



## Project Document Cover Sheet

Project Information			
<b>Project Acronym</b>	SRC		
<b>Project Title</b>	Supporting Responsive Curricula		
<b>Start Date</b>	1/9/08	<b>End Date</b>	31/7/12
<b>Lead Institution</b>	Manchester Metropolitan University		
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<b>Partner Institutions</b>			
<b>Project Web URL</b>	<a href="http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/src">http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/src</a>		
<b>Programme Name (and number)</b>	JISC e-Learning Programme: Curriculum design 05/08		
<b>Programme Manager</b>	Sarah Knight		

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<b>Document Title</b>	<i>Interim Progress Report</i>		
<b>Reporting Period</b>	<i>May 2010 – October 2010</i>		
<b>Author(s) &amp; project role</b>	Peter Bird Project Manager		
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Document History		
Version	Date	Comments
1.0	26/10/2010	Draft for internal comment
1.1	1/11/2010	Released to JISC for comment
1.2	9.2/2011	Minor update and released to JISC website

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

### **Section One: Summary**

At the last interim reporting point, the project was at a critical stage in terms of the aim of institutional transformation. The EQAL initiative had been announced with the goal of transforming the undergraduate curriculum in time for the start of the 2011/2012 academic year. However EQAL was still in the early stages of senior management planning so it was not confirmed either that the project would go ahead or that it might be approved within a reduced scope. We are pleased to announce that the EQAL program was approved by the university academic board in June of this year and the programme of change is now well underway with the following achievements:

- A revised programme approval process has been developed and approved which should reduce the workload on staff.
- Undergraduate course teams are now active in re-designing their courses to fit with the new 30 credit unit and assessment rules. All course units have to show the link between course content, assessment and learning outcomes. This work is being supported through internal conferences, workshops and faculty champions.
- Stakeholder workshops have been held to develop requirements for a single central academic database. A case study on this exercise has been published on the project Blog and through the design studio.
- A unit specification has been developed with an online proforma which will input directly into the academic database (based on Agresso). This ensures that one copy of the curriculum is used by university information systems.

Against the background of widespread change to every undergraduate unit, the subject strands continue to make progress on the specific SRC tasks:

- The Physiotherapy department introduced Pebblepad to first year undergraduates with mixed success. There are some interesting outcomes from this work (see evaluation report) but essentially staff and students need more training to take full advantage of the E-portfolio functionality; students will not find it as intuitive as we might expect. Despite some usage issues, we have gathered a rich source of evaluation data with two students keeping video diaries of their experiences and other students contributing to blogs. We are about to get students to use Pebblepad to record their placement activity and indeed six students have agreed to keep video diaries of their experiences.
- In Accounting and Finance, fourteen students undertook the AAT exams in July and we have five students who are willing to give feedback over the next two years on the impact on their employability. We are starting a trial of TalentonView with undergraduate accounting students, a bespoke and lighter-touch E-portfolio system, which will give us a different set of experiences to evaluate.

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- In Law, we are focussing on increasing work-placement opportunities and increasing the visibility of employability activities to students within both the curriculum and personal tutoring system.
- In Creative Digital, we have mapped the competencies/skills for digital marketing roles developed through employer consultation, onto the current course offerings in five areas: Marketing, Business Information Systems, Computing, Information and Communications and Art and Design. This now allows tutors information which can be used to better tune courses to employability requirements. The next stage is to create a website which can be used to get employers to feedback on and rank the importance of the skills/competencies and then to close the loop, get students to also feedback on how well they think their courses have allowed them to meet those competencies.

Some concern was raised through the last interim report that EQAL might somehow impact the scope of SRC. This is certainly not the case. The objectives of SRC are being achieved and EQAL is ensuring that there is the institutional transformation that the JISC funding hoped to stimulate. Furthermore, it has increased the chances that the impacts of SRC will sustain although challenges remain such as embedding employability across the wider curriculum.

