

Report on JISC HEA Case Study by Redcar & Cleveland College and the University of Teesside Library & Information Services

Background

The JISC HEA Case Study grew naturally out of previous joint work between Redcar & Cleveland College [Project Leader Glenn Preedy gpreedy@cleveland.ac.uk] and the University of Teesside Library & Information Services (L&IS) [Project Leader Paul Mayes paul.mayes@tees.ac.uk] especially a grant from Foundation Degree Forward. There has also been considerable input from the Learning Resource Centres of both institutions.

The FDF-supported project itself grew out of work on evaluating learning resource provision for the pilot Fds in the UoT Higher Education Business Partnership colleges (described in the FDF journal Forward No. 6. pp.42-43). This work with both students and staff indicated an interest in improving the acquisition of 'information skills' to exploit the learning resources. Also national issues were arising about the comparability of skills for Fd students progressing to the first 'top-up' degrees at universities.

For the first stage of the JISC HEA project in mid-2006, focus group meetings were held with staff and students from three colleges. Activities used Godwin's 'information skills benchmarks' as sample core skills (as shown in the partial sheet below).

Programme	Information skill (based on Godwin)	Minimum standard outcome for skill	Minimum standard for student skill development	Minimum standard for learning resource(s)
Certificate	Search tools and strategy	Defined level of - understanding of a database - understanding how to devise a keyword strategy	- template(s) available for academic staff to ensure that a student uses database(s) in their learning - support material from LRC where it is evaluated as necessary	availability to students of an evaluated number of the most relevant databases, e.g. JISC – supported Childlink
Foundation degree 1 st year				
Foundation degree 2 nd year				
Progression/ top-up degree				

However, all the groups felt these core 'library-related' skills were too restrictive or were tangled in with a wide variety of related skills that a student should acquire in a two year Foundation Degree learning journey. Staff who were responsible for the development of employability skills also showed a

strong interest in overlaps and synergies between ‘their’ skills and the study / information skills. A telling anecdote from one student cohort was that they had received advice / instruction on essay writing four times whilst ‘academic writing’ (rated highly by a control group of HE Level 3 top-up staff) or timekeeping skills (rated number one by our employer focus group) were apparently not covered. This touches on the interesting issue of the difference in perception between students and staff as to whether or how skills have been covered.

Further focus groups and activities were held in three colleges (including Redcar & Cleveland College) and a comprehensive (and growing) “Employability and Progression Skills Checklist” has emerged with 15 major headings and over 50 sub-headings (see Appendix A at the end of this report).

The Case Study funding support from JISC HEA meant that Redcar & Cleveland College could concentrate some extra academic staff work time on a template for one of the skills on the Checklist with students at sample stages from ‘feeder certificate’ through to progression to HE Level 3 / employment. If the template approach is evaluated as successful then for each sub-heading the desired skills capability will be realistically proposed and best practice teaching / assessment ideas identified along with resources (especially eResources). For many part-time staff teaching, say, one module of an Fd, the availability of well-tested templates to allow the stealth embedding of skills in subject work has been identified as very useful.

Template Development

Focus group meetings in late-2006 developed a draft template for each skill with the major headings as:

Skill:	(e.g. Academic Writing)
Explanation of scope of skill	
Preferred method of teaching/embedding/etc. of skill	
Preferred time in programme	

Examples of successful practice (locally or externally) Any Warnings?
Outcomes and 'Assurance' that skills are acquired
Resources (within college or externally available)
Any eResources (if applicable)

Since January 2007 Cath McPartland Lecturer in the Department of Early Years and Teacher Training at Redcar & Cleveland College has been developing an Action research model that is testing the template with students and colleagues on the Further Education Teachers' Certificate and Foundation Early Years programmes of study. Her 'scoping report' is available from paul.mayes@tees.ac.uk.

APPENDIX A

Possible Employability and Progression Skills Curriculum Checklist ** for use in JISC / HEA Project at Redcar & Cleveland College April 2007 version]

1. Self Management Skills

- Taking responsibility for own learning
- Proactiveness /self-starting
- Time management
- Timekeeping
- Thinking about communication
- Overall coping with stress

- Flexibility, adaptability and recognising change
- Having an 'enterprise attitude'
- Developing a work ethic
- Having a health & safety attitude

2. Communication Skills

- Speech
- Different Types of Verbal Communication
- Constructive Criticism
- Body Language
- Listening

3. Written Communication Skills

- The Conventions of Written Communication
- Academic writing
- Report and Essay Writing
- Referencing
- The Documents of Meetings
- Electronic Communications
- Using Images
- IT Skills for Written Communication

4. Numeracy Skills

- Basic Arithmetic Operations
- The Use of Tables
- The Graphical Presentation of Data
- Statistical Analysis of Data

5. Career Management Skills

- Making an Application
- Succeeding at the Interview
- Interviewer Skills

6. Presentation Skills

- Preparing the Presentation
- The Structure of the Presentation
- Bringing the Presentation to Life
- The Presentation Plan
- Delivering the Presentation
- Special Types of Presentation
- Use of appropriate media
- Responding to different types of audience

7. Selling and Negotiation Skills

- Selling Skills
- Negotiating Skills
- Ability to compromise
- The Negotiating Process

8. Group Work, Leadership and Personal Skills

- Establishing Effective Working Relationships with Others (inc Criticism)
- Understanding the Need for a Disciplined Approach
- Taking responsibility /Leading Others/Motivating/Delegating Tasks
- Mentoring
- Managing People Through Change
- Group Dynamics
- Developing Groups
- Different Types of Groups

9. Information Gathering and Research Skills

- Information Retrieval & using Information critically – printed sources
- Information Retrieval & using Information Critically – Internet / e-sources
- Avoiding Plagiarism
- Information Management
- Referencing
- Analysis of Data and Information
- Note Making

10. Thinking Skills

- Critical Thinking Skills
- Creative Thinking Skills
- Problem Solving Skills
- Decision Making Skills
- Memory
- Curiosity

11. Project and Task Management

- Identify Key Features and Conceptualise issues
- Set and Maintain Priorities
- Setting Targets
- Identify Options
- Implementing Plans (inc diagrams and charts)
- Risk Management
- Stress Management of others

- Evaluation Skills

12. Consultancy / Self Employment Skills

- Pitching and Bidding for Work
- The Administrative Arrangements
- Maintaining a Good Relationship with the Client
- Undertaking the Work
- Presenting the Work

13. Exam and Test Skills

- Revision and preparation
- The exam or test
- Stress techniques

14. Reflective Skills and Personal Development Planning

- Reflective Skills and self-assessment
- Evaluating the Portfolio of Employability Skills
- Personal Development Planning
- Understand and use work 'rules' and norms

15. ICT Skills

- Keyboard Skills
- Practical use of equipment (eg scanner)
- E-mail
- Word processing (inc mailmerge, layout and importing)
- Spreadsheets
- Saving (inc version numbers)
- Producing Web Pages
- Other Forms of Communication (eg Instant Messaging and VoIP)
-

** "Employability Skills" by D. Hind and S. Moss (Business Education Publishers, 2005) was used as the resource for the first Focus Group