e3i CETL Review 2008-9

- **INTERNAL STRATEGIC IMPACT**
- **IMPACT ON COURSES**
- **INVESTIGATING STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON EMPLOYABILITY**
- **EMPLOYABILITY RESOURCES**
- **RESEARCH AND EVALUATION**
- **EXTERNAL NETWORKING AND DISSEMINATION**
- **SUPPORTING THE VENTURE MATRIX**

Employability CETL (e3i) Review of Activities 2008-9

2008-9 has been another busy year for the employability CETL (e3i) at Sheffield Hallam. The main objective of the CETL is to increase the opportunities students have to develop their employability skills. This can take place as part of a programme of study, or can be extra curricular. The CETL team works at a number of "levels" to further this key objective: with module teams on their learning, teaching and assessment approaches, with programme and course teams on the design of the curriculum, and strategically across SHU trying to influence policy and institutional practice. In addition, the CETL team has produced and made available a number of resources that can be used by academics and students to develop employability skills.

This review highlights the main activities the e3i core team has been involved in during the year. It is not an exhaustive account of all the work undertaken, but includes what are felt to be the most important developments. More information on the work of the e3i CETL can be found by visiting the web site at:

http://extra.shu.ac.uk/cetl/

Sheffield Hallam University

SHARPENS YOUR THINKING

Internal Strategic Impact

This has been focused in two main areas: a review of the SHU Employability Framework, and the design of a scheme for a proposed SHU Employability Award. The SHU Employability Framework is an official policy document of the University, agreed initially in 2004, which describes the University's approach to employability, and which acts as a guide for curriculum planners. The SHU Academic Development Committee welcomed a revised Framework document, which included an emphasis on the following:

1. Understanding
(a) Subject knowledge and expertise.
(b) Commercial awareness.

2. Skilful practices
(a) Key skills; cognitive/intellectual skills; subject specific skills; professional skills.
(b) Reflection to aid transfer of skills and knowledge to different contexts.
(c) Career Management skills.
(d) Enterprise skills.

3. Attributes, attitudes and behaviours:
(a) Self-efficacy.
(b) Emotional intelligence.
(c) Leadership and professional behaviours.

4. Experience
Of the workplace and organisations

A proposed SHU Employability Award aims to provide opportunities to students to achieve a University award endorsed by employers which certifies and evidences their employability skills gained through both curricular and extra-curricular activities. It is not clear yet whether or not SHU will adopt the idea of an Award, or link this work to a reformulated notion of an employability entitlement for students. The Award would be aspirational in that students will have to present evidence of their achievements against specific criteria. There has been considerable stakeholder consultation around the idea of the Award, and support for a more detailed version of the proposed scheme.

The University ADC is scheduled to ratify the new framework during 2009-10.

Impact on Courses

Working with those involved with course design is a major aspect of the work of the e3i team.

In the Sheffield Business School an Employability Away Day was held to plan the "Employability Pathway" at level 6. In SBS all undergraduate courses incorporate the Employability Pathway which embeds different aspects of employability at different levels: key skills and initial CV development at level 4, placement preparation, further CV development, and interview skills at level 5,

sandwich work experience followed by "springboard into work" at level 6. So far the pathway has been rolled out at levels 4 and 5, and the Away Day brought together module leaders who will embed the final aspects of employability skills at level 6.

In ACES an Away Day was held to discuss development of employability skills within courses. Plans were agreed to embed placement preparation sessions as part of accredited modules at level 5 on all sandwich courses in the Faculty. These take place over

the first 6 weeks of the first semester. Staff from the ADCAM area of the faculty agreed to further develop employability elements of taught courses. There was general agreement that more work was needed to raise student awareness of the purposes of developing employability skills, and of the LTA strategies used to deliver them. It was also agreed that there were opportunities to develop LTA practices to better achieve this. A report of faculty validation documents, produced by Ester Ehiyazaryan, was discussed and the key points identified. A strategy for addressing the criticisms raised was developed. This was subsequently presented to and approved by the Faculty board.

A subject specific away day was also held with the Communications subject group in ACES.

