

SURF WBL-WAY – Individualised Support for Work-Based Foundation Degrees

1 Introduction

<p>1.1 Main Contact, on behalf of the Consortium, is: Professor Mark Stiles, Head of Learning Development and Innovation, Information Services, Staffordshire University, Beaconside, Stafford ST18 0AD Tel: 01785 353647 FAX: 01785 353482 Email: m.j.stiles@staffs.ac.uk</p> <p>Employers – as required by the QAA Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark, employer involvement is embedded in all SURF FD provision.</p>	<p>1.2 Main Project Partners: Staffordshire University Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology Stoke-on-Trent College Burton College</p> <p>Supporting Partners Foundation Degree Forward (Fdf) Aim High West Midlands Harvest Road Foundation Direct CETL, Portsmouth University Engineering Council SEMTA</p>
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1.3 Length of Project - 24 Months commencing in October 2006

1.4 Outline of Proposed Work for SURF WBL-WAY Project

This proposal addresses the following aspects of the call:

- This is a learner focused collaboration based on an existing legal consortium (SURF)
- Involves a range of partners with a focus on Work-Based Learning (WBL) and employer engagement
- It is focused on the cross-institutional delivery of lifelong learning via the piloting of individualised access to resources and support for the development, support and delivery of WBL in Foundation Degrees (FDs)
- It has additional foci on issues of inclusion retention, progression and employer engagement
- It will, via portal and web service-based approaches address the personalization of the learning experience for both learners and those involved in its development, support, and management and aspects of administration

Based in an existing HEFCE-funded consortium, this proposal focuses on providing individualised access to resources for supporting WBL both for those taking HE courses in FE, and those involved in the formulation and support of their courses and learning experiences. The SURF WBL-WAY project will build on the work of the SUNIWE¹ (JISC DEL Pilot), and SURF WBL² (JISC X4L Phase 2) projects to pilot a gateway for use by Work-based Learners, Tutors, Employers and Mentors across the University and three SURF FE partners. It will provide access to targeted information relating to the development, management and support of Foundation Degrees provided at the SURF institutions involved and resources to assist tutors, mentors and work-based learners. The gateway will also provide information and resources specifically targeted at employer engagement and facilitating the progression and transition of learners who have undertaken work-based learning at FE level into HE courses in FE institutions. Integration of the WBL experience into the overall SURF experience is a particular goal.

The SUNIWE project has produced/is producing web-services to provide cross-consortium access to learner and course information, together with learning resources (including direct links to VLEs) for SURF students. The proposed project will add to these services to provide employers, mentors and consortium staff and students with access, via the SUNIWE uPortal, to specific information views focused on individual and group needs from a standards conformant repository (Harvest Road Hive³). To enhance access to course description information, the project will implement work carried by the JISC XCRi⁴ project. The project will exploit the wide range of resources created to support WBL by the SURF WBL project by holding these in the repository, structured to enable individual and group to satisfied by exposing resources via services to the portal. Additional or modified web services and other code created will be made freely available as open-source. Whilst the project will focus on using existing SURF resources and content created by SURF WBL and SURF X4L, Aim Higher will provide additional resources targeted at inclusion, progression and retention, and these, plus any material created to fill “gaps” will deposited in JORUM. A prime goal will be to build on the eLearning embedding work undertaken as part of the SURF X4L project⁵. Staffordshire University’s policies, procedures, roles and responsibilities relating to the resourcing and support of WBL and Foundation Degrees will be further developed, with particular regard to

¹ The SUNIWE project – <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/COSE/SUNIWE/>

² The SURF WBL Project - <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/COSE/SUNIWE/>

³ See: www.harvestroad.com/

⁴ See: The XCRi Project - http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=elfref_mmu

⁵ Stiles, M.J., “Introducing the Reuse and Repurposing of Content as part of the embedding of eLearning - A guide to good practice and problem areas in cultural, educational and organisational change”, <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/COSE/X4L/SURFX4Lmain.pdf>

quality assurance and the creation of a community of WBL practice. Lessons learned will be widely disseminated.

Scenario 1 - I am an employer working with a team from the local college and the University to develop a new Foundation Degree. I log in to the SURF gateway and am provided with access to the documentation for the course and guidance about the forthcoming validation of the course. I have some comments to make a supply them to the development team via a forum.

Scenario 2 – I am taking a SURF Foundation degree and need to agree and plan my work-based project. By logging into the gateway I can access advice on negotiating my project and planning its activities. My mentor has added some additional documentation to help me and I email him with some ideas and questions.

Scenario 3 – I am taking a WBL further education course, and am using the gateway for support and advice. I'm unsure what to do when the course ends and use the gateway to see what options are available. I decide to take a Foundation degree, and am pleased to find the information on the gateway I had used previously has "moved with me" and been added to with some guidance on working at HE level

Scenario 4 - I am mentoring several of my company's staff taking Foundation Degrees at two local colleges. I'm delighted to find I can use the same gateway to provide support to all of them.

Scenario 5 - I'm completing a Foundation degree at Burton College and also doing a part time evening course at another SURF College. I can use the gateway to find information particular to any course I'm taking regardless of which college that are at, and can see the information the University and College hold about me.

Scenario 6 - I'm putting some of my employees through FE WBL courses and am unsure about progression routes after the courses have been completed. I access the gateway to view HE opportunities in SURF institutions and also gain advice on what sort of support I would be expected to give my staff should they take up the courses.

2 Project deliverables and Value to the Community:

2.1 Deliverables and Outputs

The project will address the range of deliverables sought by the call by carrying out and providing:

- A 12-month pilot of the proposed gateway using a range of Foundation Degrees across the SURF consortium.
- An evaluation report. The work will highlight the implications and challenges of implementing e-learning technologies to support cross-institutional delivery of lifelong learning by:
 - Expanding on the work in this area already done by SURF WBL, SURF X4L and SUNIWE
 - Addressing the issues of creating a community of practitioners for WBL within SURF
 - Embedding and disseminating a consistent approach to quality assurance in the development and support of WBL within Foundation Degrees
 - Joining up with and providing access to other initiatives and organisations involved in WBL and FDs
 - Addressing issues of supporting progression from FE level WBL to Foundation Degrees and from Foundation Degrees into graduate level 3, thus also covering issues of retention.

It is expected that, as with other work in this area carried out by SURF, the models produced will prove to be highly transferable and will be disseminated via a range of guidance, briefings and issues papers

- An evaluation not just of learners' experiences of using the technology, but its impact on those involved in creating and supporting the learning experience.
- Using and building on the range of web-services being produced by the SUNIWE project to provide directed targeted access to resources held in a repository and access to course information by using the XCRi outputs, the project will provide:
 - Use cases, case studies and scenarios analysing user needs and user interactions, including the needs of those (from employers and institutions) involved in the development and support of learning and learners whose courses are eSupported rather than delivered via a VLE.
 - Additional Web Services to provide course information and to deliver/expose resources to a portal from a repository, together with feedback areas of the e-Framework
- As with the SUNIWE project, all storyboards, channels and portlets created for the uPortal Gateway to create WBL will be made freely available via open source.
- Although content-creation/repurposing is not a primary thrust of the project, additional resources will be built as a result of the identification of "holes" in the outputs from the SURF WBL project outputs and the use of resources provided by Aim Higher West Midlands. These will be added to the SURF repository and JORUM.

3 The Context and Description of Proposed Work

3.1 Issues around WBL

WBL is a fundamental part of FD provision. eLearning offers Foundation Degrees the opportunity to provide flexible WBL experiences that are accessible from, home, work, and in the place of teaching, in. The "Foundation Degree Task Force Report to Ministers"⁶ noted:

- The need to avoid over-prescriptiveness in WBL elements (3.11)
- The need for a coordinated approach at the design & development stages of integrating WBL (3.12)
- The danger that study based elements will drive objectives and outcomes (3.14)
- The need for flexible delivery (3.16)
- That decisions about use of technology must be educationally led (3.18)
- That staff must be involved in design and development if they are to "own" a course (3.23)
- That FE institutions must, therefore, be "full partners" in design development & delivery (3.24)

The SURF consortium's approach meets the report's summary recommendations in that it seeks "innovative and authentic approaches" (3.27), uses education to drive the use of technology to provide distributed and blended approaches (3.28), and is striving to achieve a culture of "genuine partnership" (3.29).

The University Vocational Awards Council, in its publication on WBL and HE⁷ notes that: *"Work-based learning satisfies the criteria for flexible learning by being flexible in terms of time, place and mode of learning. It transforms the role of higher education into one of facilitating and supporting learning, rather than delivering pre-specified programmes of study. In order to effectively provide this support, where and when it is needed, flexible learning has come to be associated with e-learning and distance learning and with negotiated learning outcomes."*

More recently, CHERI and KPMG have recommended in "Towards a Strategy for Workplace Learning", (HEFCE May 2006) that HEFCE e-learning strategy should capture access by work-place learners to effective 'managed learning environments' (page 38). Lack of access is seen as an inhibitor to quality workplace learning (page 79). Staffordshire University and SURF have developed a policy for work-based learning, based on existing good practice in the faculties and partner colleges, which will inform further initiatives in this area, including employer engagement. This is overtly linked to the University and SURF eLearning Policy. (**Appendix C**)

Employer engagement is central to the development of quality workplace learning and the project will exploit the excellent links SURF has with local business and industry. It is a requirement of validation that all FD proposals are supported of local employers. Fdf has funded SURF to research employer engagement and the outputs of this are now available to inform this proposal.

The Quality Assurance Agency has produced a Foundation Degree qualification benchmark⁸, which describes the *"distinctive features of a Foundation Degree in terms of its purpose, general characteristics and general outcomes"* Although these are generic elements of Foundation Degrees, interpretation and application is often organisational and subject specific. Whilst SURF WBL project has produced quality assured resources to support these elements, the next step is to quality assure these resources at a strategic and policy level. Practitioners need to know what resources need to be applied consistently within all SURF Foundation Degrees and what can be re-appropriated according to context, e.g. the University APEL policy. The SURF WBL-WAY project will facilitate this process and disseminate it via the portal. Practitioners need consistent knowledge of the design, development and delivery of FDs within the consortium, and the opportunity to disseminate good practice. The portal will facilitate this by providing designated forums for practitioners to share experiences and expertise, and provide access to resources and information. It is envisaged that this will help to develop a community of practice and that information gathered can be fed back to those involved in FD staff development and the overall quality assurance process.

Whilst some SURF Foundation Degrees make use of eLearning as part of core delivery, many do not. However, as WBL is generic across FDs, the support and resourcing for WBL is seen as an effective and appropriate way of introducing blended delivery, whilst recognising that eLearning may not be appropriate for all learners or locations.

3.2 The Pedagogic Context

The need for pedagogic thinking to go beyond notions of "information delivery" and duplication of traditional practice within a VLE has been emphasised by Laurillard⁹ and Seely Brown¹⁰. In particular, the need to adopt

⁶ Foundation Degree Task Force Report to Ministers, 2004, DfES Ref. FDTF1. Nottingham: DfES

⁷ "Integrating Work-based learning into Higher Education", UVAC 2005 See: http://www.uvac.ac.uk/downloads/0401_publications/int_wbl.pdf

⁸ See: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/foundationDegree/benchmark/FDQB.asp>

⁹ Laurillard, D., (1996). "The Changing University.", Available from <http://itech1.coe.uga.edu/itforum/paper13/paper13.html>

active approaches based on the achievement of learning outcomes must be central. Prof. Stiles has written extensively on this, including publications for the JISC¹¹. The need for evaluation to focus on the processes involved in eLearning, rather than merely outputs cannot be overstressed.

The SURF WBL project collated comments from dissemination opportunities (e.g. FDF Conference 2005 and SURF WBL showcase) and Foundation Degree practitioners. They highlighted that resources to support teachers, mentors, employers and learners were required in various formats, so that dissemination was not restricted, and needed to be structured with clear guidance on their use and repurposing. The practice of structuring meaningful activities with embedded guidance reflects a constructivist perspective which is effective in both face to face and online learning contexts, recent examples of which were given in JISC's "Effective Practice with e-Learning"¹². If resources are made available via a gateway/portal the learner or practitioner makes the decision on how to employ the resource rather than it being prescribed by delivery - often the case with a VLE.

