CETLview

Issue 5

Welcome to CETLview, the newsletter updating you with what's going on in the CETLs.

This edition has been written and produced by the CETL placement students who work in the institutional CETLs. The CETL directors are very pleased that it is their words you will read so we have not made any changes to the text. Please let them have your feedback on this edition. (The CIPeL CETL will be featured in the next edition)

It's an exciting time in the world of the CETLs (Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning) as we welcome aboard new associates to both e3i (Embedding, Enhancing and Integrating Employability) and CPLA (Centre for Promoting Learner Autonomy). The new associates have started work on their respective projects which we will bring you news on throughout the year.

Meet the editors

Ben Haywood
Course BSc Hons Business and Technology
Job title CETL assistant, e3i

'I am currently undertaking my third year on placement with the CETLs. Within this role I hope to gain valuable experience of employment and further develop my professional skills. I am particularly interested in looking at how innovative activities can be embedded to increase employability, eg simulations.'

Karen Elder
Course BSc Hons Business and Marketing
Job title CETL assistant, CPLA

'I am currently in the third year of my sandwich degree. I started the job without a clear idea of what learner autonomy actually was. Since developing my understanding, the area that I have become interested in is how the relationship between staff and students, and students and their peers can be strengthened in order to make autonomy more effective.'
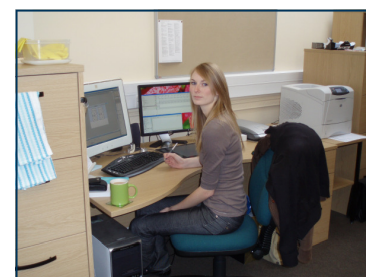
Claire Hannah
Course BSc (Hons) Computing (Visualisation)
Job title CETL Assistant, CIPeL

'My placement year is based with the CIPeL CETL. I am embedded within the project team and am involved in a range of projects developing innovative learning objects to help facilitate inter-professional e-learning.'

Sheffield Hallam University

SHARPENS YOUR THINKING

The CETLs ACES

Karen Elder

Both CETLs are increasingly involved within all faculties in the University. There have been developments this year within the ACES faculty, with the introduction of two new secondees (Steve Naylor and Anne-Florence DuJardin) in the Learner Autonomy CETL and one new associate (Rhiana Ishaq) in the Employability CETL from the faculty.

Across the whole of ACES, Mike Bramhall (CPLA Associate Director and ACES Head of LTA) is including learner autonomy in his workshops with course planning teams, to ensure that teams have considered what learner autonomy means to their staff and students, and how it can be fostered within courses.

Last year, Mike worked on a project with Keith Radley (LTI Curriculum Innovation team) to promote learner autonomy in engineering within ACES. The project involved 60 first year undergraduate engineering students. The module 'Materials, manufacturing and environmental engineering' was traditionally taught over two semesters, with keynote lectures and laboratories/tutorials in semester one, followed by case studies in semester two. However, learner autonomy was not explicitly developed within these case studies and so a new learning and teaching methodology was used in semester two of 05/06.

'We need to know that students can learn for themselves and not only when they are given specific help/instructions from a teacher. Otherwise, how will they really prosper in a rapidly changing outside world?'

(Steve Naylor on why autonomy is important)

Students undertook two new types of project work. In one set of assignments, one half of the first year group of students were required to produce short video clips (less than two minutes) related to materials, manufacturing or environmental processes.

The assignment that the other half of the group undertook was based on the theme of 'Engineering disaster management'. The students were required to develop a half page 'brief' related to an engineering disaster that has happened anywhere in the world.

Ultimately, both groups of students presented their project, as a technical paper, at the end of module 'Student Conference', which was in April this year in the Students Union – HUBS. The event was also supported by an external speaker.

This year Steve Naylor is working on a project within the ACES faculty around Problem Based Learning (PBL) in engineering, design and technology education.

The aim of the project is to develop autonomous skills in engineering students such as

- critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, cognitive, solving problems

- information sourcing skills by evaluating and using suitable learning resources

- team-working skills

- written and verbal communication skills

- enhanced self-confidence

Anne-Florence DuJardin is focusing on developing student autonomy in a research design module. The idea within this 36-week module is to help develop students' appreciation of research as a set of skills, to be developed progressively, in collaboration with peers and feedback from tutors. The module is supported by Blackboard, and will require students to use the wiki facility to present their work, and to comment on other students' work to develop a critical appreciation of research outputs. The longer-term aim is to develop students' confidence for the small-scale empirical research they need to do for their dissertation, and more generally, to consider research reports critically as research skills can be considered valuable 'life-skills'.

Rhiana Ishaq is running a project called 'Formula Student' where students form teams, from different years of University, and build a race car. Currently the project does not form part of the curriculum within any modules, first and second year students do not

get any credit for being involved and so can sometimes lose motivation for the project as their workloads increase. However, the aim this year is to look into finding ways in which to embed different parts of the project into modules within the course, and so therefore increase student's enthusiasm to take part as they will be credited. Several aspects of employability are developed through this project, such as

- applying for jobs

- obtaining sponsorship

- managing and working as part of a team

- communicating ideas effectively

- taking on multi-functional roles

Therefore, embedding this good practice into the learning and teaching strategy of the course is an effective way of enhancing employability. One of Rhiana's key concerns is that she wants these pockets of good practice to be spread throughout the faculty, and so getting involved within the CETLs is a good method of dissemination.

