



Project Document Cover Sheet

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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 10 – April 11

Section One: Summary

In October 2010, the EQAL initiative had been approved and work had started on re-writing every first-year undergraduate programme. A number of support mechanisms were put in place to train staff in the new procedures and processes, including training workshops, mini-conferences and support from staff in the Centre for Learning and Teaching. A distinctive feature of EQAL has been its emphasis on mapping the curriculum to a set of eight graduate outcomes to support the university's employability strategy of mapping skills and assessments from course units to generic employability skills. Clear and focused learning outcomes for every course unit are essential and training and support has been provided to staff in developing these. In addition, each faculty appointed an EQAL champion to help coordinate activity and forward any emergent issues to a central steering group for resolution.

A large percentage of first year units have now been revised and submitted for approval through a new online quality assurance system. It is worthwhile sharing some reflections from the early experiences of this new system although it should be noted that further changes to the programme approval process are expected over the next twelve months, partly to respond to feedback from this early usage but also because MMU EQAL still aims to introduce a full workflow-based academic database to support programme approval.

In 2009 / 2010 plans were developed to reform significantly the quality assurance processes to achieve a more effective and less burdensome system with a real commitment to enhancement and to provide greater flexibility and responsiveness whilst maintaining standards. One of the key drivers was to reduce the costs of the process both in terms of staff time and financial costs. MMU approved the revised process for Programme Approval, Review and Modification in June 2010.

During 2010 / 2011 a number of programme review and modification events have continued to take place in the traditional way with a full day event involving a panel of up to 5 internal representatives and a minimum of two subject specific external representatives. During the day meetings take place with representatives of the student body (1 hour) and with the Programme team (usually 2 x 1.5 hours with anything from 4 – 10 members of staff).

A number of programme teams have however piloted the new more streamlined ' PARM Standing Panel' approach to programme review and modification. This is intended to provide the same degree of oversight whilst making best use of the time of the panel members. The process involves the independent chair and a minute secretary meeting the students a few weeks before the panel meets; the report from this meeting is part of the documentation that the panel considers. Programme team external examiners consider subject specific issues and provide a report that forms part of the documentation reviewed by the PARM Panel. The PARM Panel itself consists of 2 academic representatives, one independent external advisor (considers compliance with the QAA Academic Infrastructure and overarching Quality Assurance procedures) and a panel secretary. If programme team

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members are called to meet the panel this involves 1 or 2 members for up to 1 hour. On any one day a PARM Standing Panel can consider 4 or more reviews or modifications. Cost savings are summarized as follows:

- We pay external advisors £150 for undertaking a review event. Therefore 1 standing panel = £150 and the external advisor considers 4 or more modifications / reviews. If undertaken using the traditional approach this would cost MMU £1200 or more.
- The student meeting takes place with one independent chair and a minute secretary instead of with 4 members of MMU staff and a minute secretary.
- Instead of all Programme Team members attending the event and usually for most of the day (10.30 – 3.30), 1 or 2 members of the team meet the panel for 1 hour where necessary.
- There is a significant cost reduction in respect of logistics e.g. room space, papers and refreshments for 4 rather than 20.

In re-writing the entire first-year undergraduate programme, a much higher-workload on the PARM process arises than would be normally expected. EQAL Review modifications have been undertaken using a similar approach to the PARM Standing Panel but in a much tighter timeline and far higher throughput in any one day. There have been 8 meetings to consider the programmes. Up to ten programmes have been considered in one day with up to 40 units considered by the small team. Quality has been maintained by providing much tighter guidance to programme teams on structure and documentation and by focusing the Panel process on academic issues. These early reflections show considerable progress and cost saving from the PARM process, which was reviewed and modeled by SRC in the baseline report from June 2009. That baseline report also reflected the institution's desire to see the curriculum held online and to see some use of electronic workflows to streamline parts of the approval process. The first-year undergraduate curriculum is now on-line, which is already providing benefits in terms of sharing good practice and identifying areas where further central support is required (e.g. on embedding employability, or the use of particular types of assessment). However, the online system is predominantly a repository with defined workflow stages, which represent the stages of the curriculum development process, and is mainly an in-house development. For sustainability reasons, the university would prefer to be able to use a third-party solution and we are now seeking to work with third-party product providers to introduce such a system but these third-party products are not going to work off the shelf. Rather they will need significant modification to scale up to the demands of an institution of MMU's size, a cost that will have to be born by the vendors and/or the institution. This will be a common problem across the HE Sector, so a sector-wide (shared services) approach to solving this may be needed.

In addition to the widespread institutional change, work in the four SRC subject stands continues as we move towards the milestone of funded support for subjects ending on 31st July 2011. Progress is detailed in the next section.

