

# CETLView

## Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

March 2006 Issue 2

### **Welcome to the second issue of CETLView!**

This issue is packed with even more highlights of CETL developments, impacting on learning, teaching and assessment (LTA). We'd like you to find out more and get involved in helping the CETLs to support change, encourage innovation and risk-taking by both staff and students. Visit our website at [www.shu.ac.uk/cetl/](http://www.shu.ac.uk/cetl/) for further information. A reminder about our CETLs:

**CPLA** (Centre for Promoting Learner Autonomy), **E<sup>3</sup>I** (Embedding, Enhancing and Integrating Employability), and **CIPeL** (Centre for Inter-Professional e-Learning).

### **Promoting Learner Autonomy through Assessment**

This project seeks to enhance the student learning experience by fostering the development of autonomy through effective use of collaborative/peer formative assessment, self-assessment and portfolio-based assessment within the new undergraduate programmes in the Faculty of Organisation and Management. It is estimated that the two-year project will impact on 1,200 students and 30 staff in the 1st year, building up to 3,000 students and 70 staff in the second year.

The project builds on the work of the Smarter Assessment project which began in 2003 in the School of Business and Finance (now part of the Faculty of Organisation and Management) and was rolled out to the whole Faculty in 2004/5. The current project involves the redesign of level 4, and some level 5 & 6, assessment within the new programmes in accordance with the Faculty revalidation framework. In addition to making full use of existing student feedback, student representatives/volunteers are involved as appropriate at both the planning and design stage.

The project is drawing on developments arising from the CETLs' Special Interests Groups and the support of the University's Learning and Teaching Institute. The outcomes of the project are important to the CETL and the University because they will empower learners to take more responsibility for their own learning thereby increasing their engagement in the learning process.

Christine O' Leary, CPLA Associate, says "A major revalidation exercise is a valuable opportunity to change the way in which students are assessed in order to enhance their overall learning experience."

It is hoped that the project will lead to significant changes in assessment and pedagogic approaches, particularly at level 4, to enable students to participate more actively in the learning process at levels 5 and 6 and beyond. Future developments might also focus on the impact of these changes on staff professional identities and practices, and implications for staff development.

### **Putting Students at the Centre of Institutional Practice**

The CETLs recognise the need to challenge institutional practices. In June 2005, Serena Bufton (Faculty of Development and Society) and John Metcalf (Faculty of ACES) attended an international conference hosted by Alverno College, Wisconsin, in the US. The conference, 'Connecting Student Learning Outcomes to Teaching, Assessment, Curriculum', was attended by delegates from across the globe, attracted by Alverno's reputation as an institution which puts student learning at the heart of all of its activities.

Since the early 1970s, Alverno has based its learning programmes on eight core abilities which are adapted and applied to each subject area.

Reflecting on the event, Serena and John said, "We were particularly struck by Alverno's concept of 'institutional alignment'. Its LTA strategy defines the institutional mission, shapes its academic and administrative structures and processes, and governs the career paths of tutors. In turn, the interaction of tutors and students, through teaching, assessment and evaluation processes, feeds upwards to inform the institutional mission. In this way, an iterative relationship is established between the different levels of the institution which assures alignment and promotes the engagement of both tutors and students with the institutional culture and aims."

Since returning from Alverno, they have considered how such 'institutional alignment' could be promoted at SHU to encourage a community of learning. The biggest challenge they face is one of scale. Serena and John went on to say, "We are looking at ways of applying the Alverno approach within a mass higher-education system through innovative LTA strategies. Such strategies may necessitate challenges to bureaucratic structures that inhibit innovations in LTA in order to assert the primacy of pedagogic rather than bureaucratic logic within the institution and to truly put the needs of the student at the centre of institutional practices."



**Sheffield  
Hallam University**

## Career Management Skills Teaching Pack 2006-2007

The CETL is funding the development of an integrated Career Management Skills (CMS) Teaching Pack that is dynamic and empowering for both students and tutors. The pack can be delivered as a 20 credit Level 5 module, single components integrated into other modules, or used as a standalone session. The pack will comprise:

- A Module Guide incorporating Learning Outcomes & Assessment Criteria
- A structured programme of lectures & PowerPoints
- Tutor notes and prompts
- A set of individual and group exercises and activities
- A range of handouts for photocopying
- A comprehensive list of supporting materials & e-resources
- A brief Tutor Manual on Employability & the development of Career Management Skills
- The professional Tutor Pack will incorporate a dedicated data-stick.