In H&W an employability away day was held in April for course leaders to examine preparation for delivery at each level of new course provision; the aim was to embed designs for employability into the curriculum.

In D&S the theme of the Faculty January conference was employability, which is a major strategic initiative in the Faculty, and therefore an additional away day was not held this year. The conference invited David Bagley from the Centre for Excellence in the Humanities at the University of Central Lancashire as keynote speaker, examined different ways in which employability was understood and supported in the Faculty, and Dave Laughton, Director of e3i, concluded the conference with a presentation on how e3i could support colleagues in employability development across the university.

The e3i Research Team undertook a systematic evaluation of validation documentation from across SHU for the year 2007-8, to examine the way in which employability has been embedded in courses and the student experience. A report was generated for each Faculty, which identifies innovative practice, areas of strength and suggestions for further work. Findings were fed back to Faculty Academic Boards and LTA Committees, and subsequent requests were responded to. For example, in D&S it was thought that it would be useful to develop resources which articulate good practice in the areas of the SHU Employability Framework which can be considered by course planning teams when developing new proposals or modifying provision. A briefing was held with the University Standing Panel Chairs group to feed back the experience of the e3i team in working with validation teams and scrutinising validation documentation. This briefing aimed to help USP chairs when they are involved in validation events by reporting the results of e3i research which detail the aspects of employability which are generally well covered in planning documents, and those which are worthy of more emphasis and scrutiny. It was suggested that more guidance to planning

teams would be useful in this context, and this work is ongoing.

Members of the e3i team continue to support employability development generally in their day-to-day work. For example, in H&W a CETL group support programme has been established, which has delivered a programme

of events involving e3i, CPLA and CIPEL to disseminate good practice and co-ordinate a series of events in support of Faculty and CETL objectives. The Employability Audit Tool developed by e3i has been used with course planners to facilitate an understanding of the employability dimensions of course curricula.

Investigating Student Perspectives on Employability

Nicky Harris from the Student Union joined the core team this year to provide the crucial student voice in the working of the e3i CETL.

e3i funded 18 small scale projects which were focused upon the student experience of employability at SHU. Much has been researched and written about employer perspectives on employability, and on how higher education institutions are responding to the employability agenda, but there is relatively little research and evaluation of the student perspective.

Project leaders were provided with £3,000 each to support their projects, which were seen as a valuable way of helping course teams to explore more deeply how students understood employability within their courses, and their expectations. Many of the projects have encouraged changes to the curriculum and LTA practices, and the production of useful resources. For example, in English a booklet for students, produced by students, has been developed which helps students to improve their employability skills during their programme of study.

Projects have been asked to send in their final reports by July 2009 and the intention is to summarise these and make them available through the e3i website.

e3i, in collaboration with the Careers Service, produced a career management skills memory stick which was made available to all final year students (see section on employability resources below). As part of this process, e3i commissioned a group of Venture Matrix students to undertake research with students more generally on the resources they would like to see on the memory stick. The results of the research fed into the final design of the resource.

Employability Resources

Three major resources have been produced/ made available to colleagues in SHU this year. The first was the career management memory stick that was distributed to all final year students (approximately 5,000). This incorporated a range of resources mapped within a clear and easily understood career management framework that will help students as they plan their life after SHU. The resource was branded with the "What Next?" label and early feedback from students has been highly positive. The contents of the memory stick can be accessed at:

https://teaching.shu.ac.uk/whatnext/
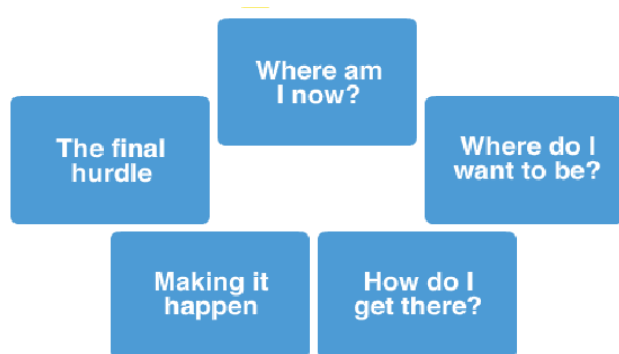
The second major resource developed by e3i (in collaboration with the University of Bedfordshire and the Open University) is the STARS resource. This is an interactive, web-based resource, which supports students in articulating their skills and attributes using the Situation, Tasks, Actions, Results and Skills formula. The resource is high quality and high profile (being launched nationally at the e3i annual Conference in May, with the offer of a free trial), with a video introduction from Carl Gilleard from the Association of Graduate Recruiters. It prompts students to reflect upon, articulate and develop skills and attributes using evidence gained from academic, work and community activities in a way that is appropriate for CVs, application forms and discussion at interviews. It is designed to help maximise students' employability and to match evidence they have against the requirements of employers. The resource can be accessed at:

https://www.starsprocess.ac.uk/page/index.php

The third major resource was the purchase from the CETL at Reading University and customisation of a web-based career management skills package called "Destinations". After customisation this has now been badged as "Careers Central," and is being used across the university to help students at various stages in their courses with the development of employability and career management skills. This is seen as an extremely high quality and versatile resource which will be drawn upon increasingly when supporting faculties with employability development.

e3i has continued to support work which has established professional networks with alumni for the benefit of existing students. Two such networks have been created: one in the hospitality subject area, and one in the real estate subject area. The latter encourages existing Masters fast-track students to join the alumni network during their course in order to interact with alumni to support their job seeking. SHU alumni provide useful insights into the recruitment process of their organisation, tips on the interview and assessment process etc. The resource also provides opportunities to celebrate the success of the course and alumni profiles plus information about international developments. Having established these professional networks the aim is to publicise the "models" and their benefits across the University and to explore other opportunities for using alumni to support existing students' employability.

In addition, the e3i team has produced and delivered over 50 validation packs to planning chairs, which include an Employability Audit Tool, guidance on how to identify and articulate employability attributes in planning documentation and examples of innovative practice, and followed this up with meetings with planning chairs/teams where requested; has produced case studies on good practice in embedding employability which can be accessed via the e3i website; and has produced a starter pack on dimensions of employability that deals with employability in definitive documents in D&S – these packs will be used by the Curriculum Development team in D&S.

Jeff Waldock, e3i core team member, has produced an electronic resource on employability, comprising key publications from the higher education sector (including from government, industry, research bodies etc.), usefully signposted with brief descriptions. This resource will be of interest to anyone working in an employability context and can be accessed at:

http://aces.shu.ac.uk/support/staff/employability

e3i has contributed to the purchase and training costs of XING, a simulation which has a theme of business development and social enterprise. The training undertaken by a group of SHU staff will be a catalyst for supporting the embedding of XING and other initiatives to develop enterprise and business awareness with students.

Research and Evaluation

In the early part of the year the e3i research team concentrated upon producing the generic evaluation of validation documents from 2007-8 for all four faculties. After this a variety of other research outputs were achieved.

Ester Ehiyazaryan and Nicola Barraclough, e3i researchers, published a paper in the journal "Education and Training", which evaluated student perspectives on the skills gained from participating in the SHU Venture Matrix experience.

Ester has also produced a research report evaluating employer perspectives of the value of any international experience that students might have in relation to graduate employability. This work was undertaken on behalf of D&S.

e3i has undertaken research with SHU alumni on how they thought their studies had improved their employability. This was begun with a qualitative questionnaire sent out to alumni and continued with interviews from a selection of the responses. It is envisaged that the final report will be available in November.

The Centre for Education in the Built Environment (CEBE) has published a Working Paper by Nick Nunnington on "Challenges" which sets out the pedagogy of challenge which underpins a number of CETL supported projects in the Built Environment discipline, including the European Challenge and the Shanghai Challenge.

Dave Laughton presented a paper at the Annual Conference of EDINEB (Educational Innovation in Business and Economics) which focused on the role of Type Two knowledge in the business curriculum, linked to the broader topic of work-based learning.