Section Two: Activities and Progress

Work Package Area	Latest Status
Programme Approval	<p>New process has been developed and most Level 4 (1st year undergraduate) modules have been revised and submitted for approval. Level 5 and Level 6 programmes will be revised in the next academic year (2011/2012) to complete the undergraduate programme overhaul. All revised units have been entered into an online database and a decision is now pending from the EQAL board as to how to further develop that database offering to support functionality such as workflows.</p> <p>Guidance and support for programme teams is being further developed to meet the needs identified in the baseline report and in the evaluation of EQAL phase 1. The aim is to provide a consistent approach to the production of curriculum documentation which makes meaningful use of institutional competences and which is responsive to the needs of stakeholders.</p>
IT , E-portfolio and Competencies	<p>Pebblepad trial continues in Physiotherapy. It appears that the use of TalentOnView in the business school may not be sustainable owing to software issues. MMU is currently purchasing Mahara so that will be evaluated once the license is in place. All of the above activities are feeding into a revised learning technologies review for MMU.</p> <p>The university has adopted generic graduate outcomes as its response to competencies and these are applied to all undergraduate programmes that are being revised through EQAL. There is still a need to look at the requirements of some subject areas where professional bodies may require that programmes are linked to specific skills or competencies frameworks.</p>
Digital Creative	<p>In Creative Digital, a further Prodev day has been held and a video produced which is present on Design Studio. A website has been launched which asks employers to rate digital marketing skills so that we enhance our understanding of employer needs, complementing previous work where we interviewed employers. The site has also been launched so that students can rate their own digital marketing skill so that we can see what the match is between employer needs and the MMU 'digital marketing' curriculum. So far we have had responses from 24 students, which is encouraging.</p>
Physiotherapy	<p>The Physiotherapy department is continuing it' Pebblepad trial with some students keeping blogs and video diaries. Students are now using this on clinical placements, which is a new development since the last report. This part of the program is continuing to run to its original objectives and plan and a rich set of data to evaluate is expected.</p>
Financial Services	<p>In Accounting and Finance there has been a trial of TalentOnView with undergraduate accounting students, a bespoke and lighter-touch E-portfolio system, This was a system which has also been used by over 1200 students on other disciplines across the business school. Unfortunately there have been problems of scalability and reliability with the software which mean that it is under review for further usage. We are currently soliciting feedback from students on the tool but it seems likely that it will not be used over the next academic year (2011/2012). The university is currently purchasing a site-wide licence for Mahara so that may offer a solution for the longer term.</p>
Law	<p>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. The activities are monitored through a paper portfolio system which the student reviews with their personal tutor. More students are now taking placement or pro-bono type opportunities as a result of this</p>

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	initiative. Once the university has established a Mahara system, we plan to trial the LAW employment portfolio using this new e-portfolio system.
Validation	Measures of responsiveness model developed at SRC mini-conference and placed on Design Studio for comment. On-going evaluation activities in the four subject strands including focus groups, surveys and analysis of video and blog records. Twenty two interviews on responsiveness conducted with final year students and a further twenty planned for “freshers” in September.
Project Management	SRC mini-conference held in November 2010 and Steering Group held in March 2011.

Section Three: Risks, Issues and Opportunities

There are no new risks to report during this period. There is continuing risk of change of scope of EQAL but this was never a committed deliverable of SRC and the institutional transformation being achieved exceeds the original scope of the SRC project. The subject strand work is now into its final six months of development and there is ample evidence that each subject strand is likely to meet their corresponding project objectives albeit in different ways than originally envisaged.

The remaining risks and opportunities are:

- There is now an academic database in place at MMU but this is a curriculum repository rather than a workflow based system. Programme approval is still driven through a manual (albeit more streamlined) process involving approval boards and documents. The EQAL steering group is now considering options for developing the academic database further and if this project goes ahead then it is possible further outputs for the sector (like the stakeholder requirements case study) may be produced.
- In terms of the academic database, the drive for Key Information Sets may also be a catalyst for developing the technology both within the institution and the sector and could lead to further cooperation with other institutions.
- 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. A model has been developed which has now been placed on the design studio and it hoped that our evaluation activities will add further strength to this.
- One of the original project deliverables was framed in terms of a competence model for the university that enabled courses and e-portfolio content to be tagged with competencies so that it would be clear to students and employers what skills or competencies are being showcased or what a particular course offering covers. Through EQAL, all undergraduate units are now mapped through learning outcomes and assessments to eight graduate outcomes, a set of generic skills which will give students the opportunity to show where they have demonstrated and been assessed on various soft skills such as communication. This is the approach for all courses and is the university strategy. However, some courses, such as physiotherapy and law, have strong links between course content and professional body frameworks so work on the academic database will need to consider subject-specific mappings as well as generic skill mappings..