The diversity of the pack will enable both staff and students to benefit greatly. Kent Roach, E<sup>3</sup>I Associate said, *"The pack will support a learning experience covering the core career management skills, Self Awareness, Opportunity Awareness, Decision Making and Transition Skills. It will include elements that will enable all who are engaged in employability activities with their students to participate fully in the teaching of career management skills."* For a pack or more information, email [K.Roach@shu.ac.uk](mailto:K.Roach@shu.ac.uk)

## Deepening Participation: Improving the First-Year Learning Experience

Enhancing student learning is a key aspect of the CETLs. This project aims to help students doing BA English Studies and BA Film and Literature get the most out of their learning from their very first day at University. The objective is to make the first-year a supportive, involving, enjoyable and challenging experience, and to create ways of thinking and working which will make the entire degree a deeply satisfying and creative learning process. This year the project centres on the module 'Introduction to English Studies', but over the next few years it will broaden to cover other modules.

The project involves working with students' own experiences of learning to produce a module which helps students to work with confidence on the creative possibilities which degree level English ideally offers. The module seeks to actively transform perceptions of learning and conceptions of what English studies is, so that tutors and students can work together on developing their own ideas of the subject. Chris Hopkins, Associate Director says: *"The module seeks to offer beginning students a real HE experience from the very start, through learning which is more autonomous, explores boundaries, offers a choice of materials to study, constructs answers from the 'raw ingredients' rather than second-hand, and in which each person participates as fully as possible. Though the project works very much with particular subject expectations about what English is expected to be, the approaches to developing students as confident, independent experts in their own subject and in ways of learning it should be applicable to other disciplines in the university."*

## Investigating the Employability aspects of courses

SHU advocates the inclusion of key features of the Employability Framework in all its courses. Resources, including a workshop package have been developed by members of E<sup>3</sup>I to support course teams, programme planners and members of validation panels in evaluating the employability dimensions of course provision. It aims to support self-evaluation and identification of those aspects of the Framework that are already a part of the learning experience and those that are worthy of further development.

The team has also developed an Employability audit instrument that can be used either in support of the workshop, or independently of it, by course/subject teams. Director of E<sup>3</sup>I, Dave Laughton says: *"It produces an evaluation of the alignment of course provision against Employability features. This can also be used by colleagues involved in the different aspects of validation for example; faculty reading groups or University Standing Panel members to guide the feedback provided on the Employability aspects of course proposals"*. If you wish to talk to a member of the team about a workshop, or would like to receive a pack including the resources, please email us at [cetle3i@shu.ac.uk](mailto:cetle3i@shu.ac.uk)

## Smoothing the path to autonomous project work

The CPLA CETL has enabled staff to support student autonomy. A "Mentoring Module" has been set up in year 2 of the Psychology course, led by Associate Director, Peter Ashworth, to help students in their final dissertation. In many subject-areas, the final dissertation is regarded as the pinnacle of students' degree work. It will allow students to bring together much of what they have learned, and to present a piece of original work showing that they are worthy of a qualification in their discipline or profession. Peter says, *"Certainly in psychology the student is not experienced in setting the parameters of a piece of research work themselves and deciding on the measuring instruments. What better preparation, then, than to become a member of the research team and serve a brief apprenticeship assisting them with their work?"*

This is a fine idea - but the further question arises: how is the student to be helped to learn from this experience? Doing useful tasks is all very well, and it's great to be a member of a research team and hear the discussion as progress is made or hindrances appear. But what to make of it? Well, learning to *reflect* seemed to be a key. So, as part of the work of the CETL, staff have coupled a training in "reflection on learning" with the Mentoring Module, and the module is assessed by a reflective essay. The CETL has enabled Psychology staff to bring in an expert tutor: Ian Thompson from the University for the Arts in London. He goes on to say, *"The thing we learn from all this is that the autonomous learner needs to be ready in a number of ways to accept the responsibility for guiding their own learning. Being able to reflect on, and learn from experience may well be one of them."*

## Find out more

Look out for issue 3 in May! If you can't wait until then, please check out our website at [www.shu.ac.uk/cetl](http://www.shu.ac.uk/cetl)