**Section Two: Activities and Progress**

Work Package Area	Latest Status
Programme Approval	New process has been developed and will be tested on the first year undergraduate programme in the next two terms so that EQAL aligned programs are available for the 2011/2012 intake. Stakeholder workshops were held (facilitated by Alan Paull) and resulted in a requirements specification for an academic database. An online unit specification has been developed where data will be input into the Agresso database.
IT , E-portfolio and Competencies	<p>Pebblepad trial continues in Physiotherapy where it will be widened to be used on work placement. TalentOnView is being used with undergraduate accounting students and the impact of this simpler approach will be evaluated. We are seeking input from employers in creative digital in what sort of portfolio they would like to see and we will have a “PimpMyPortfolio” session with employers and students at our next ProDev day in November. We are investigating the possibility of using Mahara to represent a current paper portfolio system used within Law. These four different approaches provide the possibility of a rich set of evaluation experiences as well as informing the institutions e-portfolio strategy.</p> <p>On competencies the new EQAL program and unit specification focuses tutors on meeting eight institution wide graduate competencies and mapping learning outcomes and assessments to them. There remains a variety of approaches to skills and competencies across the subject strands and whilst it's clear that one size will not fit all, we need to find away of collating and disseminating the project experiences in this area.</p>
Digital Creative	<p>Digital marketing roles have been mapped to the course offerings across five different areas of the university. A web site has been produced which will ask employers to construct the profile of their ideal candidate in order to further understand employer needs.</p> <p>A ProDev day is being planned for 10<sup>th</sup> November with video outputs produced which can be shared via the design studio and other dissemination opportunities. This event is also being used to gather more evidence of employer and students needs.</p>
Physiotherapy	Pebblepad trial continues with students now using it to record their placement experiences with up to six also keeping video diaries of their experiences.
Financial Services	Starting trial of TalentOnView, a simple portfolio product, with undergraduate accounting students. Continuing to seek further exemptions from professional exams and develop new courses, particular in financial services.
Law	Following evaluation data, focussing on getting better awareness for both students and tutors of employability enhancement activities such as events, work-placements and pro-bono opportunities. Students are issued with an employability portfolio file to maintain and consideration is being given to whether this could be implemented within the new VLE (Moodle) which contains a version of Mahara.
Validation	Validation activities have been completed on the impact of 2009/2010 activities and a report placed on the project blog. A model for measuring responsiveness has also been placed on the project blog and a workshop is planned for our annual mini-conference of 4 <sup>th</sup> November.
Project Management	Steering group meeting held in July and CAMEL held at MMU in September. Planning for 4 <sup>th</sup> November mini-conference

### Section Three: Risks, Issues and Opportunities

There are no new risks to report during this period. As stated in the previous interim report, the main risk to the project was always a lack of any change to the program approval process and this was effectively removed when the EQAL initiative was announced and there is now clear evidence that EQAL is happening with many staff activities this term. It's also worth noting that the subject strand work is now into its' third year of development and there is ample evidence that each subject strand is likely to meet their corresponding project objectives.

The remaining risks are:

- The EQAL program will somehow be reduced in scope due to changing circumstances in Higher Education. Following the Browne report and the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Vice-chancellor has re-affirmed commitment to EQAL and stressed it is a vital step to prepare the university to compete once caps on fees are changed and direct support funding is reduced.
- It is of course possible that given the challenge of the EQAL timescales then some slippage could occur. However given that the parts which overlap with SRC are in the areas of Program approval and the Academic database, then substantial progress on these has already been made sufficiently for SRC to complete an evaluation of the changes. It is to be remembered that the full-scope of EQAL was never a deliverable of the SRC project.
- The aim of developing measures of responsiveness is still a challenging one and is unlikely to be achievable as a quantitative set of, measurements. Much of the evidence of responsiveness will be qualitative e.g. increased networking with local employers. However a model is being developed which will help inform the rest of the sector and this will continue to be developed through to the project end.
- One of the project deliveries refers to a competence model for the university and that courses and E-portfolios will be tagged with competencies so that it is clear to students and employers what skills or competencies are being showcased or what a particular course offering covers. Identifying competencies across all four subject strands is being achieved but can this be harmonised? We either recognise that competencies and skills are different and can be area specific or focus on a small number of key employability skills which are common to all graduates. EQAL is taking the latter approach so that learning outcomes can be linked to demonstrable skills. The project can certainly inform the sector through an evaluation of different approaches but it may be that a mixture of approaches from specific to generic is appropriate and practice will vary across an institution.