External Networking and Dissemination

External networking and dissemination is seen as an important activity by HEFCE for all CETLs, as the sharing of innovative practice was a key objective of the sector-wide CETL initiative.

Jeff Waldock and Gary Taylor joined a national Employability Developers group, with representatives across the HE sector, and have established a resource repository and newsfeed to disseminate employability resources and support a community of practice of Employability Developers across the UK. Feedback suggest this will be a valuable way for colleagues involved in this work to share their work and learn from each other.

Dave Laughton and Jeff Waldock delivered a two day workshop session on employability in HangZhou, China, with representatives from all the regional universities, organised by the SHU representative office in China. SHU has a strong reputation for its work on employability with the British Council and with certain universities in China.

Dave Laughton ran a staff development session on employability for staff at Buckingham New University.

Damien Fitzgerald and Jeff Waldock ran a workshop on employability at a conference at the University of Central Lancashire which focused on employability in the social sciences.

Ester Ehiyazaryan and Nicola Barraclough presented a paper on their evaluation work with the Venture Matrix at the annual ASET conference in Portsmouth.

The e3i annual conference took place in May and for the first time involved delegates from across the higher education sector. It was particularly pleasing to have presentations from the employability related CETLs at the University of Central Lancashire, Leeds Metropolitan University, and the University of Bedforshire, as well as keynote speeches from Philip Jones, Vice Chancellor of SHU and Aaron Porter, the Vice President of the National Union of Students. The theme of the conference was "Student Perspectives on Employability", and many of the 18 student employability projects mentioned earlier presented early findings from their work.

The work of all the SHU CETLs is publicised via a periodical newsletter, and these can be downloaded at the following URL:

http://extra.shu.ac.uk/cetl/newsletter.html

Looking Forward - e3i Agenda 2009-10

The e3i CETL has been asked to support the implementation of the SHU Corporate Plan and, in particular, the work of the ISEG Graduate Employment Group. This latter group has now produced a scoping paper, which includes details of proposed activities and sub-groups over a five year period. It has been agreed with Sylvia Johnson, PVC lead for the Graduate Employment Group, that the e3i CETL team will in effect comprise the "Curriculum Development and Employability Skills" sub-group, and will produce the associated outcomes during 2009-10.

ISEG Activity Stream

Three activity streams will be established:

- **Curriculum Development and Employability Skills:** Curriculum support, AIG, PDP (to include Final stage of CETL), *Careers Service offering*.

- **Employer links and work-based and placement learning:** (to include *placement preparation and support*, Alumni and marketing, post-graduation activity.)

- **Policy and Infrastructure for Graduate Employability:** (to include Academic policy, QSME frameworks and implementation mechanisms, systems development and infrastructure support, data and monitoring.)

Curriculum development and Employability Skills Proposed Outcomes:

- CETL Final Report
- Core minimum entitlement and expectations for all students concerning (a) employability skills (b) career preparation (c) work related learning
- Corporate level availability of curriculum support materials
- Case studies of best practice
- AIG entitlements and strategic delivery plan
- Review/recommendations for a SHU approach to PDP
- Staff development support package for embedding employability

In addition the e3i CETL will:

- complete the evaluation required by HEFCE for August 2010;
- finalise the e3i website so as to make available resources produced by the CETL team after this is discontinued;
- produce and distribute career management skills resources to final year students;
- produce an electronic publication detailing some of the experiences and outcomes of e3i initiatives over the past 5 years, to be disseminated via "Lulu";
- organise a conference in May 2010 to disseminate resources and share e3i experiences across the UK HE sector;

Supporting the Venture Matrix

e3i has supported the Venture Matrix virtual business network in the University since its inception. The VM has proved to be successful and the support generated from staff and students has allowed it to grow beyond the pilot scheme and encourage participation from all four faculties. Increasingly the VM is engaging with local employers and other institutions outside SHU and can help with the employer engagement agenda as well as helping to enhance students' enterprise skills. From 2009-10 the VM will be hosted by the Sheffield Business School, and will continue with its cross-university approach to working with students from all faculties in the development of their employability and enterprise skills.