



Project Document Cover Sheet

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Partner Institutions			
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Programme Manager	Sarah Knight		

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1.0	19/04/10	Issued to Steering Group and project team for comment
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1.2	21/6/10	Issued for release after minor update

Project Name	<i>Supporting Responsive Curricula – Manchester Metropolitan University</i>
Report compiled by	<i>Peter Bird</i>
With contributions from	<i>Mark Stubbs and SRC project team</i>
Reporting period	November 09 – April 10

Section One: Summary

This phase of the project covers the transition from reviewing existing practice (baselining) to starting the process of developing a more responsive curriculum. This transition encompasses two key elements of the project: development and modifications to course units in response to feedback from employers, professional bodies and students, and changes to the curriculum design process through new programme approval and modification procedures. Dealing firstly with the subject strands, the highlights are:

- We have engaged in a substantive trial of Pebblepad within our Physiotherapy department and are undertaking a full range of validation activities including getting students to keep video diaries and blogs on their usage.
- In Accounting and Finance we have increased our range of professional body exemption and achieved accreditation to offer AAT (Association of Accounting Technicians) qualifications to undergraduate students, possibly the first UK university to offer this.
- In Law, we have introduced the first work placements into the Legal Practice Course and implemented changes to units based on employer feedback.
- In Creative Digital, we have run another ProDev day joining local employers and students and developed a set of competencies for digital marketing jobs.

For changes to the overall curriculum design process, SRC project deadlines have slipped due to by delays in the proposed overhaul of the Programme Approval process and creation of a supporting academic database. Delays are largely due to an understandable diversion of QA colleagues' time into last Autumn's Institutional Audit. However MMU's, Directorate and Academic Development Committee have now approved a wide-ranging academic change initiative for Enhancing the Quality and Assessment for Learning (EQAL), which aims to achieve a transformative improvement in the quality of academic life at MMU for staff and students, with major effect for undergraduate provision from Autumn 2011 followed by subsequent effect on taught postgraduate provision. This will be achieved through:

- New ways of delivering learning and academic provision that satisfy the expectations of students and staff much more efficiently and effectively, significantly reducing current effort and frustration;
- Transforming the complex and burdensome nature of current course structures and processes towards simplicity with high quality;
- A consequent reduction of workload for both staff and students in order to free time for more productive activity.

There are four key strands of work within the initiative, each with an expert leader, along with a broader range of contributors working on particular projects and tasks within the strand:

- Key Strand 1: Curriculum Structure and Delivery - This strand focuses on the structure and delivery pattern of Modules (Units) and Programmes. This will enable a revised course provision to be offered to all new and current undergraduates in September 2011.
- Key Strand 2: Organisational Infrastructure. Strand 2 focuses on the effectiveness, efficiency and integration of systems underpinning student-facing processes. Existing

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work on key infrastructure projects will be joined up with the academic changes to achieve much greater simplicity, quality and reliability. Key elements in this are co-ordinated timetabling and room allocation; common assessment database and processes; common module database and course information; and effective information on student engagement and progress. A key feature of the proposal will be the establishment of a single academic database that will provide a link through the portal to all modules. These will be recorded in a standard format matched to the standardised module structure.

- Key Strand 3: Seamless, Personalised Student Experience - Strand 3 will work to achieve further improvement in the ways in which we support both learning and the broader student experience through online interaction and other technologies, linking closely to the infrastructure of systems and processes addressed in Strand 2.
- Key Strand 4: Quality Assurance and Enhancement of Provision - Strand 4 will achieve significant reform of quality assurance processes to achieve a more effective and less burdensome system with a real commitment to enhancement. Flexibility and responsiveness will be improved while maintaining standards.

The EQAL initiative has a far wider goal of transformation than envisaged through the SRC project although it includes key elements of SRC in the reform of quality assurance, production of a central curriculum database and the embedding of an employability curriculum framework. Aligning with EQAL allows SRC to pursue the responsive curricula agenda on an institutional scale and offers the potential to share results across the sector which will inform other institutions' strategies for responsiveness. EQAL will benefit from SRC in providing independent validation of the new processes and systems and input from other projects within the JISC curriculum design area. The sector will benefit from the joining up of SRC and EQAL through outputs such as requirements for an academic database, a deliverable not envisaged in the original SRC vision.

