspects of the project work better than others? Give details where appropriate.

The staff CPD event and teaching resources seemed to be the most successful sections of this project. Staff from the colleges and University were enthusiastic about the chance to network and the F.E. staff fully appreciated being given resources to help, especially when given the time to familiarize themselves with them. It is hoped that these sections of the project will have longevity far beyond the end of July 2011.

Identifying potential opportunities for teaching collaborations between the University and colleges is an ongoing process, the responsibility for identifying and setting these up being in the hands of the colleges and University. Whilst it would have been more positive if actual collaborations had been set up by the project deadline, it is hoped that the networking and bringing together the different establishments that this project has provided will act as a catalyst for further opportunities and skills transfer at the right time when it is needed.

The professional higher degree programme was hindered due to lack of employer engagement. This area of the project will be addressed further in a follow on project. (See future developments section below).

What is the next stage? Will there be future developments based on the outcomes of this project?

Funding has been given for a 6 month project to look at 'Accreditation of land-based CPD'. The University was approached by a UK animal feed company to ask if the University could accredit their in house animal feed and nutrition CPD training. The funding will be used to investigate the level and content of the training, whether this is something the University could give accreditation status to, and if so, to put in place the mechanisms for that to occur.

The staff CPD event proved very popular and requests were made for additional future CPD training of a similar style. This would be dependant on a funding source being identified.

Was the support of Progress South Central appropriate to the project?

Yes, the support of Progress South Central was fully appropriate to the project and was in line with the same aims. Without the funding from Progress South Central the positive outcomes from this project could not have been achieved.

Is payment due after the submission of this report?

No.

Thanks. Please submit this report by email to: psc@reading.ac.uk