Centre For Promoting Learner Autonomy
Project Summaries 2008/2009

Introduction
Ivan Moore - Director Centre For Promoting Learner Autonomy

The Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) has been established to promote an environment which supports students in becoming more autonomous as learners. Many approaches may be developed, including Enquiry Based Learning, Problem Based Learning, Design Based Learning, investigations, Case Based Learning, and role plays, in which the learning is driven by a process of enquiry owned by the students.

As part of its activities, the CETL was delighted to be able to announce an invitation to all staff of the University to bid for funding and support for those interested in running a one-year project in the development of learning and teaching approaches that are designed to enhance the development of learner autonomy. Applications were received in April 2008 and were judged by the CPLA core team, with the intention to fund up to 12 projects. However, such was the quality of applications that 24 projects were selected for support and funding. these projects will begin in September 2008. The projects will be managed by small project teams and outcomes are expected be achieved by June 2009. Support for these projects will include a suite of workshops, facilitated by CPLA; at-elbow support from the CPLA director and associate directors; action learning sets; and an interim seminar in January 2009. The outcomes of the projects will be disseminated through the CPLA website (address below), an end of project symposium in July 2009 and through internal and external publications and presentations.

If you require any further information please contact the CPLA CETL team at cpla@shu.ac.uk or contact them by phone on 0114 2254735.

Managing 'what technology where' through higher level constructive alignment
Simon Polovina - ACES

This project aims to not only teach students to evaluate technologies critically but also to equip them to decide which technologies suit industry problems. Each problem is novel, and demands a novel combination of technologies that simply cannot be taught beforehand. The objective then is to give students the ability to self-manage autonomous learning to cope with challenging situations outside of the 'safe' environment of a university. The anticipated outcome of this project is an educational resource embodying an approach that could be applied across many other disciplines.

Key issues in Contemporary Criminology
Richard Lynch - D&S

This project aims to use an enquiry-based approach to enhance the partnership between students and staff in the discipline of criminology. This will be accomplished via two different methods. Firstly an investigation will be created that provides an opportunity for students to articulate keys issues and a future direction for the discipline. Secondly an enquiry based model will be used to plan for student learning within the module so as to build engagement and motivation. The end result of this project will be the mapping of concepts of student learning about the discipline which can then be evaluated.

Promoting Enquiry Based Learning Using The Philosophical Enquiry Approach
Fufy Demise - D &S

The project aims to develop students' skills and confidence to participate effectively in seminar discussions. The philosophical enquiry approach uses stimuli such as music, film, stories and pictures to encourage discussions based on philosophical questions that arise from the stimuli, where curiosity, creativity, critical approach and caring are central (Lipmann 1980). Students will put autonomous learning into practice by generating questions, influencing and shaping discussions through their responses, and by observing and giving feedback on their group's progress in using thinking and discussion skills. Following training on the principles and tools of philosophical enquiry, participating tutors will facilitate philosophical enquiry seminars using the tools of philosophical enquiry. A range of evaluation methods will be used to evaluate the impact of using philosophical enquiry on students' learning.

Supporting Students' Autonomous Learning Of Concepts Of Databases
Matthew Love - ACES

This project aims to explore the learning styles students adopt when studying the design and implementation of database systems and through that exploration develop a number of learning objects that use a variety of methods to help students understand and independently apply these domain skills. The project will also address student autonomy by developing facilities that encourage students to self-observe their own approaches to problem solving. Through this observation students will develop their awareness of learning strategies that work for them.

Sheffield Hallam University

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Student-Led Resource Creation Within The FDS Learning Hubs
Julie Evans - D&S

This project (to be delivered in collaboration with the RiT initiative and Student Union) aims to develop enquiry-based learning skills in students while taking an increasingly student-centred approach to LTA. By using the Learning Hubs as a 'vehicle' through which to promote, develop, and embed strong and innovative learning and teaching practices the project will provide students with the opportunity to reflect on, research and experience different styles of learning. In addition to the creation of 're-usable' learning resources - providing visual evidence of links with student-led research and learning - the project is seen as an opportunity to develop an extra-curricular activity which could be replicated each year and rolled-out across the Faculty.

Enabling Students To Engage With Autonomous Learning: The Assessment of Student Character Strengths
Ann Macaskill - D&S

This project aims to use measures and techniques from Positive Psychology to develop student confidence to facilitate their development as autonomous learners. This will be accomplished through increasing student self-esteem by assessing character strengths of first year psychology students and providing them with feedback and information about how these strengths can contribute to developing their learning skills. The end result of this will be a package allowing an individual to assess student strengths and replicate the positive effect of increased student confidence on learner autonomy.