Section Two: Activities and Progress

Work Package Area	Latest Status
Programme Approval	Taking outputs from baselining and undertaking full review of process with the aim of piloting new processes within 2010/2011 academic year and introducing for all undergraduate courses for 2011/2012. Using process modelling to help with creation of requirements for new academic database.
IT , E-portfolio and Competencies	Considered as part of learning technologies review. There will not be a single E-portfolio approach for the university with multiple approaches being allowed although we will continue to support Pebblepad where there is a clear requirement. We are also looking at how we can record competencies within the proposed new academic database.
Digital Creative	We continue to interview employers to gather requirements but have defined competencies for a number of "digital marketing" roles and are now mapping those to existing course units.
Physiotherapy	Actively trialling Pebblepad with undergraduate students and gathering research data through focus groups and students keeping blogs and video diaries.
Financial Services	Developed a new Masters in Financial Planning using feedback from baselining and have developed an AAT offering for undergraduates which 20 final year students will pilot this summer. We then plan to follow their employability outcomes after they graduate.
Law	Increasing opportunities for work placements within the LPC course and modifying

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	units as a result of employer/student feedback from those placements.
Validation	Updated plan (see project plan 2.0) to reflect more individual approaches within the subject strands requiring a more tailored validation approach.
Project Management	Held two steering group meetings (January and April 2010) and revised project plan to align with MMU EQAL initiative.

Section Three: Risks, Issues and Opportunities

Reviewing the risk section in the project plan, the main issues the project has been dealing with are organizational and technical, where organizational issues have been the timing of the Institutional Audit coupled with the uncertain funding outlook in HE, and technical issues have been a review of our learning technologies.

The organizational issues were reflected in the last interim report (October 09) which highlighted the delay to the PARM review and academic database, key elements of SRC if it is to have a transformational impact on the institution. In a sense, the visit by USQ last October acted as a catalyst to revive thinking about how to introduce institution-wide changes to curriculum design and development. At the same time the university executive were reviewing the way the university managed its curriculum and delivered it to students within the new funding constraints that were emerging. The EQAL initiative is the result of these discussions and promises a much wider change than envisaged by SRC. In that sense the risks have been reduced as transformational change is far likelier within this new initiative. Nevertheless there is a lot of work to do to achieve the objectives of EQAL by the start of the 2011/2012 academic year so risk remains.

On the technical side, the project started with the aim of using Pebblepad within all the four subject strands against a background where Pebblepad was the institution-wide e-portfolio solution. This approach has clearly changed as it has become clear from baselining that the views of students, employers, professional bodies and staff are extremely diverse in terms of E-portfolios and a single tool or approach is no longer assumed. Further trials will take place to gain a deeper understanding of requirements ahead of an E-Portfolio option appraisal exercise scheduled for January 2011 in the second phase of MMU's learning technologies review.

SRC has therefore decided to pursue a variety of approaches within the subject strands (including Pebblepad) which will potentially result in a richer set of outputs from the project. After all, there are already numerous Pebblepad case studies available via JISC and others, so potentially this change results in a more useful set of outputs for both the institution and sector as a whole.

Section Four: Outputs and Deliverables

<i>Output</i>	<i>Latest status</i>	<i>Outputs within reporting period</i>
<i>Map current curriculum against high-level skills/competence frameworks</i>	<i>Completed in Physio and mostly complete in Creative Digital. Employers and professional bodies not “engaging” with competencies in Law and Finance</i>	
<i>Approve, advertise and make available for enrolment at least eight course-units using refined electronic work-flow for validation and documentation</i>	<i>Courses already approved or undergoing approval in this academic year: Masters in Financial Planning, LPC electives in Housing and Welfare, AAT qualification offering.</i>	
<i>Create information, advice and guidance materials to support elective choice and help learners identify work placements and other opportunities to develop high-level competences</i>	<i>Work placements developed in Law (LPC) and AAT offering developed in Finance; The university is also developing an Employability Online website for all students which SRC will input to.</i>	
<i>Support learners in showcasing their talents in terms of the high-level skills and competencies desired by employers and professional bodies</i>	<i>Pebblepad trial active in Physiotherapy. Work starting in other areas later this year.</i>	