3.3 The Organisational Context

The University has made very significant progress in embedding all aspects of eLearning into the normal practice of the University and the SURF community. This work has been widely published and disseminated:

Integrative Development¹³ – This is a coordinated process for the development of eLearning/eSupported courses from inception to delivery and involves practitioners working in partnership. It takes a project management approach to development, with a learning technologist filling the management role in liaison with the module/award team. eLearning demands new pedagogic skills and fluency with technology - staff involved in developing courses may need support in developing skills in course design, supporting/managing students and ICT/technical skills. These skills are often interrelated; the integrative approach facilitates a pick and mix approach to staff development which is dependent on individual needs, sharing and cascading of staff development, training and knowledge, leading to an emphasis on:

- resourcing and good design relating to learning and teaching strategies - rather than just content
- addressing staff development needs appropriately
- articulation of organisational processes and procedures
- formalised documented process

Quality Assurance/Enhancement - The University has QA policies and procedures designed to focus on the learning experience rather than content and to promote enhancement. To ensure that staff development and other interventions occur early in the development process, an eLearning threshold statement was introduced¹⁴, defining eLearning as where: *"A student cannot reasonably be expected, without due provision of individually focused accommodations (to meet the needs of disability, for example), to meet the learning outcomes of the course without accessing and/or engaging with the electronically delivered and/or supported components of the course."* Proposals for new courses are required identify eLearning intentions as part of academic planning and to consult the LDI team at that stage. The emphasis on learning experience is reflected in validation requirements and point of delivery "QA Checklists" addressing evaluation and enhancement. These QA processes were cited by QAA as "exemplars of good practice" in the 2005 institutional audit and analysed as part the JISC COVARM project¹⁵.

eLearning Policy A review of institutional policies, procedures, roles and responsibilities that affect eLearning has been ongoing since 2003. The review is aimed at providing "horizontal coherence" in institutional conduct of

¹⁰ Brown, J.S. and Duguid, P., "Universities in the Digital Age", *Change*, (July/August 1996), Available in updated form from: <http://www.parc.xerox.com/ops/members/brown/papers/university.html>

¹¹ Stiles, M.J., "Pedagogy and Virtual Learning Environment Evaluation and Selection", JISC MLE Briefing Paper No5, 2001, Available from: <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/mle/reps/briefings/bp5.html>

¹² See: www.jisc.ac.uk/elp_practice.html

¹³ Stiles, M.J., and Yorke, J.M.E.Y., "Embedding Staff Development in eLearning in the Production Process and using Policy to Reinforce its Effectiveness", 9th SEDA Conference, Birmingham, November 2004, <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/COSE/cosnew/embedding.pdf>

¹⁴ Stiles, M.J., "Embedding eLearning in a Higher Education Institution", Keynote Paper for: "At the Interface - 2nd Global Conference on Virtual Learning and Higher Education", 12th - 13th September 2003, Mansfield College, Oxford, <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/COSE/cosnew/ati2stilesrev.pdf>

¹⁵ See covarm.tvu.ac.uk/covarm/

eLearning, but revealed a lack of “vertical coherence”¹⁶ in that, for eLearning, nothing joined business plans and policies to strategies defining goals and operational procedures. Professor Stiles led a group of representatives from Faculties and Services to create a University eLearning Policy, approved in late 2004 (**Appendix C**). Providing 10 principles defining the conduct of eLearning and eSupport, it acts as an enabler for change at operational level and a context for the development of University strategies (**See Appendix D and E**). This policy was also cited by QAA as an “exemplar of good practice”.

A Challenge for the project: The University has put considerable effort into the way that eLearning and eSupport for SURF awards are developed delivered and supported, but this is still a problematic area, particularly as regards getting college teaching and support staff to “own” activities and work in partnership with their University Colleagues. The FD Task Force Report to Ministers also commented on this issue. An additional challenge for the University and SURF is to develop and embed processes across the consortium, in particular, those associated with effective use of a repository. However, SURF are confident this challenge can be met and appropriate policies and workflows established. One output of the SURF WBL project has been wider dissemination of University processes and procedures, and the provision for practitioners to discuss and clarify roles and responsibilities.

3.4 The Consortium Context and Relationship to other JISC Efforts

Staffordshire University Regional Federation [<http://www.surf.ac.uk>] is a “HEFCE Recognised Funding Consortia” of Staffordshire University and nine Staffordshire and two Shropshire FE Institutions. SURF. (**Appendix F**)

The SURF Partners are: Cannock Chase Technical College, Burton College, Rodbaston College, Leek College of Further Education and School of Art, Newcastle-under-Lyme College, Walford & North Shropshire College, Stoke-on-Trent College, Stafford College, Shrewsbury College, Tamworth and Lichfield College, Staffordshire University (**lead institution**), City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College.

The SURF Quality Assurance Handbook has been approved by all partner Academic Boards. In 2005, the QAA review of the Foundation Degree for Teaching Assistants resulted in a judgement of confidence in the emerging academic standards and emerging achievements of students and in the quality of learning opportunities. SURF is developing a suite of Foundation Degrees, mainly part-time, to meet the needs of new markets. Development is collaborative between the University and colleges, with significant contribution from employers. The current portfolio of Foundation Degrees is:

Project Management (2001), Teaching Assistants (2003), Applied Technology (2003), Care Management (2003), Early Years (2004), Polymer Technology (2004), Construction – Architectural Design (2004), Construction – Quantity Surveying (2004), Business Information Technology (2004), Computing (2004), Electrical & Electronic Technology (2005), Neighbourhood Policing (2005), Performing & Small Scale Touring (2005), Social Care (2005), Care Practice (2006), Complementary Therapies (2006), Creative Arts for Employment (2006), Heritage & Culture (2006), Leisure Management (2006), Travel and Tourism Management (2006). Plus, under development: Legal Practice, Media Production, Medical Illustration, Screen Based Graphics

During 2005/2006 SURF has been involved in a HEFCE-sponsored tri-partite project (Huddersfield, Staffordshire and London Southbank) to examine the leadership, governance and management issues of running of HEFCE Recognised Funding Consortia. The final report will be published in July 2006, with a guide to support existing and emerging HE/FE partnerships across England.

The University is leading the development of a Lifelong Learning Network (LLN) for the sub-region of Staffordshire, Stoke on Trent, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. SURF will be a key component, as the main mechanism for increasing the number of vocational learners will be foundation degrees. The diverse nature of the sub-region requires innovative approaches, e.g. ensuring access in rural areas via distributed learning. The LLN is working closely with Aimhigher in Staffordshire and Shropshire. Aimhigher plans include enhanced WBL projects, to create opportunities for more learners to move into HE.

At Stoke College, the benefits derived from engagement in previous consortium projects have proven pivotal in informing and guiding practice. The development and support work that was initiated through the projects plays a central part in the college’s strategies and day-to-day delivery of online and blended learning. The commitment to use of technology in enhancing the learner experience and access opportunities, coupled with a focus on learning

¹⁶ Romanainen J. (2004) Technology Foresight in context – shaping and aligning policies for innovation; http://www.forfas.ie/news/foresight_for_innovation_conference_2004/programme/5

delivered outside of traditional locations means the proposed work would be a natural continuation of this, affording new opportunities to deploy resources and explore further ways of engaging and informing staff.

At Shrewsbury College of Arts & Technology, the development process has been informal with ideas coming jointly from tutors and the ILT team, and the bulk of the development work carried out by the ILT team. The College sees the proposed project as a logical progression, with a move towards more formal policies and procedures for design, development and support. Involvement in SURF JISC projects has fostered partnerships within SURF and raised the profile of the College in relation to the work developed and shared with other institutions.

Burton College participated in the SURF WBL project and benefited by gaining expertise in using e-learning to support learners whilst contributing towards project aims. Online website, library, and intranet facilities have been established and MLE/VLE developments have been intensely scrutinised/reviewed. Involvement in the project highlighted the college ILT infrastructure and the embedding of eLearning, in terms of staffing support and policy. A new HE centre is being built at Burton, particularly targeting Foundation Degrees linked to local industry demands. The college is keen to continue to promote sustainable levels of expertise.

3.5 Description of Work Proposed, Fit to Programme, and Benefits to the HE/FE Community

Both SUNIWE and SURF WBL have built on and used the outputs of previous JISC projects. SUNIWE has built on the Web services and portal work of the NIIMLE project to produce personalised portals for SURF and WETN. SURF WBL has extended the good practice established in X4L Phase 1 particularly in relation to organizational processes and procedures associated with the SURF Consortium. A feature of both projects is the continued development of relations with other partner colleges within the SURF Consortium, in particular Stoke and Shrewsbury, who were also involved in X4L Phase 1, and Burton College. This collaborative approach has helped to clarify organizational issues within the Consortium for both projects and enabled the sharing of expertise.

The SURF WBL-WAY project will take the Portal developments from SUNIWE, which include services to provide learners with information about themselves, their courses and progress drawn from cross-SURF MIS systems and links to course resources in VLEs and combine this with the work of the SURF WBL project, which has produced generic and exemplar resources for the support of WBL. To build on this, it will work with the external partners to produce a uPortal-based gateway focused specifically at the support of WBL across the SURF consortium.

This will consist of extending the gateway to provide web services giving targeted access to resources to facilitate:

- Employer engagement not just in the delivery of WBL in FDs, but in the development of courses
- The mentoring process for WBL
- The transition of FE work-based learners to WBL in FDs and from FDs to Level 3 HE provision
- The development and quality process for WBL in Foundation Degrees
- Timely and individually targeted access to resources and support for work-based learners whose courses are not VLE-based or supported (VLE access is already covered by SUNIWE the gateway development)
- Improved access to course information for learners and employers (See COVARM and XCRi)

This will involve the creation of additional web services and portlets and the structuring of resources within the repository to provide appropriate and individualised access to the various individuals, courses and groups involved.

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE: Staffordshire University is about to purchase the Harvest Road Hive Repository. This system, which has passed IMS conformance testing and includes UK outputs such as RELOAD is focused on the needs of eLearning (but also supports traditional “library” repository use). Harvest Road and the University are to become research partners, and Harvest Road, who are supporting this project, are providing access to their Java-based APIs. Harvest Road and the University have agreed that outputs from the research partnership will be made freely available as open-source, and this will include services to deliver targeted resources from the repository to uPortal as planned for the proposed project.

The following list outlines the work proposed. Many activities overlap, and the list does not imply sequencing:

Documentation

- Core group develop a detailed Project Plan and operational protocols, and agree these with JISC
- The project learning technologists develop and agree “trial” workflows and processes

Portal / Gateway (Building on SUNIWE Portal)

- Working with Harvest Road, develop further web services to provide access to personalised resources for practitioners and learners from the repository. (This includes resources for the support of the development and quality assurance of Foundation Degrees and will build in part on the COVARM project)
- Develop further web services to provide access to improved course information (Builds on XCRi)

- Further develop the authenticated gateway/portal for practitioners and employers
- Provision for targeting immediate information to practitioners, e.g. via. RSS
- Development of an electronic community e.g. via forums
- Provision for sharing resources and information online
- Software outputs made available to the HE/FE community

Associated Support Activities contributed by project partners:

- Metadata support (from both the IS Learning Development and Innovation, and IS Learning Support Teams)
- Technical support of use of University and College VLEs, MIS systems, and the Harvest Road Repository
- IPR/Copyright advice (IS Learning Support)
- Advice and guidance (Employers, Aim Higher, CETLs, and Foundation Degree Forward)

Targeting of Resources (Building on SURF WBL)

- The partners ensure that all required academic involvement in the project has been accurately identified and agreed and that SURF HE in FE course elements where WBL activities and materials will be embedded are agreed via liaison between College and University course teams
- In partnership with Foundation Degree Forward and other supporting partners, agree the support requirements for WBL and associated resource and information requirements
- In partnership with institutional information specialists, carry out a detailed review of available resources and resolve any outstanding CP/IPR issues via negotiation.
- The academic group develop, with learning technology staff, a plan to built learning opportunities using identified existing resources and address “holes” in resourcing from SURF WBL
- All resources quality assured using SURF QA procedures
- Where not already done, resources packaged in IMS format and delivered by a gateway from the repository
- Resources disseminated across SURF and deposited in JORUM

Staff Development

- The project team provide staff training (to other support staff and academics) including embedding staff development into “production approaches and workflows” within the individual partners. Academic staff and learning technologists select and structure WBL information and resources in partnership

Piloting and Evaluation

- All support and delivery evaluated from employer, practitioner and learner perspectives, using a range of Foundation Degree Courses within the three FE partners and building on approach used by SURF WBL.
- Workflows evaluated – changes to policy and procedures agreed and made
- Written project deliverables produced
- Review and evaluation of individual institutional communications (awareness, project objectives/outcomes)

3.6 Evaluation Approach

The project will build on the approach adopted by the SURF X4L and SURF WBL Projects. Here, instruments were agreed across the partners and used in common. This allowed distinctiveness in partners to be identified as well as commonalities and consisted of interviews with staff, observation of staff and students, and a common on-line questionnaire. Emphasis was placed on capturing both organizational and pedagogic issues and practitioners and learners’ own views of the experiences. In the proposed project, the portal will facilitate a more targeted approach to evaluation. For example allowing online questionnaires and surveys which could be correlated according to area of practice e.g. tutor, mentor or employer. The portal could include practitioners in the evaluation of learners. There is an opportunity for feedback by associated projects and organizations via links within the portal which should help avoid repetition of materials by other projects.