Developing Management Simulation Software To Promote Learner Autonomy - Sim Sports Facility
Chris Moriarty - H&W

This project aims to enhance students' development as autonomous learners through engagement in metacognitive process. The metacognitive process in this instance is a computer simulation which engages students in an iterative process of setting objectives, performance indicators and targets; managing the simulated facility to these objectives (by inputting a range of management decisions into the simulation software); receiving immediate, software-generated feedback on performance; evaluating performance and re-evaluating objectives, performance indicators and targets. At the same time professional skills (including decision-making, teamwork, communication and performance management) will be developed.

Audio Feedback To Assist Disabled Students To Feed Forward Their Learning To Become More Autonomous Learners
Anne Nortcliffe - ACES

The project aims to research and develop a methodology of audio recording to promote more autonomous learning amongst disabled students and enhance their learning experience. Higher Education aims to help students become autonomous learners however, learner autonomy is contentious in some quarters where there are concerns that it may engender inequality for disabled students. The strategic and selective audio recording of lectures and other learning events can be beneficial for disabled students and with the addition of audio 'notes', including audio feedback, may offer more control to students with disabilities.

Using The 'Apprenticeship Model' Of Research Supervision In Occupational Therapy Students
Melanie Bryer - HWB

The aim of this project is to investigate how undergraduate research can be embedded more effectively within the Occupational therapy curriculum and utilised by academic staff. In particular it will investigate how an apprenticeship model might enhance the research experience of Occupational Therapy (OT) students and improve their choice of research topic. In addition to this there will be further investigation into how dissemination of research findings can be enhanced more effectively through partnerships with OT graduates and by academic staff. The main goal of this project is to enhance personal development and motivation of staff and SHU/OT graduates through engaging in more meaningful research activity

Evaluating 'Live' Assessment For Nutrition Students
Jenny Paxman - O&M

This project aims to evaluate 'live' assessment for Nutrition students and furthermore to explore how collaborative work across academic and technical teams can enhance the student experience of assessment and promote learner autonomy. The annual Nutrition Fair is a real or 'live' assessment for final year Nutrition students who are studying the module Applied Nutrition 2. The staged assessment package involves students in the planning, preparation and delivery of a stall for the fair on a topic relevant to nutrition and health. This project will establish how 'live' assessment is perceived by students, staff, visitors and employers and to find out more about how such activities can be supported both internally, within the University, and externally.

Developing Learner Autonomy In International And UK Students At SHU
Gudrun Myers - O&M

The aim of this project is to allow international and UK students to act as peers in their areas of expertise and to support each other in the development of autonomous behaviour across a spectrum of activities, leading ultimately to a stronger sense of self-efficacy and higher levels of academic success.

Click, Clarify, Copy, Create - Media Literacy Skills For Discovering, Evaluating And Reusing Sound And Visual Resources
Linda Purdy - LITS

The aim of this project is to produce an online interactive resource which would allow students to develop key skills in 'media literacy'. We live in an increasingly media rich society and students are entering the University with an expectation of accessing and reusing media resources in their work. They are used to having film, TV, radio and images at their finger tips particularly via the internet. Students tend to be naive and inexperienced in how to discover quality resources and the factors to consider when critically evaluating and reusing them; these are key skills in developing 'media literate' students.

Developing Student Autonomy Through The Production Of A Public History Resource
Emma Robertson - D&S

This project will develop, implement and support an innovative piece of assessment in which level six undergraduate students autonomously produce a public history resource. The assessment will take place as part of a new history module entitled, 'Northern Soul: Constructing Regional Identities in the North of England, 1850-1980,' and will involve staff from the History group and LTI. Students and tutor will work in partnership to discuss the nature of this resource, which could be, for example, a mini-exhibition, short film, website or booklet. The students will then have the opportunity to explore and receive training in different technologies, as appropriate to their group projects, which will help them in developing their digital fluency.

Disciplinary Investigations: An Enquiry-Based Approach To Engaging Learner Autonomy
Ann Robinson - D&S

This project is a pedagogic project developed by a team of staff members within the criminology subject group and is designed to use an Enquiry-Based Learning (EBL) approach to enhance learner autonomy and develop a learner-teacher partnership between students and staff in the subject group.

The module content (informed by research interests of teaching staff) and process (enquiry-based investigation into 'key issues' in criminology) are aligned within the project to give the greatest potential for staff and students to maximise their autonomy in engaging with the subject.

Putting Students in their Lecturers' Shoes
Robert Wilson - H&W

This project aims to investigate, plan, develop and implement supplementary instruction into the learning, teaching and assessment in a module on a level 4, 5, or 6 computing, sports management and nursing degree course with a view to promote student learning autonomy. A key element of this will be giving students the opportunity to drive and deliver a module which will also offer the students an opportunity to develop different key skills, autonomous learning and active learning styles.

