

Centre for Excellence

in Teaching and Learning for Employability (e3i)

Report to HEFCE: Interim Evaluation
July 2007

Appendix 5: Report on the Employability Considerations of SHU Faculty Academic Boards and LTA Committees, 2005-7.

EMPLOYABILITY ASPECTS OF THE CONSIDERATIONS OF FACULTY ACADEMIC BOARDS AND LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT COMMITTEES 2005-7

INTRODUCTION

By way of evaluating the impact of the Centre for Excellence in Employability (e3i) at Sheffield Hallam University two years into its operations, a study has been undertaken of the minutes of Faculty Academic Boards (FABs) and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committees (LTA Coms). The aim of this study is to assess the impact and imprint of the work of e3i in the deliberations and considerations of key faculty committees, and the extent to which these key faculty committees incorporate discussions about Employability.

Key objectives of e3i are institutional and cultural change relating to the embedding, integrating and enhancement of Employability within university and programme policies and practices. It was deemed a useful indicator of impact in this context to examine minutes of FABs and LTA Coms to establish whether debates, discussions and decisions relating to Employability were forming part of their deliberations.

FABs have responsibility and authority under SHU regulations for academic development within the faculty. LTA Coms are sub-committees of FABs and focus on the LTA aspects of academic development. Both committees, potentially, have a crucial role to play in engaging with the Employability agenda within the university.

METHODOLOGY

FAB and LTA Com minutes were obtained in electronic format for the period 2005-7. These minutes were subjected to a word search which involved words associated with Employability, most of which appear in the university's Employability Framework (see main evaluation report): placement, Employability, workbased learning, e3i, Matrix (an enterprise project initiative), learner autonomy, PDP, enterprise, Special Interest Groups (SIGs), skills. Where a match was identified the relevant minute was extracted and a content analysis was undertaken of all the relevant minutes.

FINDINGS

- 1 There were examples of discussions/deliberations relating to all of the Employability dimensions identified above in faculty committees.
- 2 There was variation in the extent to which these were discussed across the faculties.

3 There was a high level of awareness of the CETLs/e3i and the work it was undertaking, and a keenness to engage with this work.

4 The term “Employability” was mentioned more than any other term or category.

5 Placements and workbased learning along with PDP were the aspects that faculties discussed most in terms of frequency.

6 Three out of the four faculties had discussed the notion of an “Employability Guarantee” – a proposal to develop a student award related to achievement and competence in aspects of Employability.

7 Three out of the four faculties had discussed the “Matrix” – a curriculum development project which aims to offer opportunities for enterprise learning across the university.

8 Two out of the four faculties had a standard agenda item “reports from the CETLs” where the latest developments associated with e3i could be explored.

9 The Faculty of Development and Society has established an Employability Working Group with an advisory remit, and the Faculty of Organisation and Management established such a group to inform the revalidation of undergraduate programmes.

CONCLUSIONS

From a review of FAB and LTA Com minutes, it is clear that there is both a high level of recognition of the work of e3i and of the importance of the Employability agenda within the university. Many of the discussions focus on how the faculties can engage in a deeper way with the work of e3i, and appropriate initiatives to make this happen. Personnel associated with e3i, and Employability work more broadly, are identified and their responsibilities outlined. The faculties focus on different aspects of Employability at certain times, as a consequence of their business or planning priorities. Two of the faculties have standard agenda items for receiving reports from e3i, ensuring continual review of the work of the centre. After two years of operation, the imprint of the work of e3i on the key faculty committees identified is clear, and this is an important enabling mechanism in furthering the Employability agenda within the university.