4 Other Capability and Experience within the Project Partners and Value for Money

The University has over 8 years experience in the implementation of eLearning and associated strategy, policy and processes. SURF partners have been delivering foundation degrees since 2001, and the three FE partners have good experience with their own VLEs. Staffordshire University LDI Team have worked with IMS specifications for over 6 years, including Content Packaging and Metadata in COSE/JTAP, and the CO3 Project (with Bangor and Huddersfield). The partners have been/are also involved in other work on the IMS specifications, including the Enterprise specifications under the FE Interoperability Trials, CO3 and SUNIWE. The University LDI and LS teams are working on portals for distance learners and access to local, regional and national information resources. The LDI team are now in the process of completing the SUNIWE project which includes staff from NIIMLE, the Welsh eTraining Network and SURF partners, and which is producing a consortium level uPortal gateway focused on provided individualised access to the learning experience.

4.1 Accessibility – Staffordshire University endeavours to embed accessibility from both a technical aspect and design view. It has encouraged research into accessibility, and worked with TechDis and the RNCB. The University wrote a report on “Accessibility and the VLE” for DISinHE and, with support from assistive software vendors, made the COSE VLE conform to Sun, IBM and W3C Java Accessibility Guidelines. The SURF X4L

Project continued work with accessibility by working with the RNCB on developing accessible content. The LDI team are active in the CETIS Accessibility SIG, and have also designed and teach several accredited Masters courses that dedicate a large percentage of their content to accessibility issues and the legal aspects of the DDA (1995) that affect the use of electronic support for work based learning.

4.2 Copyright, IPR and Open Source

The project will build on the agreements produced for SURF WBL and SUNIWE which covered these issues and provided for the creation of such things as asset registers and copyright clearance, the release of software outputs as open source, and the use of resources across SURF and their deposit into JORUM. In addition, the SURF Consortium Agreement has recently been renewed and specifically covers issues of copyright in such a way as to enable the reuse of resources created for SURF courses by all SURF partners for any non-commercial purpose.

5 Budget, Management & Staffing of Project and Outline Workplan

Professor Stiles, reporting to the SURF Management Board, would direct the project. Work at the FE partner Colleges would be managed centrally but supervised locally. Representatives of the SURF Curriculum and Quality Committees, and supporting partners would be part of the Project Steering Group. The key project staff would form a Progress & Planning Group that would be the main driving force of the project. The partners will adopt an approach compatible with JISC guidelines. As well as the SURF Agreement, as members of the SURF, a consortium agreement covering the main project partners was created and approved by JISC for the SURF WBL project – this will be renewed and updated for SURF WBL-WAY.

5.1 Budget Summary

Foundation Degree Forward have agreed to actively assist and support the project by provision of electronic and paper dissemination, and at workshops, seminars and conferences, and will provide resources to enable this. This has allowed the funding requirements for dissemination requested as part of this bid to be reduced.

The project will adhere to fEC using TRAC methodology. The following is a draft based upon fEC but using current methodology and will require remodeling following implementation of TRAC by the University in August 2006. Nevertheless the figures are a realistic representation of institutional contributions and an accurate statement of funding sought from JISC.

		Gross Salary June 06	Year 1 Full Cost 10/06-7/07	Funding sought from JISC	Year 2 Full Cost 8/07-7/08	Funding sought from JISC	Year 3 Full Cost 8/08-9/08	Funding sought from JISC
Staffing Staffs	FTE							
Project Director	Fraction	52,214	2,964		4,337		1,244	
Project Manager	Fraction	27,117	5,614		6,244		1,066	
Technical Manager	Fraction	30,002	11,107		13,656		1,866	
Coordinator	1	21,536	20,875	17,164	26,565	21,961	4,721	3,920
Technical Developer (Jan 07 on)	1	25,565	17,387		31,304	25,806	5,536	
Metadata Support	Fraction	27,471	443		466		167	
Systems Support	Fraction	31,611	862		883		181	
Accessibility Support	Fraction	24,821	916		939		394	
Academic staff time	Av p/hr £19.23		7,524	6,303	22,593	18,903		
Dir Costs Staffs	See Note Above							
Admin/Clerical Support	£23 p/hr		575		690		230	
Travel/Dissemination – All partners	Managed by Staffs		2,000	2,000	3,000	3,000	500	500
Consumables	Basic		150		180		50	
AimHigher			10,000	10,000				
Indir Costs Staffs			45,209		67,866		10,156	
Staffing Burton	FTE							
Local Manager	0.5	26,433	13,216		16,335		2,804	
Project Officer	0.75	20,000	15,000	12,500	18,000	15,000	3,000	2,500
Indir/Dir Costs Burton			5,643		6,867		1,160	
Staffing Shrewsbury	FTE							

Local Manager	0.5	23,005	13,775		14,189		2,435		
Project Officer	0.75	20,000	15,000	12,500	18,000	15,000	3,000	2,500	
Indir/Dir Costs Shrewsbury			5,755		6,437		1,087		
Staffing Stoke	FTE								
Local Manager	0.5	29,000	13,919		17,205		2,953		
Project Officer	0.75	20,000	15,000	12,500	18,000	15,000	3,000	2,500	
Indir/Dir Costs Stoke			5,783		7,041		1,190		
Totals			183,508	72,967	232,931	114,670	36,584	11,920	
Total Cost of Project							453,023		
Total JISC Funding Sought							199,557		

As the work forms a core part of SURF and Staffordshire University business plans and strategies, the qualitative benefits to both the University and SURF are fundamental in that it will enable the achievement of goals. In quantitative terms, SURF FTEs amount to some 18% of the University's total, so the successful growth of SURF FD provision and improved retention will have considerable financial impact on the partners.

5.2 Outline Workplan

This is merely an indication of the breakdown of the phases of work across the project. A full project plan would be developed and agreed immediately following the start-up of the project.

Months	10 06	11	12	1 07	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1 08	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Create Project Plan																									
Scope/Specify new Gateway Req'ments																									
Design/Develop new Gateway Services																									
Target/Structure Resources																									
Quality Assurance																									
Evaluate Gateway																									
Pilot Phase 1																									
Review & Modify																									
Pilot Phase 2																									
Review																									
Dissemination																									

5.3 Profiles of Identified Key Staff

All key Staff, both funded and contributed, are currently employed by the partners and will include:

Prof Mark Stiles, Head of Learning Development and Innovation, Information Services, Staffordshire University. Professor of Technology Supported Learning – has led numerous projects under a range of JISC programmes. Widely published on eLearning. Member of CETIS Steering Group. Will direct proposed project.

Vicki Watkin, Learning Development Manager, Staffordshire University, a chartered librarian, teaches aspects of eLearning at postgraduate level, project manager for the SUNIWE and SURF WBL projects, specialist interests in policy and pedagogy. Will manage proposed project.

Sam Rowley, Learning Development Manager, Staffordshire University – has led technical developments in eLearning and interoperability since 1996. Developed the COSE VLE and is technical lead on the SUNIWE project. M.Sc in Computer Science Will also manage technical work on the proposed project.

Fleur Corfield, Learning Development Specialist, 10 years of IT support experience. Led an X4L Phase 1 project at New College Telford, Project Coordinator for the SURF WBL project and will transfer to coordination of the proposed project in Oct 06

Susan Lee, Learning Development Specialist, Staffordshire University – specialist on accessibility, delivers staff course up to Masters level in eLearning. Will advise proposed project on accessibility.

Professor Moofik Al-Tai, Faculty of Computing, Engineering & Technology, Staffordshire University – an expert on Work-based Learning, member of SEMTA. Will advise project and liaise with employers in his field.

Paul Johnson - Electronic Information Co-ordinator, Staffordshire University. - a librarian with a portfolio for researching and advising the institution on the use and implementation of relevant metadata standards for a range of resources and project areas. Will advise the project on these areas

Steve Blakemore, Educational Technologist Team Leader, Stoke College – leads eLearning at the college, has worked a number of JISC projects including SURF X4L, SUNIWE and SURF WBL. Will manage SURF WBL-WAY locally

Richard Booth, ILT Co-ordinator, Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology - leads eLearning at the college,

has worked a number of JISC projects including SURF X4L, SUNIWE and SURF WBL. Will manage SURF WBL-WAY locally

Dave Shearan, E learning Project Champion, Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology – current project officer on the SURF WBL project at the college. Will transfer to SURF WBL-WAY in Oct 06

Mike Parker, Learning Resource Centre Manager, Burton College, leads eLearning for the college, manages its contribution to the SURF WBL project. Will manage SURF WBL-WAY locally.

Song Ye – Senior Learning Development Specialist, Staffordshire University – Technical developer for SUNIWE project. 2 years Java programming and 6 years and software maintenance experience. M.Sc. in Computing Science. Will transfer to SURF WBL-WAY in January 07

5.4 Risk Analysis

Project is overambitious – medium – project is achievable but time frames might be tight

Loss of key personnel – medium to low – all partners have stable teams, and whilst staff turnover might occur, the situation is not seen as a “project killer”

Cross-Partnership problems – low – all partners are longstanding members of JISC projects within SURF.

Technical problems – low / medium – technical problems certain, but SUNIWE has addressed most likely ones

Willingness of teaching staff to contribute required effort – medium – will build on commitment from SURF WBL

Insufficient resources and CP/IPR problems – medium – the projects main is on the gateway providing access to resources.

Reliance on outputs of SUNIWE embedding phase - low - the SUNIWE uPortal Gateway must be operational before it can be built upon but is scheduled to be completed and embedded by the end of December 2006.

Partners technical/operational constraints - medium to low - integration of Gateway components at partners will be prioritised to ensure operational permissions and technical effort can be progressed at an early stage.

6 Continuation and Dissemination

6.1 Continuation

SURF proposes this work on the premise that it is, besides being of great value to the wider community, an important part of the strategies it has developed to ensure its own survival and development. The partners are committed to the long-term retention and re-use of software components and material created. Sustainability of materials will be provided through the use of standard conformant metadata and by preservation at Staffordshire University through its repository system, as well of course through JORUM

6.2 Arrangements for dissemination

SURF's strategy includes sharing “experience of collaborative working within the wider educational community”. Consequently the project would disseminate as widely and publicly as possible. As with the SURF WBL project, Foundation Degree Forward will work actively with the project on national and regional dissemination. Dissemination would take place not only externally but also within the SURF consortium at both institutional and consortium levels, and include support staff as well as teaching staff and managers. Activities would include:

- A project website linked to the JISC, CETIS, and other national initiative websites
- A WIKI or equivalent tool providing access to the formative outputs of the project for comment and feedback by the UK educational community
- Publications and conference presentations
- Regular meetings with relevant groups (e.g. CETIS SIGs and other JISC Projects) and workshops
- Distribution and dissemination of outputs within the SURF and the University.
- Progress meetings with associated organisations

The SURF Consortium has an outstanding record of dissemination. Professor Stiles and the LDI team have contributed to JISC, ALT, UCISA and other conferences, and published many articles and papers. The Consortium believes in active participation, evidenced by membership of CETIS Groups, and attendance at events.