**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 Creative Digital. Employers and professional bodies not “engaging” with competencies in Law and Finance Graduate outcomes embedded within new EQAL processes.</i>	
<i>Approve, advertise and make available for enrolment at least eight course-units using refined electronic workflow for validation and documentation</i>	<i>Widespread course update now occurring through EQAL.</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. Creative Digital ProDevday planned</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 and extended to work placements. TalentOnView starting in Accounting and Finance.</i>	<i>Presentation at CETH employability conference in June <a href="http://www.uclan.ac.uk/ahss/ceth/conference_2010.php">http://www.uclan.ac.uk/ahss/ceth/conference_2010.php</a></i>

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<i>Develop a suitable representation for high-level skill and competence frameworks</i>	<i>Model developed and will be explored in conference on 4<sup>th</sup> November.</i>	<i>Model placed on SRC project blog for comment and presented to CAMEL cluster</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>	<i>EQAL confirmed at academic board in June 2010</i>
<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>Produced as part of development of academic database within EQAL initiative</i>	<i>Case study placed on project blog and design studio</i>
<i>Develop measures of responsiveness</i>	<i>Plan to focus on this in this year's SRC mini-conference in November..</i>	<i>Model placed on project blog for comment.</i>
<i>Institutional case study in how use of xcri and electronic work-flow methods has refined responsiveness of curriculum processes</i>	<i>Not clear whether this will be achievable within project timescales. Commercial products not yet available which have these capabilities and can scale up for a large institution such as ours.</i>	
<i>Guidance to learners on development and showcasing of high-level competences</i>	<i>In the plan for 2011/2012.</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 –another one will be held November..Involving students in the creation of an employability website – an activity we will do some evaluation research on.</i>	<i>See blog entry on ProDev days at <a href="http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/src/">http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/src/</a></i>

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Our first major input to the design studio is the case study on the academic database requirements and we have already had comments from several institutions on the value of this within their own context. We plan to also place the video material from the next ProDev day (planned for 10<sup>th</sup> November) and our model of responsiveness (after review at the mini-conference on 4<sup>th</sup> November).

### Section Five: Evaluation

An evaluation report which summarises the outputs from the validation activity over the last twelve months, has been placed on the project blog and it contains details of findings as well as forthcoming activities. To summarise what will happen in the next six month period:

- We have developed an initial model of responsiveness to try to aid measurement. This will be developed at the mini-conference on 4<sup>th</sup> November and outputs shared within design studio.
- We are planning to do qualitative interviews of twenty first-year undergraduates over November and December to get their views on what they expect from the institution, to build up a picture of how we can be responsive to their needs, We would hope to repeat this exercise the following year to get a view from students who are completing their courses.
- Focus groups will be held with tutors on Law to investigate ways of embedding employability within the curriculum and increasing the visibility of this to students.
- The Digital ProDev day will be used to get further input from students and employers on creative digital skills and start to gather requirements for what employers would like to see in student creative portfolios.
- Students on Physiotherapy will be out on placement and using Pebblepad to record and reflect on their experiences. Some students will be keeping video diaries and others will have the opportunity to blog their experiences.
- The website will be launched in Creative Digital to encourage employers to rank the skills that they feel are most important in candidates.