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<i>Develop a suitable representation for high-level skill and competence frameworks</i>	<i>Plan to hold workshop later this year to start aligning work on competencies</i>	
<i>Develop agile course validation and modification processes for responding to gaps in current curricula</i>	<i>Being considered as part of current PARM review project within EQAL umbrella.</i>	
<i>Devise an electronic workflow that supports validation and approval workflow and facilitates tagging, disaggregation and re-use of the course documentation produced</i>	<i>Development of workflows closely linked with PARM review which is feeding in requirements for academic database development</i>	
<i>Make policy recommendations to the institution on future developments to support flexible curriculum development.</i>	<i>Baselining has already helped shaped the institution's strategy resulting in EQAL initiative</i>	Announcement of EQAL
<i>Process models representing an agile curriculum development process</i>	<i>Process modelling expertise will be used within PARM review and academic database developments.</i>	
<i>Generic competencies that can be mapped to the curricula and have been developed through stakeholder discussion and input.</i>	<i>Starting to look at this and planning to hold workshops on the subject.</i>	
<i>Evaluation of how the project has improved responsiveness within MMU</i>	<i>Part of Evaluation plan for 2011/2012</i>	
<i>Requirements specification for an academic database which meets the needs of all the stakeholders</i>	<i>Being considered as part of development of academic database within EQAL initiative</i>	
<i>Develop measures of responsiveness</i>	<i>Plan to focus on this in this year's SRC mini-conference in November. Considering using external consultancy to facilitate.</i>	
<i>Institutional case study in how use of xcri and electronic work-flow methods has refined responsiveness of curriculum processes</i>		
<i>Guidance to learners on development and showcasing of high-level competences</i>	<i>In the plan for 2011.</i>	
<i>Models of engaging students, academics and employers</i>	<i>Continuing to develop through work in the different subject strands. ProDev days in Creative Digital is the best example of new practice.</i>	See blog entry on ProDev days at http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/src/

There have been no inputs to the design studio during this reporting period as most outputs are a work-in-progress. However MMU did give permission for the baseline report to be released for wider dissemination so perhaps this could be placed within design studio.

Section Five: Evaluation

Responding to the changes in the project plan, we have updated our validation plan to reflect on the different activities that will take place within the four subject strands (Accounting, Creative Digital, Law and Physiotherapy). This has required some tailoring of the validation plan rather than the uniform validation approach that was originally envisaged.

Following feedback on the last SRC interim report, we have included development of measures of responsiveness in the project plan and validation plan. There has been some work on this during baselining but it had not developed any specific measures. With the launch of EQAL, this re-focus on measures of responsiveness is timely as there is synergy with the need to develop measures by which the success of EQAL can be judged. Given the challenges of getting both senior and academic staff together to discuss these measures, we have decided to use this year's SRC mini-conference to focus on responsiveness, perhaps involving external help to facilitate and develop this.

Key forthcoming evaluation activities are given in the following table:

Area	Key questions	Methods
Physiotherapy	How can the idea of employability be truly embedded within a subject (e.g. when to introduce, how to gain acceptance by staff and students)?	Student blogs and video diary Student-led research Staff interviews
Creative digital	How can any analysis carried out (e.g. competency framework) best be used to actually make an impact? What would make these tools useful?	Blog review Staff interviews Employer interviews Student focus groups
Accounting and finance	Is the impact of external accreditation on employability worth the additional workload and impact on staff?	Meeting with accreditation agency (AAT) Staff interviews Student interviews Follow up telephone interviews
Law	How can placements be made of greatest value to students and employers? How can employers most effectively input into the curriculum design and validation process?	Student questionnaires Employer interviews Staff interviews Student focus groups
Validation processes	What are the institutional barriers to change?	Interviews with key staff Analysis of meeting minutes Analysis of process documentation
Technology	What are the barriers to adoption of PDP technology?	Interviews with key staff Interviews with students
Responsiveness	In what ways has responsiveness changed?	Interviews with key staff Interviews with students SRC mini-conference Synthesis of evaluations

Activities within Physiotherapy, Creative Digital, Accounting and Finance and Law are currently taking place and will have interim results available by September this year although these evaluations will continue until the project completes. Activities on validation processes, technology and responsiveness will mainly take place in 2011 once EQAL has delivered major changes in the way the curriculum is delivered. Note that SRC is not undertaking a complete validation of the EQAL initiative but will instead focus on the impact of both SRC and EQAL within the four subject stand areas. Clearly EQAL will have an impact on the responsiveness of the institution and this should be reflected

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in the validation that SRC will undertake in the latter stages of the project. Please refer to appendix D of the updated project plan for further information on validation.