7 Formative Evaluation of Project

Formative project evaluation will be via the various project meetings documenting their own discussions and decisions. Reflection on activity will be carried out at Progress and Planning meetings, which will have available notes from technical and evaluation meetings. To ensure that all activity is captured for evaluation, electronic communication between project members will be done via a WIKI or equivalent tool, which will be archived, and reports and other relevant communications will be added to this archive. All project documentation and meeting notes will be circulated using the toll, to ensure a single source of documentary record. The Project Steering Group will disseminate its own work back through this mechanism to ensure that evaluation is 360°. The project team will also ensure that they are involved in national events and will also host events to showcase activities and resources.

Appendix A

Cover Sheet for Proposals (All sections must be completed)	JISC Capital Programme	
Name of Capital Programme: e-Learning		
Name of Lead Institution: Staffordshire University		
Name of Proposed Project: SURF WBL-WAY- Individualised Support for Work-Based Foundation Degrees		
Name of Project Partners: Staffordshire University (Lead Partner) Burton College Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology Stoke on Trent College PLUS: fdf, Aimhigher, Foundation Direct, Engineering Council, SEMTA and Harvest Road as supporting partners		
Full Contact Details for Primary Contact: Name: Professor Mark Stiles Position: Head of Learning Development and Innovation Email: m.j.stiles@staffs.ac.uk Address: Information Services Staffordshire University Beaconside, Stafford, ST18 0AD Tel No: 01785 353647 Fax No: 01785 353482		
Length of Project: 24 Months		
Project Start and End Dates: October 2006 – September 2008		
Total Funding Requested from JISC: £199,557		
Funding Broken Down over Project Years: 2006-7: £72,967 2007-8: £114,670 2008: £11,920		
Total Institutional Contributions: £253,466		
Outline Project Description Based in an existing HEFCE-funded consortium, this proposal focuses on providing individualized access to resources for supporting WBL both for those taking HE courses in FE, and those involved in the formulation and support of their courses and learning experiences. The SURF WBL-WAY project will build on the work of the SUNIWE and SURF WBL JISC projects to pilot a gateway for use by Work-based Learners, Tutors, Employers and Mentors across the University and three SURF FE partners. It will provide access to targeted information relating to the development, management and support of Foundation Degrees provided at the SURF institutions involved and resources to assist tutors, mentors and work-based learners. The gateway will also provide information and resources specifically targeted at employer engagement and facilitating the progression and transition of learners who have undertaken work-based learning at FE level into HE courses in FE institutions. Integration of the WBL experience into the overall Foundation Degree experience is a particular goal.		
I have read the Circular and associated Terms and Conditions of Grant at Appendix B (Tick Box)	YES ✓	NO

An eLearning Policy for Staffordshire University

1 Overarching Context

The University Business plan for 2003/4 to 2007/8 has the following aims (numbering as per plan):

- 2.1 To provide high quality, lifelong learning opportunities which anticipate and satisfy market demand and which are supported by research and scholarly practice
- 2.2 To take a national lead in offering learning opportunities to all those who can benefit, at a range of levels and in a variety of modes to suit individual needs
- 2.3 To engage in focused and useful applied research which translates into consultancy and knowledge transfer to the private, public and voluntary sectors and encourage all our customers to be enterprising
- 2.4 To play a leadership role in the cultural, social, economic and intellectual life of the local, regional and wider communities we serve and be known for our expertise in supporting economic and social regeneration.
- 2.5 To put our students first by offering them a distinctively high quality and relevant experience which adds value
- 2.6 To forge and maintain strong partnerships with FE/HE institutions, both in the UK and internationally, business, government and voluntary agencies to promote mutually beneficial opportunities for the furtherance of our mission
- 2.7 To maintain financial health and stability through income diversification and cost effective management of our resources
- 2.8 To build an agile organisation where all staff feel empowered to respond effectively and creatively to the challenges of the changing higher education environment

eLearning is contributing, or has the potential to contribute, to all of these aims, but equally, its successful use is dependent in their fulfilment in the context of other University strategies.

This policy explicitly meets one of actions against the University Plan's Strategic Objectives under Aim 2.2:

Objective: To exploit new delivery mechanisms, including networked workplace and 'e' learning, to the benefit of a wider range of students both on and off campus

Action: Prepare an E-Learning Policy to include information literacy, training, ongoing support and service level agreements with students.

And is part of the Objectives under Aim 2.1:

Objective: To sustain a pervasive culture of professional, pedagogic research and scholarly practice, supported by appropriate staff development, in order to guarantee the relevance and quality of all course provision

Action: Prepare a new, updated Learning and Teaching Strategy to support delivery of the University Plan and enhance pedagogic practices and delivery

And

Objective: To increase our full-time and part-time postgraduate and accredited full cost courses with a particular focus on continuing professional development (CPD).

Action: Expand postgraduate taught awards using traditional, blended and full e-learning delivery mechanisms

2 The Policy Statement

The University will use eLearning where appropriate to support the achievement of its goals in providing learner-centred learning experiences that are flexible, responsive and effective and meet the needs of all its learners and partners. eLearning will be used to innovate both learning and its delivery and will be delivered making effective and efficient use of all resources whilst maintaining the quality standards the University is committed to.

Policy aspects pertaining to eLearning will, where relevant, be embedded in all University policies and procedures to ensure a consistent and corporate approach to associated systems, processes and responsibilities.

What is eLearning?

For the purpose of this policy, and the Quality Assurance and other procedures it relates to, an award is considered to involve e-Learning where:

A student cannot reasonably be expected, without due provision of individually focused accommodations (to meet the needs of disability, for example), to meet the learning outcomes of the course without accessing and/or engaging with the electronically delivered and/or supported components of the course.¹

Here, the word course (as used in the original document as approved by QDC) is intended to cover both awards (at any level of granularity) and informal courses. Where an offering provides eLearning components or eContent on which the achievement of the learning outcomes is NOT dependent, it does not fall within the scope of this policy but nevertheless, such provision is subject to the requirements of the University relating to electronic learning content, including its provenance, quality, and management.²

2.1 Principles of the eLearning Policy and their Context

2.1.1 Principle 1: *The University will ensure that its eLearning provision can meet the needs of a full range of flexible and independent learning experiences. This will include on and off campus learners in local, regional, national and international settings and cover both blended and fully eLearning courses ranging from full awards to informal and individual learning.*

Context: This principle supports, in particular, all Strategic Objectives under Aim 2.1 and also the following under Aim 2.2:

Objective: *To review and develop targeted internal and regional initiatives aimed at increasing participation by non-traditional and under-represented learners*

Objective: *To exploit new delivery mechanisms, including networked workplace and 'e' learning, to the benefit of a wider range of students both on and off campus*

Objective: *To investigate and develop more radical forms of flexible learning, assessment, awards and recognitions of success to meet the demands of new and diverse student constituencies*

It is highly dependent on the achievement of the following Objective under Aim 2.7:

Objective: *To maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the physical and IT infrastructure to ensure fitness for purpose*

¹ See papers and minutes of QDC from December 2003. Copies of papers also available from IS LDI.

² See papers and minutes from QDC from 1998, January 2001, and December 2003. Copies of papers also available from IS LDI

The key here is “flexibility” – to meet the needs of a wide range of learners, drawn from diverse contexts, with very different learning requirements, requires providing University staff in both Faculties and Services with the appropriate skills and professional capabilities, ensuring that working practices, policies, processes and responsibilities are appropriately aligned, and that technical and infrastructural systems support eLearning are adaptable whilst being robust and effectively managed.

2.1.2 Principle 2: *The University will ensure that students taking eLearning courses have equity of opportunity with those taking courses delivered in more traditional ways, and that its marketing, recruitment, administrative and support procedures and provision are fully aligned to the needs of the eLearner.*

Context: Objectives, which it supports, include:

All under Aim 2.1

Under Aim 2.5:

Objective: *To provide cost-effective, customer focused, targeted delivery of our services to meet the needs of specific groups of students*

Objective: *To maximise the number of students who stay and successfully complete their courses*

This principle is fundamental to all aspects of retention, widening participation and inclusion, and also to meeting the needs of the lifelong learner, those involved in CPD, and partner organisations.

2.1.3 Principle 3: *The University will continually work towards ensuring that all systems, both manual and electronic, used in the eLearning context interoperate in the most effective way to provide learners with a effective and increasingly individualised learning environment encompassing all aspects of their experience as a student of the University, as part of a holistic Managed Environment for Learners (MEfL).*

Context: This principle contributes to all Objectives under Aim 2.1 plus, particularly:

Under Aim 2.5:

Objective: *To provide cost-effective, customer focused, targeted delivery of our services to meet the needs of specific groups of students*

And, Under Aim 2.6:

Objective: *To retain existing and form new international partnerships with overseas educational institutions, and with agents, to support the expansion of international students studying at the University and abroad in partner organisations*

Objective: *To sustain and develop our innovative Staffordshire University Regional Federation (SURF) with colleges in Staffordshire and Shropshire and other appropriate FE/HE partnerships*

eLearning is not just about VLEs – its success depends on the effective interoperation of all systems supporting the learner, including the various MIS, financial and student record systems, PDP systems, those providing resources such as eLibrary and eBook systems, and corporate repositories, as well as all of these linking to, and exchanging data with, regional, national and international systems. This has to be achieved in such a way as to provide the prospective, current and past student with a view of their experience at Staffordshire that is personal to them. Part of this work will need to provide a single, simplified, but individual, point of access to the learning experience.

2.1.4 Principle 4: *The University will exploit the range of technologies used in the eLearning context to work with partner organisations, employers and individuals to assist it in meeting its goals of supporting the independent and lifelong learner and continuing professional development.*

Context: This principle support all objectives under Aims 2.1 and 2.6 plus:

Under Aim 2.2:

Objective: *To review and develop targeted internal and regional initiatives aimed at increasing participation by non-traditional and under-represented learners*

This principle follows from the previous one. In order to work well with outside organisations and facilitate the lifelong learner, including in areas such as progression and CPD, it will be essential that not only do the University's own systems used to support eLearning interoperate, but that they can also import and export information readily from partners and other organisations. Only by doing this can the needs of the independent learner be adequately covered. For example learners will want to bring personal development records/plans with them and take them away when they move on.

2.1.5 Principle 5: *The University will ensure that as far as possible, resources for both tutors and learners, including eLearning course content, University eResources, and those provides from external sources are easily accessed from point of need. In addition, it will via the use of managed repositories, ensure that University owned eContent and eResources are readily available for repurposing and reuse by those entitled to do so, and will thus actively support cross discipline and Faculty developments.*

Context: As well as Aims 2.1 and 2.2 this principle supports:

Under Aim 2.5:

Objective: *To provide cost-effective, customer focused, targeted delivery of our services to meet the needs of specific groups of students*

Under Aim 2.6:

Objective: *To retain existing and form new international partnerships with overseas educational institutions, and with agents, to support the expansion of international students studying at the University and abroad in partner organisations*

Objective: *To sustain and develop our innovative Staffordshire University Regional Federation (SURF) with colleges in Staffordshire and Shropshire and other appropriate FE/HE partnerships*

Under Aim 2.8:

Objective: *To further develop effective methods of internal communication, collaboration and consultation and to disseminate best practice*

Experience from the University's use of Lotus LearningSpace has shown the danger of having all content tied to a single system. It is important that content can be used in multiple systems and contexts, and that where resources reside in fixed systems (for example Books), that they can accessed readily from references help in other systems. Along with this, the independent learner needs to be able to search easily for resources relevant to their needs, even where these resources reside "outside" the course they currently studying. Lastly it is imperative, to avoid needless duplication of effort, that, where appropriate tutors (including partners) can readily access and reuse tried, tested and quality assured resources created or identified by their colleagues (in such a way that their colleagues work is acknowledged). All of this will enhance the ability of the University to respond to new eLearning opportunities and the experience it offers to its learners, and assist in underpinning the cross discipline and Faculty developments the University requires for the future.

