

An Inter-disciplinary Autonomous Learning Resource for the Built Environment



Commenced: 2005

What is it?

This project examines the creation of a rich multi-media resource that drives four major educational issues:

- employability
- learner autonomy
- multi/inter disciplinary working
- consultancy skills

The project builds upon an international field project for the MSc Property Appraisal and Management course which is supported by leading real estate companies including Cushman & Wakefield. It examines the redevelopment of a vast strategic site on the Suzhou creek in Shanghai immediately adjoining the famous and historic Bund. It offers a development project opportunity at a scale unprecedented in the UK.

What is involved?

Supported by two of Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) - Promoting Learner Autonomy and Embedding, Enhancing and Integrating Employability - the project involves the "massification" of an existing complex field project based in Shanghai currently only engaged in by students from a fully funded postgraduate conversion course.

Funding from the CETL will allow engagement beyond the normal staff team by, for example, the Programme Leader for Architecture, thereby extending the reach and inter-disciplinary focus of the project. His input will ensure that additional resources such as CAD referencing will allow teams of students from a variety of professions to work together autonomously in a way never achieved before. The project will capture video, photographic and technical resources to be compiled within Blackboard and on a DVD including, for example, expert commentaries from leading local practitioners. The resources will be packaged in an innovative way to support maximum autonomy recognising the different demands placed on up to 8 students working together on the project from different courses.

A CEBE (Centre for Education in the Built Environment) funded case study will examine the problems and opportunities of capturing, organising and managing a multi-media resource capable of being used by teams of students studying architecture, construction, real-estate, planning and engineering. It will also examine the promotion of autonomy within high order problem based learning and issues associated with embedding such a project into the curriculum of a number of courses.

Why is the project important to the CETL and the University?

The need for this project was a recognition that despite the transformation of the built environment profession into inter-disciplinary teams, education has trailed behind, hindered by validation, timetabling and resource constraints. It also recognises the opportunities available when making physical international field visits to capture resources for deployment in a number of other course opportunities. It will test and explore issues raised when teams of up to 8 students from different programmes work together autonomously on an assessed consultancy project.

Finally, the project boosts employability by exposing students to a "live" case in an unfamiliar context which challenges their ability to apply their learning to unfamiliar territory and develop consultancy skills by working in an inter-disciplinary consultancy based team.

What impact do you hope the project will have?

The project will create a significant opportunity for students from architecture, planning, regeneration, real estate, environment and construction to work together. Projects constructed around the resource will allow students to work together with a high degree of autonomy in inter-disciplinary teams which mirror real life practices. Due to the innovative design of the resource and the excitement of being able to work on a stunning site in arguably the most dynamic real estate market in the world we expect high levels of engagement and student motivation.

The whole process will provide a rich seam of opportunity for research and evaluation by the CETL teams at SHU in terms of both learner autonomy and employability.

Future Developments

After a pilot year at Sheffield Hallam University the resource/courseware will be made available nationally creating a significant opportunity for the re-design of course programmes to promote inter-disciplinary working, autonomy and employability. The courseware will allow national and international teams to compete in a sponsored competition thereby embracing employer engagement and recognition.

Links

<http://www.cebe.heacademy.ac.uk/>

<http://www.cushwakeasia.com/apoffice/Shanghai.htm>

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