Section Six: Outcomes and Lessons Learned

This phase of the project has been moving from baselining to implementation of change so there hasn't been any major new deliverable since the baseline report. However the institution's thinking on changing the curriculum has developed from the baselining to create a much wider-ranging project (EQAL) then originally envisaged by SRC.

SRC has been mainly focussed on changing the Program Approval process and providing supporting technology in the form of an academic database. However, becoming more responsive as an institution cannot be achieved by just overhauling program approval as many other factors impinge on responsiveness to employers, professional bodies and students' needs. These include timetabling the structure of the academic year, assessment, learning technologies, to name just a few, so perhaps a lesson from SRC is that responsiveness is a whole institution strategy and may need to be addressed as such. This will be considered further as EQAL evolves and may form an important outcome for the sector at the end of the SRC project.

Section Seven: Communication and Dissemination Activities

In terms of external events, the project has:

- Run another ProDev day for Creative Digital students and employers in November. See <http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/src/> for a report.
- The project organized a half-day conference held on 5th November to promote the project internally. See <http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/src/>
- Mark Stubbs and Peter Bird presented lessons from the project at the JISC online e-learning conference on 26,27 November 2009

In terms of forthcoming events:

- Claire Hamshire will present work on SRC and Pebblepad at this year's CSP congress in October (<http://www.csp.org.uk/director/members/events/cspcongress.cfm>) and the UCLAN employability conference (http://www.uclan.ac.uk/ahss/ceth/conference_2010.php) in June. For the UCLAN conference we are involving students.
- Rachel Forsyth has had a paper which references SRC accepted for a conference in Malaysia for autumn 2010. See <http://web3.tarc.edu.my/v1/tic/index.htm>

In addition, we are pleased to see that Claire Hamshire has been appointed to the CSP's short-life working group on Pebblepad strengthening the connection between SRC and professional bodies.

The main outlet for sharing information across the project and externally is the blog but regular face-to-face project meetings are the most effective way of coordinating the project internally.

Section Eight: Collaboration and Support

There have been two cluster meetings at Leeds and Bolton since the last report. These continue to be useful for sharing experience and we would like to see these continue. There is no specific feedback or suggestions for improvements at this stage.

Section Nine: Financial Statement

Total Grant	██████████	Duration of project	3 years 11 months
Reporting Period	August 1st 2009 to January 31st 2010 (Note that figures are only reported quarterly and January is the most recent report)		

Budget Headings	Total budget allocated	Expenditure this reporting period	Total expenditure to date	Further information
Staff	██████████	██████████	██████████	
Travel & Subsistence	██████	██████	██████	
Dissemination activities	██████	████	████	████████████████████
Evaluation activities	██████████	██████	██████	████████████████████ ████████████████████
Consultancy	██████████	██████	██████████	████████████████████

Checklist:

Before you return this report:

- Ensure that your project webpage on the JISC site is up to date and contains the correct information. Attach details of any required amendments to this report. Project webpages can be found from: www.jisc.ac.uk/curriculumdesign
- If there have been any changes to the original project plan and/or work packages, ensure that amended copies of the relevant sections of your project plan are attached to this report.
- Identify and name any areas within this report that you'd like removed before the report is made public (*see below)

***Please note** the interim reports will be made available on the JISC website and on the Circle site with the budgetary information removed. We recognise that projects may occasionally address very sensitive issues. We would like you to present as full a picture in this report as you can as the lessons you learn are valuable to us. We assure you that any issues you identify as confidential are removed before the report is made public. Where such issues do represent valuable lessons for the community we will involve you in further discussion as to how they could be passed on without identifying institutions or individuals.