2.1.6 Principle 6: *The University, through its quality processes, will ensure that eLearning provision meets the standards expected by the University, funding bodies and relevant legislation, and that it is accessible, educationally sound, engaging and appropriate to its target populations, whilst ensuring that course developers and those facilitating learning have the scope to innovate and fully employ their professional skills and judgement.*

Context: Supports Objectives under Aims 2.1 and 2.5

The University's academic planning processes need to be both robust and flexible enough to allow it to respond in a timely manner to new opportunities. Whilst QA has, in the past, concentrated on matters of eContent, it is important that policies and procedures are developed to ensure that eLearning offerings are fit for the target population, including the independent learner, and offer an educational sound experience which is both effective and engaging. It will be important here to ensure a distinction is drawn between "eLearning" as defined at the start of this policy, and "eEnhanced" learning where engaging with the e-components of an award are not a prerequisite to meeting its learning outcomes. Unless this is done, approval and QA procedures could act as a barrier to progress. It is important, however, that QA procedures ensure that standards required by external bodies and legislation (for example SENDA) are met.

2.1.7 Principle 7: *To ensure that the potential of eLearning to innovate learning and meet the needs of an increasingly diverse range of potential learners is realised, the University will actively encourage research, scholarship and development in all aspects of eLearning, and in particular, pedagogy for eLearning. In addition, it will, via appropriate staff development, ensure all management, administrative, support and teaching staff have the skills, and understanding of each others' roles, required to play their part effectively in the provision of eLearning.*

Context: Supports all Objectives under Aims 2., 2.3 and also:

Under Aim 2.8:

Objective: *To increase our change capacity and capability through positive leadership and management development*

Objective: *To further develop effective methods of internal communication, collaboration and consultation and to disseminate best practice*

Objective: *To provide a working environment where all staff are valued and able to reach their full professional potential*

The University possesses, in both Faculties and Services, areas of considerable expertise and excellence in the research, scholarship and practice of eLearning and associated pedagogies. It must develop the means to encourage and promote these, whilst also ensuring that the outputs of this work is effectively not just disseminated, but embedded in practice across the institution. Experience at the University, backed by research, has shown that effective dissemination of lessons learned is most effectively achieved where this is embedded in the development process along with appropriate staff development. Indeed, a practice of active development of all groups of staff in their part of the eLearning context is essential if effective working practices and delivery are to be maintained and further enhanced.

2.1.8 Principle 8: *The University will monitor and evaluate the use of all systems and practices contributing to its learners' eLearning experiences, to ensure that practice, policy and strategy are responsive to lessons learned and agile in respect of new opportunities, and will actively seek to remove barriers that impede or restrict effective eLearning.*

Context: Supports Objectives Aim 2.1 and 2.2, enhances contribution to Aims 2.3, and also contributes to:

Under Aim 2.5:

Objective: *To provide cost-effective, customer focused, targeted delivery of our services to meet the needs of specific groups of students*

Objective: *To maximise the number of students who stay and successfully complete their courses*

Experience and research have shown that eLearning can only be considered fully embedded into an institution when all policies, procedures, roles and responsibilities pertaining to the use of eLearning are fully integrated – not just with each other, but with those applying to “normal” practice.

2.1.9 Principle 9: *The University will ensure, assist by the use of monitoring and evaluation, that the resources required to support eLearning, in human, technical and infrastructural aspects, are appropriate to its requirements and will allow it to provide its eLearners with realistic definitions of the levels of service they can expect*

Context: as Principle 8 plus Aim 2.7

The University needs to develop a holistic approach to the evaluation of eLearning that is integrated with the monitoring of the overall students experience. In addition it needs to understand the true resourcing requirements of eLearning if students are to be given expectations of the service the University will provide them with that are achievable.

2.1.10 Principle 10: *The University will ensure that, by using effective costing models and market research, the pricing of eLearning offerings is both competitive and appropriate to the target populations.*

Context: Underpins Aims 2.1, 2.2, and 2.6, and:

Under Aim 2.5:

Objective: *To provide cost-effective, customer focused, targeted delivery of our services to meet the needs of specific groups of students*

Under Aim 2.7:

Objective: *To develop effective financial models, which ensure the cost efficient delivery of our business proposition*

Both market research and costing/pricing are areas that need urgent attention. eLearning must not be costed in isolation, but as part of the total cost of the provision of any offering. Market research is both dependent on, and contributes to, effective costing/pricing and the University must investigate ways that new proposals can be evaluated against demand that are both realistic and affordable.

Note: The eLearning Strategy - Current Position and the Challenges to be met

A paper will shortly be available which provides

- A concise explanation of where we are currently at in terms of activity, P2R2 and strategy, including other University strategies, with explicit reference to the various Principles above.
- A brief discussion of things to be addressed, including P2R2 and Strategies, with explicit reference to the various Principles above. This might then be extended into an outline strategy to take things forward.

This paper will be submitted to the next meeting of LTEG.

WORK-BASED LEARNING POLICY

Introduction

Work-based learning will assume greater significance in the curriculum of Staffordshire University as it develops a portfolio of awards to meet the National Skills Strategy and contribute to the supply of a skilled work force for the regional and local economies. This trend will be supported by: the establishment of a Lifelong Learning Network for Staffordshire, Stoke on Trent and Shropshire, Telford & the Wrekin; and the planned University Quarter development in Stoke on Trent. HEFCE's emerging Work Place Learning Strategy and recent government statements – including the Secretary of State's funding letter to HEFCE in January 2006 - point to a funding regime which will support those universities that extend and enhance the quality of their work-based learning provision and engage with employers to deliver the skills that the labour market needs.

Definitions

Work-based Learning (WBL) derives from the workplace: it flows from the experience of engaging in, and reflecting on, specific work roles. Learning that involves work-place knowledge and skills will occur in the University, in partner colleges and in the workplace. It will normally include the formal involvement of one or more employers – in award development, mentor support, assessment and review. Learndirect's **learning through work** national initiative is a means by which, through online technology, people can access a qualification using the learning continually developed through working life – and without traditional university attendance.

Policy

In the light of these developments, the University will extend its WBL provision through offering:

- Flexible and negotiable work-based learning qualifications
- University Learning Awards
- Accreditation of Continuing Professional Development
- Accreditation of in-house/company training programmes
- Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning AP(E)L
- Learning through work (**learndirect**) programmes
- E-learning and E-supported learning in accordance with the E-learning policy
- Short course brokerage
- Development of Foundation Degrees with its partner colleges and other organisations

Principles

1. Where Staffordshire University is involved, either through the direct provision of programmes or modules, or with or through partners, WBL will normally be credit-bearing.
2. Employers, professional bodies, sector skills councils, partner colleges and other education providers will be involved in the development and implementation of WBL to ensure the intended outcomes are appropriate.
3. Credit-bearing WBL provision will follow standard University programme and module approval and quality assurance procedures.
4. University policies and procedures, including those in faculties and services, will be monitored and evaluated to ensure that they accommodate the needs of work-based learners. This process will actively seek to remove barriers that impede or restrict effective work-based learning and will include provision which falls outside the standard University academic year.
5. Specific consideration will be given to the academic, welfare and support needs of students on WBL programmes as these will be different to those of traditional (i.e. full time, campus-based) students. This will include a review of all University facilities to ensure that they are 'fit for purpose' in meeting the needs of work-based learners (who will tend to be employed, mature, with family and work commitments). In particular, attention will be given to information, advice and guidance systems for these learners.
6. Existing good practice in WBL will be identified and disseminated through staff development and awareness raising seminars, provided for administrative, support and teaching staff. This will ensure that all these staff have the skills, and understanding of each others' roles, to ensure the effective delivery of work-based learning.
7. Staffordshire University will identify and promote progression routes into and from work based learning - including those from apprenticeships and other vocational programmes - on to University awards.
8. Staffordshire University will act on feedback from students undertaking WBL, their work based mentors and employers, to help it provide the awards and support services they require. It will also work with employers' organisations, sector skills councils, professional bodies, the Regional Skills Partnership, the Learning and Skills Council, SURF colleges and other partner organisations to identify market needs.
9. Staffordshire University will make effective use of e-support and e-learning to support and enhance its provision of work-based learning in accordance with the principles of its e-learning policy.

Strategy

In developing its strategy for work-based learning, Staffordshire University will make linkages, as appropriate, to its relevant policies, for example:

- Widening Participation
- Ethics
- Programme/award design
- Quality assurance and improvement
- E-learning
- Accreditation of client
- Service level agreements
- Equal opportunities

Staffordshire University

Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2006/07 – 2008/09

Themes and Key Objectives

1. Curriculum Innovation and Development

It is recognised that the range of students enrolling on awards within the University is widening in response to local, regional, national and international demands and as a consequence the way in which the curriculum is designed, delivered, assessed and evaluated must be constantly reviewed in order that it remains fit for purpose. In particular it is important that the curriculum is sufficiently flexible and adaptable to be able to respond to changing needs of our students and external stakeholders.

1.1 To provide substantially increased opportunities for flexible delivery and assessment of learning in terms of place, pace and mode of study

1.1.1 To develop and embed appropriate structures that will facilitate flexible delivery in all Faculties, based on the experience gained from delivering the HEFCE-funded Flexible Learning Pathfinder project

1.1.2 To develop and implement an appropriate framework that will result in a substantial increase in the amount of work place learning being delivered and position the University to become a market leader in this area

1.1.3 To build on the existing initiatives resulting from the principles established in the University e-Learning Policy by increasing the extent to which e-learning is embedded in learning and teaching practice and award delivery

1.1.4 To exploit the outcomes of the University's commitment to the e-learning benchmarking project and ensure ongoing measurement of the quality and effectiveness of institutional support and delivery through similar methods of evaluation.

1.2 To provide an institutional framework that encourages and facilitates innovative curriculum development and delivery

1.2.1 To implement as a key component of the new planning cycle a portfolio review process that will encourage and facilitate innovative and demand –led award development

1.2.2 To implement a revised academic calendar that will be responsive to the demands of our client base and to facilitate curriculum innovation

1.2.3 To ensure that future curriculum developments reflect employer engagement and changes taking place in 14-19 qualifications

1.3 To provide learning opportunities that provide a quality experience for our international students and prepares UK-based students for participation in an increasingly interdependent world

1.3.1 To establish an 'Internationalisation of the Curriculum' task force

1.3.2 To provide Staffordshire University students with increased opportunities to study overseas

1.3.3 To develop an appreciation of diverse cultures and cross-cultural attitudes amongst staff and students

1.4 To ensure high quality provision and sound standards whilst seeking continuous improvement

1.4.1 To ensure that our quality assurance processes will satisfy both internal and external stake holders that the whole range of provision is of the highest possible quality

1.4.2 To ensure that quality assurance processes are enhancement – led and that continuous improvement is fostered and supported

1.4.3 To continue to retain quality while streamlining the quality assurance of e-learning through the development of appropriate institutionally approved pedagogic models

2. Supporting Student Learning and Success

As a customer - focused University committed to social inclusion and widening participation, the provision of high quality student support at all stages of the student life-cycle has been a key feature of previous Learning and Teaching Strategies . In this new strategy, student support will be developed in selected key areas with the intention of providing enhanced opportunities for our students to succeed.