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 work-flow for validation and documentation</i>	<i>Widespread course update now occurring through EQAL.</i>	<i>Over 860 new course-units entered</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>ProDev day held November 2010</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.</i>	<i>TalentOnView trial held in Accounting and Finance. “PimpMyPortfolio’ clinic held at ProDev day 2010</i>

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<i>Develop a suitable representation for high-level skill and competence frameworks</i>	<i>Detailed mapping of physiotherapy curriculum to professional skills framework. Mapping of creative digital roles to MMU course offerings.</i>	
<i>Develop agile course validation and modification processes for responding to gaps in current curricula</i>	<i>Part of current PARM review project within EQAL umbrella.</i>	<i>New process is allowing higher review throughput e.g. EQAL panels have processed upto forty units in a single day</i>
<i>Devise an electronic workflow that supports validation and approval workflow and facilitates tagging, dis-aggregation 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>Awaiting next stages of EQAL project</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>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>Models placed on design studio in stakeholder requirements case study</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>All EQAL units now being mapped to eight generic graduate outcomes</i>
<i>Evaluation of how the project has improved responsiveness within MMU</i>	<i>Part of Evaluation plan for 2011/2012</i>	<i>Interviews on responsiveness held with 22 final-year undergraduate students</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>Now linked to evaluation plan</i>	<i>Model further developed at SRC mini-conference in November. This has been placed for comment on the Design Studio</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>Now a part of EQAL. Employability online website being developed with help from undergraduates.</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..</i>	<i>See ProDev day 2010 video on the design studio.</i>

Section Five: Evaluation

Evaluation work continues with increased effort as we move towards the final year of the project. Activities have included the following:

- 22 Interviews carried out with final year students, looking at their views on responsiveness and attitudes towards technology and learning, these will be thoroughly analyzed in the coming months. From an initial reading the interviews seem to show that learners have lower digital literacy and higher information literacy than is typically assumed (but these findings are tentative as a thorough, systematic analysis is still in progress).
- A further 20 interviews using the same approach are booked for October with first year students.
- The model of responsiveness has been developed further with senior management input at the November mini-conference. This is now up on Design Studio and we have had comments from other institutions. It is hoped that the evaluation work will provide further input to the model.
- Rachel Forsyth and Nicola Whitton are developing a staff development “game” which will allow course teams to examine the issues with regard to institutional change. This will be presented and evaluated during at least two conferences this year (see dissemination section).
- Subject evaluations continue as follows:
 1. Physiotherapy – student video diaries and questionnaires
 2. Accounting & Finance – online questionnaire on TalentOnView, telephone follow-up of AAT learners
 3. Creative Digital – evaluation of ProDev day and analysis of response to ‘Perfect Candidate’ website
 4. Law – 3 focus groups held with staff focusing on employability

Section Six: Outcomes and Lessons Learned

A key part of the project findings will be evaluation of the impact of institutional change. This will be obtained through interviews, focus groups etc., with stakeholders and a full analysis presented in our final report. In the interim, these are current observations based on anecdotal evidence:

- In managing a process of institutional change such as that being undertaken by EQAL, it is important to engage stakeholders in as many ways as possible. This is being achieved through having faculty EQAL champions, conferences and workshops and having support for change provided through our Centre for Learning and Teaching. The university is also using a website to inform staff and encouraging interaction through social media such as blogs and twitter.
- It is inevitable there will be some staff and trade union resistance to widespread change such as that undertaken by EQAL. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, staff have to re-design their curriculum to meet the new requirements whilst at the same time having to deliver the existing curriculum which can lead to increased workloads over the change period. Secondly with the changes in funding for HE, staff across the sector anticipate some form of rationalisation of curriculum offering may be necessary in some institutions and thus any change programme (such as EQAL) can be seen as a pre-cursor to identifying cost reductions. Hence stakeholder engagement is extremely important to dispel concerns of hidden agendas.
- As this stage of the SRC project, attention turns to where the changes introduced by the project will sustain and embed in the absence of external funding support. EQAL is now firmly established so the goal of institutional transformation is almost certainly embedded. For the subject stand work, we are optimistic that tutors will continue with the initiatives.
- Perhaps the one area where embedding of SRC outputs is a potential issue is Creative Digital. Because this subject is spread across many different faculties and subjects then there is not a single central understanding of the creative digital curriculum and in effect SRC has provided this function. This is a challenge but the university is investigating approaches where

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it can bring together expertise at a central point, which can champion the whole creative digital offering.