Uncovering the mystery of SIGS

Ben Haywood

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are defined as a collection of people within the University who have an interest in a specific area. It has become clear that there is a great deal of good practice within pockets of the University and the SIGs provide an opportunity to communicate, spread and develop new and exciting LTA approaches.

SIGs have a close relationship with the CETLs in that they take their ideals and work forward at a local level as well as across the institution. It is a novel way to impact areas of the University which wouldn't necessarily be reached by the CETLs alone. It also gives staff who are not directly related to the CETLs the opportunity to get involved.

In the past SIGs often determined an action plan by brainstorming about what they want to achieve. However, in the future a more formal structure is hoped to be implemented without stifling creativity.

Student engagement is strongly encouraged within these groups in order to ensure that their work and development is in alignment with the needs of students. For example in the Transitions SIG, students have been involved in organising and facilitating a conference for staff about the student experience in order to improve awareness. This is due to happen again in the new year.

The first transitions SIG meeting of the year

The line-up
Each SIG has a SIG leader, as identified below. If you are interested in a particular SIG, these people are the first port of call to find out more information and will be happy to discuss membership.

Staff and autonomy
Christine O' Leary and Malcolm Todd

Scholarship, research and evaluation
Brian Hudson

Transitions
Serena Bufton

Institutional processes
Ranald Macdonald and Anthony Rosie

Enterprise and entrepreneurship
Simon Brown

Work-based learning, CPD and employers
Richard Pountney

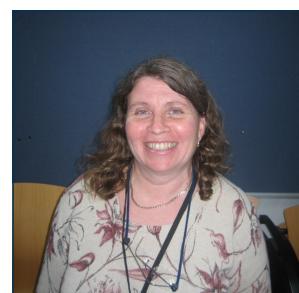**Personal Development Planning (PDP)**
Damien Fitzgerald

Career management and diversity
Pat Quinn

SIGs in action – Staff and Autonomy

Ben Haywood and Christine O'Leary

Here at CETLview we thought that it would be a good idea to investigate one of the SIGs in more depth. In this issue we look at staff and autonomy with the help of Christine O'Leary.

Christine O'Leary

Can you give me a brief overview of what your SIG is about?
Learning is a mutually constructive activity involving both University staff and students. The staff and autonomy SIG seeks to explore what new approaches to teaching and learning mean for academic and support services staff professional identity and ways of working. The key aim of the SIG activities will be the empowerment of staff within these new educational environments in order to enhance the staff and student experience.

Why did you get involved with the SIG?
The literature on learner autonomy acknowledges the existence of a strong link between teacher autonomy and learner autonomy. New approaches to teaching and learning have a significant impact on staff practices. Both academic and support staff are key to the success of educational developments. None of the existing SIGs seem to address issues/ development needs from a staff point of view. I felt that the SIG would be an opportunity to explore the issues from a staff perspective and to establish a support network, in order to meet present and future challenges.

What do you hope to achieve through the SIG?
The SIG's key aim is the empowerment of staff to develop effective innovative practices and/ or systems in partnership with learners and colleagues.

What do you feel will be the main challenges you will face?
An initial meeting to gauge support for a staff and autonomy SIG highlighted a number of issues relating to staff professional identity and institutional processes. The SIG will need to address these challenges, and encourage the participation of as many colleagues as possible across all staff groups.

How can staff get involved with the SIG?
The first meeting of the SIG occurred late last year. Anyone who is interested in participating but was unable to attend the first meeting is invited to contact myself, Christine O'Leary or Malcolm Todd.

Something old, something new!

After being a part of the CETLs team for a few months we have been introduced to a wide range of experiences already. We thought that it would be interesting to compare our first impressions of the CETLs with those of the departing student placements.

I believe that it is fair to say that we as placement students were confused as to the organisation and projects of the CETLs. However now that we have been involved in projects to a greater extent we have a firm grasp (or as good as anyone can!) of what they do.

It is good to know that there are initiatives such as the CETLs and departments like the LTI which work towards enhancing the student experience. As a student you never really know about the creative projects which are going through the development phase. We think that our role as CETL assistants can offer a student perspective to these projects. Hopefully even if this doesn't end up directly benefiting us, it will help fellow students.

From what I have seen so far we believe that the work of the CETLs is extremely valuable and effective. If the goals of the CETLs are achieved, (and there's no reason why they shouldn't be!) We believe that the student experience is going to change for the better over the next four years and beyond. By changing the perceptions of employability and autonomy and helping staff embed good practice in their courses, the CETLs are creating a sustainable future for employability and autonomous learning practices at Sheffield Hallam University.

Following on from a year's work placement, last year's placement students have given their views on the CETL.

'It was great to work with loads of different staff from right across the University. When I first started I was a bit nervous, but after running my own workshop for academics, I became a lot more confident.'

'I now make a conscious effort to take on extra-curricular activities in order to improve my skills base and give myself a competitive advantage in the job market.'

Room with a CETLview

They're here...
The CETLs have recently refurbished the old Blackwell's bookshop (level two of the atrium) and created three learning environments – The Boardroom (Owen 221), Learning Lounge (Owen 222), and teaching room (Owen 223). The idea is that students will have the opportunity to learn in different environments which will support innovative activities.

It is possible to check the availability of these rooms via the staff intranet.

Stay tuned for the next issue where we will look more deeply into the use of the CETL rooms!

Find out more

For further information, news, developments and a user friendly list of CETLs FAQs please visit our website at www.shu.ac.uk/cetl

Look out for the CETLs and the celebration event in May

This information can be made available in other formats. Please contact us for details.