2.1 To provide all students with appropriate systematic support so as to maximise their chances of successfully completing their course of study

2.1.1 To review and evaluate the impact of the current Retention Strategy

2.1.2 To ensure, with specific reference to the First Year Experience, that all students are provided with effective and appropriate opportunities to make the transition to the higher education

2.2.3 To ensure that the revised Personal Tutor policy is fully implemented in Faculties

2.2.4 To utilise the outputs from the National Student Survey and the University's Student Satisfaction Survey to improve the learning experience of students

2.3 To provide high quality and timely support for an increasingly diverse student body

2.3.1 To ensure that learning, teaching and assessment methods are inclusive, taking into account the needs of students from different cultural backgrounds

2.3.2 To ensure that the learning and teaching provisions of the University Disability Equality Scheme and action plan are fully implemented across the University

2.3.3 To ensure that all staff involved in facilitating student learning are provided with information and guidance about inclusive teaching practices

2.3.4 To develop further the support for part time, off campus and distance learning students

2.3.4 To support the development of the staff and student portal as a communication tool and over time to ensure this will become the personalised single point of access to information, learning environments and repositories

2.4 To provide enhanced opportunities to support the development of student employability and learning skills

2.4.1 To ensure that the opportunities available to develop and enhance employability and career management skills are appropriate to the needs of our students

2.4.2 To implement Personal Development Planning in all awards according to agreed timescales

2.4.3 To develop and implement an Information Literacy strategy and policy that will enable Staffordshire University students to develop the skills of independent information searching, evaluation and utilisation using all available sources of information and appropriate technologies

2.4.4 To establish a central facility to provide enhanced opportunities for student academic skills support

2.5 To ensure that assessment practices provide effective opportunities for the support of student learning

2.5.1 To undertake a review of assessment practices across the University including a focus on the balance between summative assessment and formative assessment/feedback

2.5.2 Investigate how best to deter/combat plagiarism by students and to ensure that good practice is disseminated widely

3. Enhancing and Developing Teaching

To support the University's commitment to professional high standards and customer satisfaction, we will ensure that all staff involved in the facilitation of student learning are given sufficient opportunities to develop their abilities, share good practice and celebrate their achievements.

3.1 To provide high quality structured professional development opportunities for all staff involved in teaching and the support of student learning

3.1.1 To formalise policies to support the development of learning and teaching

3.1.2 To ensure that all staff involved in the teaching/facilitation of student learning have access to accredited programmes to support their development

3.1.3 To provide flexible delivery of accredited programmes by utilising blended learning approaches

3.1.4 To develop a framework of accredited CPD courses working as pilot with the Higher Education Academy

3.1.5 To ensure that all staff involved in teaching HE in FE are supported in their development by formalising the programme of CPD opportunities for Associate Lecturers in SURF colleges

3.1.6 To provide regular staff development briefings and workshops to address key learning and teaching priorities

3.2 To provide appropriate opportunities for staff involved in teaching and the support of student learning to reflect on and enhance their professional practice

3.2.1 To develop further the appraisal process through the incorporation of HE Academy teaching standards

3.2.2 To provide an effective Peer Observation programme and to monitor on an annual basis the faculty application of the Peer Observation Policy

3.2.3 To encourage a critically reflective approach to own development in order to improve the student learning experience

3.2.4 To embed further the development of learning and teaching within discipline specific contexts

3.3 To recognise and reward excellence in teaching/facilitation of student learning

3.3.1 Ensuring that all Faculties, appropriate Services and partner colleges are actively engaged in the University Learning and Teaching Fellowship Scheme

3.3.2 To develop the community of Learning and Teaching Fellows by ensuring that they are active champions of learning, teaching and assessment practices within their Faculties/Services and across the University

3.3.3 To sustain the support for the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme and to review the University scheme in the context of the revised NTFS

3.3.4 To allocate mentoring responsibilities to staff who are excellent practitioners in learning and teaching

3.3.4 To facilitate the secondment of high performing staff onto specialist projects

3.3.5 To explore how, within the context of the National Pay Framework, achievement in teaching and /or the facilitation of learning could be included in the awarding of accelerated progression or contribution payments

4. Research Informed Teaching (RiT)

The University recognises the importance of the reciprocal relationship between teaching and research in enhancing the students' learning experience. In the University Research and Enterprise Strategy, for example, it is stated that applied research activity will underpin the student experience through its support of learning and teaching, and many staff already make good use of their research in the teaching context. During the period of this Learning and Teaching and Assessment strategy the RiT nexus will be embedded at University, Faculty and subject level. This will be developed within an inclusive framework that recognises the value of various types of scholarship (of discovery, application, integration and teaching).

4.1 To identify how Staffordshire University defines and implements the research informed teaching nexus

4.1.1 To develop and implement a University strategy and action plan for RiT

4.1.2 To participate in a benchmarking project with another institution(s) to analyse methods of implementing the RiT nexus

4.2 To develop ways of integrating and embedding research into the learning environment to enhance the student experience

4.2.1 To fund a range of projects at University, Faculty and subject levels to contribute to supporting the enhancement of practice and encourage the development of a community of practice around RiT

4.2.2 To support and encourage staff to develop approaches to teaching that are research informed

4.2.3 To ensure that the RiT nexus is embedded in appropriate University structures, policies and procedures

4.3 To disseminate and celebrate both staff and student success stories in the area of RiT

4.3.1 To establish a range of opportunities at both University and Faculty level to ensure that effective dissemination takes place

4.3.2 To establish an annual undergraduate conference to enable students to

4.4 To ensure that RiT initiatives and projects are effectively evaluated and underpinned by pedagogic research

4.4.1 Utilising the expertise of the University-based Institute for Education Policy Research to ensure that appropriate evaluation takes place

5. Partnership Working and Civic Engagement

As a distributed University we will continue to identify, and engage proactively with, a range of partners who will contribute to the enhancement of the University's educational mission. In addition we will extend the opportunities we provide to our students to be involved in civic engagement and service-learning activities with a range of partners both to enable students to develop generic skills, and enhance the quality of life in disadvantaged sections of the community.

5.1 To play a lead role in the development and implementation of key regional educational partnerships

5.1.1 To develop further the role of Staffordshire University Regional Federation (SURF) in the provision of innovative approaches to the delivery of higher education

5.1.2 To play a key role in the Staffordshire, Shropshire, Stoke on Trent, Telford and Wrekin Lifelong Learning Network in facilitating the progression of vocational learners into and through higher education

5.1.3 To implement a framework that will ensure that the University Quarter Educational Vision, with its focus on 'education-led regeneration', is appropriately embedded in University, Faculty and Service plans

5.2 To provide enhanced opportunities for students to take part in civic engagement activities

5.2.1 To build on the success of the HEACF-funded student and staff volunteering initiative based in Sponte

5.2.1 To develop the ethos and practice of Service-learning as a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities

6. Learning Infrastructure

We recognise the central importance of the learning environment and infrastructure in providing high quality learning opportunities for our students. During the planning period we will review the fitness for purpose of learning spaces within the institution. This will involve, in particular, a focus on the need to develop more flexible learning spaces that are responsive to developments in student-led and blended learning. In addition, during the period 2006-10, the University will implement the Information Services Plan 'Creating the Integrated University' which in terms of learning and teaching contains important commitments relating to personalised and individualised learning experiences.

6.1 To plan, develop and maintain the physical environment and infrastructure with sufficient flexibility to meet the changing needs of students and staff

6.1.1 To provide supported and technologically enabled learning environments of all kinds (physical and virtual) where learning information and services are embedded, delivered flexibly and "just in time"

6.1.2 To ensure that buildings and learning spaces are re-purposed to fit the development of a Flexible Learning Area model across the institution providing facilitation for individual, group and ad hoc learning. This development will be supported through a number of permanent and short term advisory and development groups including a learning environment sub-group of Campus Management Team

6.2 To ensure that planning for developments in Communication and Information Technology are informed by academic practice and the changing patterns of learning and teaching

6.2.1 To ensure progress is made towards an individualised learning experience by the interoperation of all Communication and IT systems impacting on the learning experience

6.2.2 To support and advise on the creation of a personalised staff and student portal which delivers information, learning environments and resources enabled by access through a "single sign on"

6.2.3 To safeguard the University's investment in learning content by implementing a learning and research gateway / repository which will promote ease of access and re-use and re-purposing of content

THE STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY REGIONAL FEDERATION (SURF)

AGREEMENT (amended December 2005)

SURF membership begins when this Agreement has been signed by Staffordshire University's Academic Board and the corporations of each college.

1. MEMBERSHIP OF SURF

Membership of the HEFCE approved funding consortium

Burton College
Cannock Chase Technical College
City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College
Leek College of Further Education and School of Art
Newcastle-under-Lyme College
Rodbaston College
Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology
Stafford College
Staffordshire University **(lead institution)**
Stoke-on-Trent College
Tamworth and Lichfield College
Walford and North Shropshire College

2. AIM OF SURF

To plan and provide quality assured higher education to widen participation and facilitate progression and support the economic strategy for people in Staffordshire and Shropshire and adjacent areas, through collaboration and partnership.

3. OBJECTIVES

3.1 To extend and widen participation in higher education.

3.2 To develop higher education provision that is accessible and socially inclusive, based on student demand.

3.3 To support the Regional Economic Strategy by addressing skills shortages through work with employers, employers' organisations and Sector Skills Councils.

3.4 To establish learning pathways between further and higher education within the National Qualifications Framework.

3.5 To develop staff through the dissemination of good practice in curriculum design, learning and teaching assessment, quality assurance, student support, administration of provision and CPD.

3.6 To maximise the learning and teaching potential through e-learning across the SURF consortium.

3.7 To work together to provide high quality support for students so as to promote high student recruitment, retention, achievement and progression.

- 3.8 To work together to maximise funding and marketing opportunities for widening participation in higher education.
- 3.9 To share SURF's consortium experience of collaborative working within the wider educational community.
- 3.10 To maintain SURF's position as a leading consortium in FE/HE collaboration, undertaking innovative curriculum development.

4. TERMS OF SURF AGREEMENT

4.1 Duration

- 4.1.1 The SURF Agreement commenced at 1/4/2000
- 4.1.2 The SURF Management Board (in the remainder of this document, referred to as the SURF Board) will review the Agreement after 18 months' operation and every three years thereafter. The results of the review will be reported to governing bodies, Corporations, Academic Boards or senior academic committees of all member institutions.

4.2 Responsibility for Management of SURF

The SURF consortium will be managed by the SURF Board:

4.2.1 Membership of the Management Board

One representative from each College (normally the Principal or nominated representative).

Two representatives from the University, one of whom should be a member of the University Leadership Team.

The University Vice-Chancellor will chair the SURF Board.

The University will provide administrative support for the SURF Board, its committees and working groups.

The quoracy of the SURF Board will be two thirds of members.

4.2.2. Terms of Reference of the Management Board

- a. To determine the strategic direction of the SURF consortium
- b. To establish the process, criteria and performance indicators to review and evaluate the operation of the SURF consortium
- c. To agree a framework for the allocation of student numbers between members
- d. To agree any proposals to HEFCE for additional student numbers

- e. To determine the financial arrangements under which the SURF consortium operates
- f. To receive reports from the SURF Management Committee on the work of sub-committees and working parties. (See Annex A for the Terms of Reference of the SURF Management Committee)

4.3 Withdrawal of Partners from the Agreement

- 4.3.1** Any College member who wishes to withdraw from membership of the SURF consortium must give twelve months' notice from the beginning of the following academic year unless agreed otherwise by the SURF Board.
- 4.3.2** The University must give two years' notice to all college members from the beginning of the following academic year of intention to withdraw from the SURF consortium.
- 4.3.3** Any student numbers allocated to SURF since its establishment would normally be retained by SURF but may be retained by the withdrawing College subject to agreement by HEFCE and the SURF Board.
- 4.3.4** Where the University decides to withdraw, student numbers and funding will stay with Colleges subject to HEFCE agreement.
- 4.3.5** Any application for withdrawal from the University or any Colleges that are party to this Agreement must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the SURF Board that appropriate arrangements have been made for students to complete their programme of studies.
- 4.3.6** As the lead institution, Staffordshire University will, with the agreement of the SURF Board, withhold funding from any consortium member who defaults on their obligations and responsibilities under this Agreement.

4.4 Addition of new members

- 4.4.1** Applications for membership will be considered by the SURF Board as a whole and will require a two-thirds majority vote of members in favour.