### Section Six: Outcomes and Lessons Learned

There have been some significant findings through the early stages of EQAL and the latest reflection upon work within the subject strands:

- In trying to develop the academic database requirements, it is striking how much of the university information systems rely on rolling forward from one year to the next – in effect a copy and paste of data. In taking the EQAL approach of revising all the undergraduate curriculum, then a roll-forward approach no longer holds, One of the challenges of designing new online proformas for course units is getting all stakeholders to recognise that systems have to distinguish between a course (or unit) and an instance of that course for a specific academic year.
- The university has had to design and implement its own online unit specification for input of course information into a central database. We had hoped to use a commercial product but it's clear that they are some way from having systems which will scale-up to meet the requirements of a large institution such as MMU. We still hope to use commercial products in the future but JISC need to seek ways of encouraging developers of these systems to engage with the experiences of the design projects, many of who are trying to solve this problem.
- The development of EQAL and the roll-out across all university academic departments is being achieved through stakeholder involvement and creating faculty champions to support the process. It is also interesting to note that the first tutor to pilot course re-design was one of the more unconventional and innovative tutors. This helped to convince other staff that the change was both beneficial; and achievable, perhaps an interesting tip for other institutions trying to promote similar change.
- Whilst EQAL is trying to increase the link between courses and employability by forcing learning outcomes to be mapped to key graduate skills, it remains a challenge to transform an

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institutions approach to employability. Although EQAL encourages change, how do you get the kinds of employability activities undertaken in SRC to permeate the whole curriculum?

- Our experiences of using PebblePad have again highlighted the mixed level of undergraduate IT skills and how it is unsafe to assume that student cohorts are now “digital natives”. Without training and support, it is apparent that students will not find these systems intuitive and hence will not realise the benefits that they offer.

### **Section Seven: Communication and Dissemination Activities**

In terms of external events:

- Claire Hamshire presented work on SRC and Pebblepad at this year's CSP congress in October (<http://www.csp.org.uk/director/members/events/cspcongress.cfm>)
- Claire Hamshire and Adam Cartlidge (a student from physiotherapy using Pebblepad) presented at UCLAN employability conference CETH([http://www.uclan.ac.uk/ahss/ceth/conference\\_2010.php](http://www.uclan.ac.uk/ahss/ceth/conference_2010.php))in June.
- Nicola Critchlow presented the project's work on creative digital skills and competencies at 'Teaching Web Design and Development' event on the 6th Sept which was an event at MMU by the HE Academy, for the subject centre for Information and Computer Sciences. This was the projects first engagement with HEA subject centres.
- Nicola Critchlow and Peter Bird presented the project interim findings to the internal EQAL conference on 8<sup>th</sup> September at MMU, an important step in raising the project's profile as a driver for EQAL across the whole institution.
- Mark Stubbs presented our work on changing the quality assurance process in a session at the recent Curriculum Design and Delivery meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> October.
- Mark Stubbs has visited Stafford to share experiences on transforming institutional systems with the Enable project. This has also led to collaboration on mobile learning survey work between the two institutions.

Forthcoming events are the SRC mini-conference on 4<sup>th</sup> November and the Digital ProDev day on 10<sup>th</sup> November.

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 a cluster meeting at MMU 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**

<b>Total Grant</b>	<b>£403,000</b>	<b>Duration of project</b>	<b>3 years 11 months</b>
<b>Reporting Period</b>	<b>May 2010 to October 2010 (Note that figures are only reported quarterly and August is the most recent report)</b>		

<b>Budget Headings</b>	<b>Total budget allocated</b>	<b>Expenditure this reporting period</b>	<b>Total expenditure to date</b>	<b>Further information</b>
Staff	£321, 721	£48,382	£182,382	
Travel & Subsistence	£10000	£1000	£4000	
Dissemination activities	£4000	£500	£1000	Will increase as project outputs mature
Evaluation activities	£20,000	£2492	£5350	Evaluation activities now increasing as project enters final year of subject strand activities
Consultancy	£48,000	£10,000	£26,039	Increase in last six months represents work on academic database requirements

**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](http://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.