Promoting Learner Autonomy Through Mentoring
Nicola Martin - D&S

This project aims to evaluate and develop existing SHU mentoring techniques by working with six students who have Asperger Syndrome. Although the Disabled Student Allowance is able to fund mentoring, and research evidence suggests that students do find this useful, there has so far been no systematic interrogation of whether this promotes learner autonomy. The overall goal of this project is to produce good practice guidelines which will have application beyond SHU.

Developing Learning Autonomy in Work-Based, Learner-Centred CPD Provisions
Kiefer Lee - O&M

This project aims to develop learner autonomy in the work-based, Postgraduate/Post-experience CPD provision within the Marketing subject area. The process for achieving this will include taking the existing provisions and making them more work-based and ensuring they are centred upon enquiry/problem based approaches targeted at the resolution of real business problems within the learner's organisational context.

Enhancing Student Feedback With Voice Files
June Clark - O&M

The aim of this project develop the use of Web 2.0 technologies to actively engage learners using podcasts to provide a meaningful record of feedback to students. Students engaged in group work assessment would be provided with and then expected to engage with audio tutor feedback. Students would also produce their own podcasts to provide peer feedback and as a means of recording their "brainstorming ideas" assessment and thereby enhance the student learning experience.

Enquiry-Based Learning For Biology
Ben Abell - H&W

Traditional teaching in Biosciences follows a lecture-based approach, without a strong focus on learner autonomy. In contrast, Biosciences lecturers possess strong research backgrounds that are based on understanding and building new knowledge through enquiry-based approaches. To maximise the transfer of these skills and develop learner autonomy it seems natural to move towards enquiry-based approaches for module delivery. Expected outcomes are that students will learn biology in a deeper and more coherent manner, promoting quality learning and the acquisition of key transferable skills.

Developing Enquiring Teachers Through Peer Group Learning
Mark Boylan - D&S

Developing teachers as educational enquirers has been put at the heart of newly revalidated secondary education programmes. This project will enhance the evolving inter subject collaboration that has developed through the creation of cross subject modules. The first strand of the project will be to design cross subject activities to be used by collaborative learning groups, working both with tutor support and independently. The second strand is to develop a number of innovative cross subject learning experiences to support the development of enquiry skills. These will involve highly interactive sessions for large cohorts of students working in smaller peer learning groups and collaborative team teaching by tutors.

The Venture Matrix
Simon Brown - ACES

The Venture Matrix aims to achieve a sustainable University wide programme that will provide our students with a mechanism to simulate or replicate the world of work. Students will develop knowledge and experience the holistic nature of working in their chosen professions, engaging in authentic learning opportunities, multi-disciplinary teams or consortia, across subject boundaries and faculties with high levels of interaction demanding critical knowledge and skills. They will not only learn from their tutors but also from their peers; developing true learner autonomy. The project will help establish and resource a small number of key ventures that will offer ongoing learning opportunities for students from all levels of study.

Turning Student Groups Into Teams
Lynn Cinderey - ACES

Autonomous learners are expected to assume greater responsibility for, and take charge of, their own learning. This project will examine how a selected group of final year students equip themselves with the knowledge and skills to run team meetings with first year Information Systems students. This project will look at how students use declarative knowledge in practice and ask what is it like to lead student teams?

Project Based Learning: Making Media
Hilary Cunliffe-Charlesworth - ACES

The project aims to demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of learner autonomy and how it can improve student engagement and comprehension, and encourage other staff to use this style of learning.
This project involves students from Making Media in developing promotional tools for students from Level 5 Computer Network Engineering. Both cohorts gain autonomy from cross disciplinary working using their subject skills, as clients giving and receiving direction in small group activities The relationship to the real world and employment is a key aspect.

Enabling Students To Engage With Autonomous Learning: The Application of Student Character Strengths
Ann Macaskill - D&S

This project aims to increase student self-esteem by assessing their character strengths and providing them with feedback on their strengths. This will be achieved by delivering workshops aimed increasing self-confidence by enhancing the use of students' character strengths. When the project comes to an end there will be a number of effective workshop protocols which other individuals could use to plan their own confidence building workshops.

Introduction To Academic Skills
Cathy Morse - D&S

This project aims to build confidence in students and expose them to the academic skills which will be built upon throughout their course. The project consists of a voluntary set of online 'exercises' together with suggested 'model' approaches to be offered to students from the point at which they become Unconditional Firm in the Admissions process. The goal of the project is to enhance awareness of the nature of higher education and to foster the potential for autonomous learning.