4.5 Resolution of disputes

- 4.5.1** The SURF Management Committee will aim to arrive at a consensus by a process of consultation in all its decision-making. Where a vote is necessary decisions will be taken by a majority of the SURF Management Committee in attendance.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS OF MEMBERS

5.1 Student Numbers

- 5.1.1** The SURF Board will recognise the continuation of existing franchising arrangements between its FE College members and HE institutions other than Staffordshire University.
- 5.1.2** The SURF Management Committee will enter into an open planning process and an annual planning exercise to:
- (i) set HE enrolment targets in each institution on a programme/course basis for the next academic year;
 - (ii) agree any bids for additional students numbers and
 - (iii) agree virement for under and over-recruitment as far as possible between SURF members.
- 5.1.3** It is the intention that all College members will channel the expansion of student numbers and funding through the SURF consortium except where otherwise agreed by the SURF Board. Such exceptions may include:-
- (i) insufficient subject specialism among SURF members
 - (ii) a strategic need, from the perspective of the College, for continuity with existing partners
 - (iii) growth funding is not available within the consortium

An annual review of the HE provision delivered by members in partnership with other HEIs will be undertaken by the SURF Management Committee.

- 5.1.4** The allocation of HEFCE contract student numbers by the University to the SURF members will be agreed with the SURF Board each year. The University will seek to protect the total numbers allocated to the SURF members and any reduction in aggregate HEFCE contract numbers will only be made on the basis of a mutual agreement between the University and the SURF Board.

5.2 Student Admissions, Retention and Achievement and Progression

- 5.2.1** It is the responsibility of each member to meet the student recruitment target for each programme agreed by the SURF Management Committee.
- 5.2.2** The University will manage the UCAS admissions and applications process for all programmes within the framework of the SURF UCAS handbook entry.
- 5.2.3** The University will manage the interface between SURF members and UCAS within the framework of the SURF UCAS handbook entry.

- 5.2.4** Each College will be responsible for making prompt returns of information about student enrolment and withdrawals to the University and each will name an officer responsible for making such returns.
- 5.2.5** The University will undertake an audit of College member HE data systems every two years.
- 5.2.6** The University will provide the SURF Management Committee with annual data on enrolments, widening participation indicators, student retention, achievement and progression.

5.3 Financial Arrangements

- 5.3.1** HEFCE grant income for all SURF students will be paid to the University in the first instance.
- 5.3.2** The tuition fee income for full-time SURF programmes will be collected by the University. The tuition fee income for part-time SURF programmes will be collected by the Colleges. Colleges may set the level of tuition fees for part-time SURF programmes below the assumed fee level used by HEFCE to calculate grant income, however HEFCE assumed fee levels will be used for the calculation of the University's retention and any clawback of income as set out in clauses 5.3.3 and 5.3.5 below.
- 5.3.3** The SURF Board will agree the proportion of HEFCE Grant Income and total assumed tuition fee income which will be retained by the University for an agreed range of services.
- 5.3.4** The University will distribute to the Colleges the balance of the HEFCE grant income and full-time tuition fees less the University's retained funds (as set out in clause 5.3.3 above). This balance will be distributed monthly, in line with HEFCE payments and in accordance with the proportion of students and the banding of programmes attributable to each College.
- 5.3.5** The Edexcel registration fees for SURF programmes operated under the University's Edexcel licence will be collected by the University and paid directly to Edexcel.
- 5.3.6** Access Funds will be paid to the University by HEFCE and distributed to College members according to an agreed formula calculated on the same basis that these funds are allocated by the Funding Council.
- 5.3.7** The SURF Management Committee will receive details of any special funding allocations from HEFCE that is attributable to the programmes delivered in the Colleges.
- 5.3.8** If a student withdraws before completing a programme there will be a pro rata adjustment of the fee income to the college. Where the University does not have to pay back funds to HEFCE this money will form a SURF development fund.

5.4 Complaints and Appeals

- 5.4.1** Each College will have its own Complaints Procedure and student complaints will be handled through these procedures until they have been exhausted.
- 5.4.2** The SURF Board will seek to harmonise the Complaints Procedures of individual members, drawing on best practice, where appropriate.
- 5.4.3** The SURF Board will monitor, on an annual basis, student complaints of an academic nature which have been through the College members' Complaints Procedures, through the SURF Quality Committee.
- 5.4.4** Where students are on Staffordshire University Awards the University Appeals Procedure will apply.

5.5 Staff Recruitment and Development

- 5.5.1** College members are responsible for their own staff appointments.
- 5.5.2** In line with the QAA Code of Practice the University, as the Awarding institution, should be able to satisfy itself that staff engaging in delivering or supporting a collaborative programme are appropriately qualified for their role, and that a partner organisation has effective measures to monitor and assure the proficiency of such staff.
- 5.5.3** The SURF consortium will play an active role in the provision of staff development opportunities, although staff development is primarily the responsibility of each member.
- 5.5.4** Members will waive tuition fees for all their award-bearing programmes for all staff members on a reciprocal basis, other than in exceptional circumstances where full cost recovery is necessary.
- 5.5.5** College staff teaching on University awards delivered in SURF colleges will be designated as Associate Lecturers of the University.
- 5.5.6** Colleges will have access to SURF staff development activities. These will include those organised by University faculties and by SURF centrally and where appropriate, jointly by staff in colleges and the University.

5.6 Student Support

- 5.6.1** Individual members are responsible for the level of student support provided to students on programmes in their institutions.
- 5.6.2** For members, the University will provide the following:
 - a. Access to University library and learning resource information and electronic sources.
 - b. Access to the University's IT facilities.

- c Access to Careers and Employability information e-guidance via the website.
- d. Access to quality care and education services for children 0 - 5 years old.
- e. Access to the Chaplaincy.
- f. Access to the Film Theatre and Sports Centres.
- g. Access to the Students' Union and its Advice Centre.
- h. Management of the HEFCE Access to Learning Funds administration and returns to HEFCE.

6. QUALITY ASSURANCE

6.1 Principles

- 6.1.1** The University is responsible for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name.
- 6.1.2** The University is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the quality of learning opportunities offered through collaborative arrangement is adequate to enable a student to achieve the academic standard required for its award.
- 6.1.3** However, each consortium member is directly responsible for the quality of the learning opportunities of its HE programmes, for the achievement of standards, and for putting right any significant weaknesses.
- 6.1.4** The University is committed to supporting SURF Colleges in 'setting and maintaining expectations in quality and standards'.
- 6.1.5** The SURF Board is committed to acting as a united body in all those aspects of quality assurance where such an approach helps to maintain standards and improve the quality of provision for students in any of the member institutions. It will seek to harmonise procedures and practices wherever appropriate.
- 6.1.6** In any instance where the HE provision in a subject in a member institution is judged by QAA to be unsatisfactory or failing quality, the SURF Management Committee will exercise responsibility, through the SURF Quality Committee, for the development of an appropriate Action Plan for the subject provision in the constituent College.
- 6.1.7** Responsibility for the termination of any HE provision within SURF Colleges which is deemed to remain 'unsatisfactory' lies with the SURF Board.
- 6.1.8** Ultimate authority for any Staffordshire University award lies with its Academic Board.

6.2 Processes

- 6.2.1** The SURF Management Committee will establish a SURF Quality Committee comprising senior staff responsible for quality assurance in all Colleges who will share good practice and report to the Board on progress towards the harmonisation of quality assurance processes and practices.
- 6.2.2** The SURF Quality Committee will assume responsibility for operational oversight of validation, monitoring and review procedures for all SURF sub-degree HE provision.
- 6.2.3** All procedures, terms of reference and requirements have been elaborated within the Quality Assurance Handbook: SURF Collaborative Provision.
- 6.2.4** Staff development in the area of quality assurance is recognised as an area for mutual support and exchange. The SURF Quality Committee will assume responsibility for developing a programme of appropriate staff development activities.

6.3 Copyright

The following conditions apply for the duration of the SURF Agreement. Where content is produced for SURF courses, copyright resides with the University (where it has either produced the content or funded its production) or the producing College (where the college has funded production). The copyright-holding institution shall license such SURF material it holds copyright on for use by all SURF members for educational use in perpetuity.

APPENDICES TO THE AGREEMENT

1. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE SURF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ANNEX A

ANNEX A

SURF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference

1. Overall Responsibility

The SURF Management Committee will be responsible for:

- i) The implementation of strategies agreed by the SURF Board
- ii) Agreeing and implementing all operational matters
- iii) Recommending strategic developments to the SURF Board
- iv) Establish sub committees and working parties as appropriate

2. Areas of Activity

2.1 Planning

- i) One year Delivery Plan /agree student target figures
- ii) Agree a 5 year development plan for new course provision and other areas of activity within the strategic framework agreed by the SURF Board
- iii) To agree the allocation of student numbers to each College within the strategic framework agreed by the SURF Board
- iv) Monitor progress against the development plan and instigate appropriate action

2.2 Quality Assurance

- i) Set the framework for foundation degrees that operate under the SURF Agreement and other curriculum developments.
- ii) Identify good practice and ensure it is disseminated across SURF members.
- iii) Receive reports from the SURF Quality Committee and approve recommendations for action.

2.3 Wider Activities

- i) Advise the SURF Board on wider developments including attracting external funds and expanding the range of activities offered by the partnership.

Membership

The SURF Management Committee will be chaired by a college principal. Staffordshire University will have two representatives. Each college principal will nominate a senior member of staff to represent the college. In addition, ex officio appointments will be made to the SURF Management Committee where appropriate.

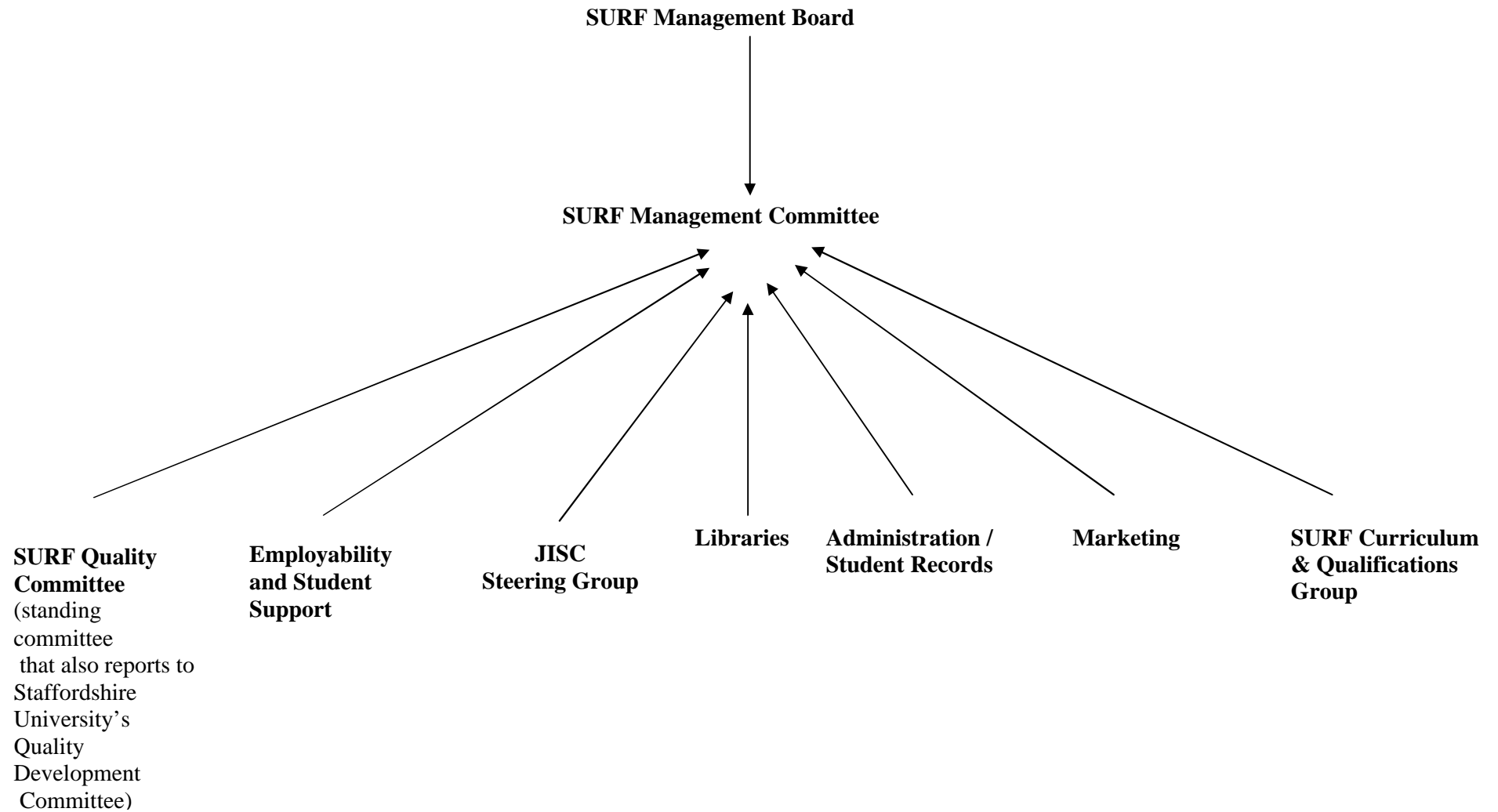
SURF Management Committee 2005/2006

Chair Keith Norris (Burton College)
Jon Vincent (Burton College)
David Jenkins (Staffordshire University)
Richard Benefer (Staffordshire University)
Steve Wyn Williams (Staffordshire University)
Allan Howells (Staffordshire University)
Richard Dunnill (Staffordshire University)
Peter Glennie (Staffordshire Learning & Skills Council)
Louise McMillan (Cannock Chase Technical College)
Paul Mangnall (City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College)
Pete Turpie (Leek College)
Colin Burkes (Newcastle under Lyme College)
Norman Houston (Rodbaston College)
Jonathan Davis (Shrewsbury College of Arts & Technology)
Anne Piercy (Stafford College)
Graham Moore (Stoke on Trent College)
Amanda Sawford (Tamworth & Lichfield College)
Andrew Roberts (Walford & North Shropshire College)

Meetings

The SURF Management Committee will meet at least three times in each academic year, timed to relate to SURF Board meetings.