Section Seven: Communication and Dissemination Activities

In terms of external events and papers:

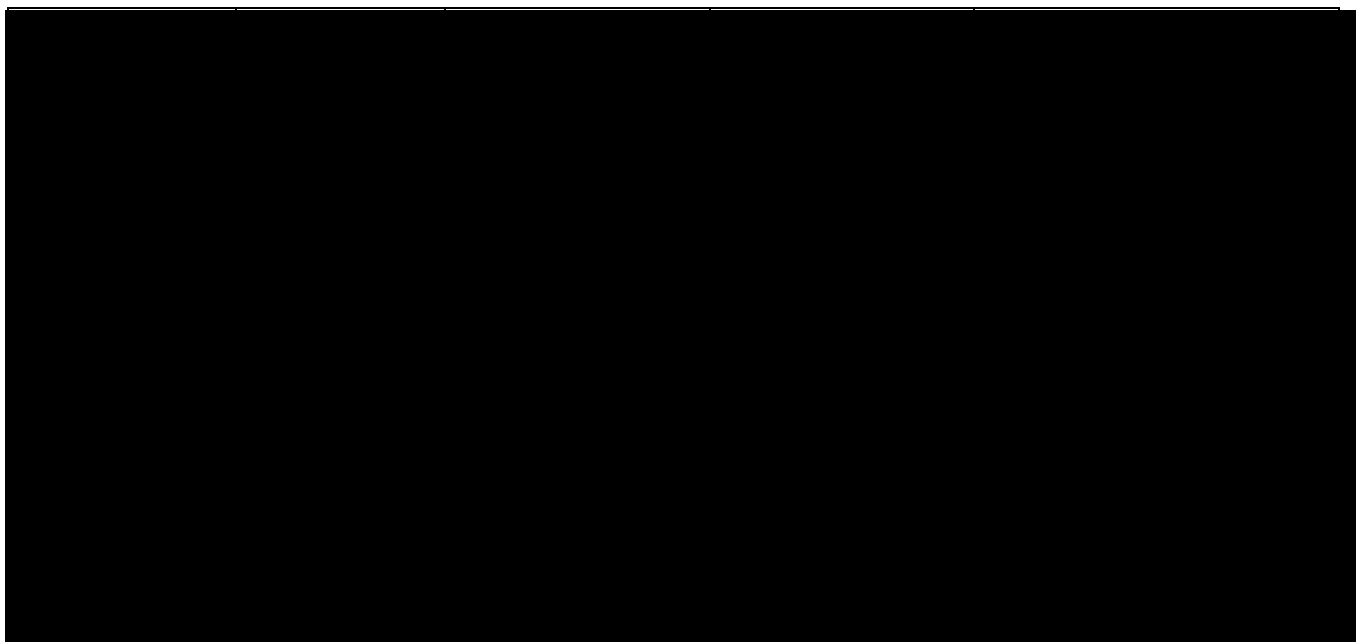
- Claire Hamshire had a joint paper referencing SRC published with Suzanne Gough entitled "Blending digital technology to enhance reflection and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) using simulation, podcasts and the Pebblepad e-portfolio" in the December issue of the journal Simulation in Healthcare.
- Claire Hamshire also presented in an Elluminate session on Wednesday 16th March using material gathered from SRC student video blogs. The session was entitled "Using video within the Curriculum Design programme: from personal reflection to evaluation evidence"
- Claire has also had submissions accepted for the 4TH INTERNATIONAL CLINICAL SKILLS CONFERENCE to be held in May 2011 and the World Confederation for Physical Therapy Congress in June 2011.
- Rachel Forsyth and Nicola Whitton have had submissions accepted for two forthcoming conferences: 'A Model of Responsiveness in Curriculum Design' – HEA 2011 conference and 'Accreditation! The Responsive Curriculum Game' has been selected for submission as an academic paper to ECGBL 2011.
- ProDev day 2010 was held in November last year and attended by over 200 students. Employers from across the North West were represented including BBC North.
- The SRC mini-conference was held on 4th November 2011 and attended by 36 delegates from around the institution
- Mark Stubbs has been invited to present the SRC/EQUAL/XCRI work at a number of events, including the UCAS Conference (25/01/2011) and the IMS Global Learning Consortium event in Utrecht (16/02/2011)

Section Eight: Collaboration and Support

There have been no cluster meetings held since the last report but one is planned at Staffordshire in May.

Section Nine: Financial Statement

Total Grant	£403,000	Duration of project	3 years 11 months
Reporting Period	November 2010 to February 2011 (Note that figures are only reported quarterly and January is the most recent report)		



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.