The terms of reference of the SURF Management Committee will be reviewed every two years.



Mark Stiles
Professor of Technology Supported Learning
Head of Learning Development and Innovation
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June 12 2006

Dear Professor Stiles

SURF WBL-WAY

Foundation Direct offers its full support to your bid that builds on your existing SURF WBL project. Should your bid be successful we believe this would strengthen the collaboration we have just started with you to the benefit of our foundation degree and our learning at work students on our Partnership Programme. The University of Portsmouth has a rich tradition in work-based learning having pioneered developments from the early 1990s and we believe that this would mean we could also offer support to development of this project should your bid be successful.

Yours sincerely



Frank Lyons

Director of Foundation Direct



HarvestRoad.

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16 June 2006

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Phone +44 (0)1785 353647
FAX +44 (0)1785 353482
Email m.j.stiles@staffs.ac.uk

Dear Mark,

Proposed Work-Based Learning Project – HarvestRoad Support

Reference: Proposed Work-Based Learning Project: SURF WBL-WAY dated 6 June '06

In accordance with the planned research partnership, currently being finalised between Staffordshire University and HarvestRoad Ltd, we would be pleased to participate in the proposed Work-Based Learning Project (SURF WBL-WAY) as outlined in the Reference.

Details of the participation would be determined in line with the scope of the proposed research agreement.

Yours faithfully,

Grame Barty
Managing Director
Harvestroad Limited



Professor Moofik Al-Tai
Professor of Electrical Technology Education
Staffordshire University
Faculty of Computing, Engineering and Technology
P.O. Box 334
Beaconside
Stafford ST16 9DG

20th June 2006

Dear Moofik

SURF WBL-WAY Project

I am writing to confirm that SEMTA the Sector Skills Council for science, engineering, manufacturing technologies and mathematics supports this project. Work-based learning is currently undervalued and underused by the HE sector, and your project will make an important contribution by bringing work-based learning into use within HE for the development professional engineers.

SEMTA are keen to encourage universities and colleges to explore ways of developing work-based programmes with employers.

SEMTA will also be pleased to play its role as the work-based learning champion and will be available to advise your project partners on employers needs within our sectors.

Yours sincerely

John Harris

Higher Education Manager

14 June 2006



SHREWSBURY COLLEGE
OF ARTS & TECHNOLOGY

Mark Stiles
Professor of Technology Supported Learning,
Head of Learning Development & Innovation,
Information Services,
Staffordshire University,
Beaconside,
Stafford,
ST18 0AD

Dear Mark

Shrewsbury College of Arts & Technology has been involved in three major SURF projects funded by JISC in the last three years which have benefited the College in terms of output materials and development. This association has added strength to the SURF partnership.

Our inclusion in this next proposed project would be beneficial for a number of reasons, including support for the College ILT Strategy in generating materials, collaboration and use of a variety of learning platforms. An aspect of the work development is to support work-based learners on Higher Education courses delivered in Further Education Institutions and this will greatly assist the learning material generation for the Foundation Degrees available from September 2006.

The projects give the college and associated institutions a high profile in both the HE and FE sectors nationally and raises awareness of the good and sharing practices within cross-institution partnerships.

Yours Sincerely



Len Tildsley
Director of Information & Planning



Our Ref: GTF/JB

Reply to

Burslem Campus

19th June 2006

Direct Line

01782 603127

email: gordon.foulkes@stokecoll.ac.uk

FAXED TO 01785 353482

Prof M J Styles
Staffordshire University
Beaconside
Stafford

Cauldon Campus

Stoke Road
Shelton
Stoke on Trent
ST4 2DG
Telephone (01782) 208208
Facsimile (01782) 603504

Dear Prof Styles

Individualised Support for Work-Based Foundation Degree Learners

Burslem Campus

Moorland Road
Burslem
Stoke on Trent
ST6 1JJ
Telephone (01782) 208208
Facsimile (01782) 603103

This letter is our formal expression of interest in the above mentioned project.

The proposed project builds on our previous collaborative projects as part of the SURF consortium and dovetails significantly with the College's implementation of strategies geared to engagement, support and retention of work based learners in all scenarios and situations.

We believe it will support the ongoing work of the College in developing staff skills in supporting delivery in the workplace as well as allowing the development of a collaborative and reflective approach to our long term work with the local business community, guiding development of programmes and support strategies appropriate to the needs of a diverse workforce requiring ongoing reskilling and personal and professional development.

<http://www.stokecollege.ac.uk>

Minicom: (01782) 603508

Should our expression of interest and subsequent application prove successful we look forward to working with you on the proposed project.

Principal &
Chief Executive
Graham Moore O.B.E.
BSc (Econ), MA, FRCSA

Yours sincerely

Dr Gordon T Foulkes
Director of Quality & Development

"Lifelong learning and achievement for the whole community"



Wolverhampton Science Park
Wolverhampton
WV10 9RU
United Kingdom

Tel: 01902 824437
Fax: 01902 824438
E-mail: Aimhigherwm@wlv.ac.uk
Website: www.aimhigherwm.org

West Midlands Regional Director
Dr N Vivien Wylie MA DPhil (Oxon)

Dear Mark,

I am writing on behalf of Aimhigher West Midlands to support your work-based learning project entitled SURF WBL-WAY.

As you know David Round and I have been working with training providers and WBL tutors to provide materials to help work-based learning students to progress from Level 3 to higher education. Our latest initiative is a CD with interactive games and information to help them understand what may be involved in higher education, and give them the confidence to apply.

We have conducted at least seven focus groups with students over the last two years and it is obvious that they do not want to leave work to study and that time is at a premium for these young men and women.

The materials you propose would facilitate the learning of these groups in a way which is totally appropriate. If this bid is successful we look forward to working with you to share freely our materials and help to create new ones to help this group and their tutors. They have a very low level of progression to higher education at the moment, but we have seen from case studies that many more people working at this level are capable of achieving in higher education with this sort of support.

We wish you every success with the proposal because I have a firm belief that the results of such a project could enhance so many lives. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely



Ann Brownless
Aimhigher West Midlands
Bridging Consultant and Programme 2 Adviser (WBL)

Information Services

Liz Hart
BA(Hons), DipLib,
MBCS, FCLIP

Staffordshire University
PO Box 335
Beaconside
STAFFORD ST16 9DQ
United Kingdom

20th June 2006

JISC Executive
Northavon House
Coldharbour Lane
Bristol
BS16 1QD

To Whom it may concern

Re: SURF WBL-WAY

I would like to confirm Staffordshire University's strong institutional support for the above proposed project.

Work-based Learning, ELearning and the growth of the SURF (Staffordshire University Regional Federation) Consortium's portfolio of Foundation Degrees form major components of the University's current and future business plans and core strategies. The work proposed is similarly part of those plans and will proceed even without JISC funding, and I would therefore stress that the level of institutional contribution indicated in the proposal is both realistic and achievable.

Previous SURF-based projects funded by JISC have considerably strengthened the partnerships making up the SURF consortium and we expect the proposed work to have the same benefits.

Yours faithfully



L HART
Director of Information Services

JV/MP/ASS/855

15 June 2006

Professor M Stiles
Head of Learning Development and Innovation
Information Services
Staffordshire University
Beaconside
STAFFORD
ST18 0AD

Dear Professor Stiles,

SURF WBL-WAY – A WORK-BASED LEARNING GATEWAY FOR THE SURF CONSORTIUM

I confirm that Burton College will support this project, should your bid be successful. The development of HE provision in Burton upon Trent is very important to us, as the College is currently building an HE centre to improve on what is already a strong involvement with SURF HE provision. The project relates positively to our strategic plans, particularly in respect of HE and ILT.

As with our involvement with the present JISC SURF WBL project, I am happy to commit resources and contribute to the project. This would take the form of staff support, 0.5 FTE plus ancillary support and accommodation for the 1.0 FTE for which funding is sought.

On behalf of Burton College, I wish you every success with your bid.

Yours sincerely



Jon Vincent
Deputy Principal

From the Office of the Deputy Principal Main Tel: (01283) 494400 Fax: (01283) 494801

Principal & Chief Executive: Mr Keith Norris MA MSc MCIOS Deputy Principals: Mr Jon Vincent BA (Hons) PGCE
Lichfield Street, Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire, DE14 3RL
Tel: (01283) 494400 Fax: (01283) 494800 www.burtoncollege.ac.uk





19 June 2006

Professor Mark Stiles
Head of Learning Development and Innovation
Staffordshire University
Beaconside
Stafford
ST18 0AD

**Engineering Council
(UK)**
10 Maltravers Street
London WC2R 3ER

Tel 020 7240 7891
Fax 020 7379 5586

info@engc.org.uk
www.engc.org.uk

Dear Professor Stiles

SURF WBL-WAY Project

I am writing to confirm that Engineering Council UK supports this project. We believe that work-based learning has a significant role to play in the education and development of professional engineers, and we are keen to encourage universities and colleges to explore ways of developing appropriate programmes with employers. The success of such programmes is however likely to be dependent upon appropriate support being available for all parties involved. This includes the facility to access high quality information and resources. The SURF WBL-WAY project would provide this, and we are therefore happy to support it and to assist in the development of those aspects of it which relate to engineering.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Shearman', with a horizontal line underneath.

Richard Shearman
Deputy Director

Professor Mark Stiles
Head of Learning Development
Information Services
Staffordshire University
The Octagon
Beaconside
Stafford ST18 0DP

19 June 2006

Dear Mark,

Thank you for sending the details of your work-based learning project: SURF WBL-WAY.

I can confirm that Foundation Degree Forward will be interested in supporting this project as it develops and in dissemination of its outcomes. The QAA FD Review indicates that one of the most significant areas for development within Foundation Degrees remains the enhancement of more consistent practice in developing flexible work-based learning opportunities that are integral to the programme of study. FDF would see your project as supporting our wider strategy to stimulate more innovative approaches to work-based learning within Foundation Degrees, especially in the context of Further Education Colleges where resources and the technical infrastructure can be a limiting factor.

We also support the links made in the project between widening participation and work-based learning through provision of more flexible delivery that genuinely is attuned to the needs of both employers and employees.

FDF is also supporting complementary initiatives involving the New Engineering Foundation and the Engineering Technology Board and your project would 'fit' very appropriately within a co-ordinated strategy, given your other supporting organisations.

I hope that you are successful in getting this project off-the-ground and we will be happy to support it.

Yours sincerely



Derek Longhurst