

Project Acronym: PiP
 Version: 3.0
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 Date: May 2009

| Project Information | | | |
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| Project Acronym | PiP | | |
| Project Title | Principles in Patterns | | |
| Start Date | 1 September 2008 | End Date | 31 July 2012 |
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| Partner Institutions | n/a | | |
| Project Web URL | www.principlesinpatterns.ac.uk | | |
| Programme Name (and number) | <i>Institutional Approaches to Curriculum Design</i> | | |
| Programme Manager | Sarah Knight | | |

| Document Name | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------|--|
| Document Title | <i>Evaluation Plan</i> | | |
| Reporting Period | n/a | | |
| Author(s) & project role | Catherine Owen, Project Manager | | |
| Date | March 09 | Filename | PiP Evaluation Plan v3.0 - Apr 09 |
| URL | <i>tbc</i> | | |
| Access | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project and JISC internal | | <input type="checkbox"/> General dissemination |

| Document History | | |
|------------------|----------|----------|
| Version | Date | Comments |
| 3 | May 2009 | |
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Pip Evaluation Plan

Introduction

The objectives of the Principles in Patterns (PiP) project are to:

1. Analyse and improve the curriculum approval workflow by:

- Documenting current practice in faculty curriculum design and approval processes, with an emphasis on identifying gaps or blockages in planning processes, in information sharing, in the way guidance is provided and in alignment with strategic objectives.
- Developing a new approach to curriculum design and approval that reduces blockages, more appropriately supports staff and reflects the principles and strategic objectives embodied in university policy.

2. Develop supporting resources and materials to help staff members involved in curriculum design and approval decisions by:

- Testing ways of representing effective learning designs at the task, module and course level to support teachers in design activities and to support staff members responsible for planning, managing and sharing of curriculum design information.
- Representing these outputs in ways that are useful to other institutions engaged in curriculum design and to the wider HE and FE sector.

Purpose of evaluation

Evaluation of the activities and outputs of the project will focus on these two separate, but related areas. Evaluation activities will be both formative and summative, with a particular emphasis on establishing an institution-wide community of practitioners and administrators, who will help the project team to establish a baseline, analyse current practice, identify opportunities for enhancement and develop materials that have the best possible potential for wider adoption across the institution. Although the principal focus will be internal, the project will also solicit formative evaluative data from external stakeholders as materials are created and refined.

Measures of success

The project team will work closely with academic and administrative partners to gain insights into the value of changes to the university's curriculum design and approval processes. Standards and measures explicitly related to those of the programme-level evaluation and of interest to institutional partners and the wider academic community are likely to include:

- Improved document and process workflow when developing and approving curricula
- Improved efficiency and/or effectiveness of the curriculum design and approval process
- Embedding of educational policies in module and programme documentation

- Perceived improvements in module and programme data collection for different university constituencies (e.g. to support multiple processes and outputs)
- Enhanced information available to learners at key decision points

Approaches to evaluation

1. Baseline analysis and comparison

The project team are producing baseline maps of the institutional processes associated with curriculum design and approval and with the flow of information about modules and courses. These baseline maps will form the basis of discussions with key stakeholders to establish:

- How academic staff currently approach module and programme design
- The steps that departments and faculties go through when supporting and validating this process
- What guidelines, policies, or other institutional messages inform the design and approval process
- Perceived blockages and opportunities for enhancement

Data collection activities will include:

- **Analysis of institutional documentation** including module and programme approval forms, department and faculty quality assurance reports, external examiners reports and data from student evaluations
- **Interviews** with key stakeholders including faculty and management representatives about decision-making processes and the use of documentation to inform decision-making
- **Workshops** with stakeholder groups

Once a clear baseline has been established, this data will be used **formatively** (to inform changes to the curriculum design and approval processes) and **summatively** (to demonstrate changes to the way curriculum design and approval is conducted).

2. Evaluation of curriculum designs and supporting materials

The development of curriculum designs and supporting materials is conceived as an iterative process of formative evaluation over a number of stages:

- Patterns derived from the REAP project and from the educational literature are developed and represented as practice models
- These models are tested with academic staff in different disciplines across multiple faculties at the University of Strathclyde through workshops and related consultation exercises
- Models are refined and further developed
- Models are tested across the sector

This formative evaluation process should result in resources that best serve the needs of those engaged in curriculum design at the University of Strathclyde and provide materials to inform similar developments at other institutions.

3. Evaluation of technical outputs

The project comprises two broad areas of related technical development:

Analyse and improve the curriculum approval workflow by:

- Modelling current processes and workflows
- Modelling improved/enhanced approval workflow system(s)
- Implementing pilot workflow systems

Develop supporting resources and materials to help staff members involved in curriculum design and approval decisions by:

- Representing curriculum designs that communicate proven educational principles
- Storing designs and support materials in an architecture that also supports meaningful metadata (these might include information on underlying principles, disciplines and previous implementations, etc.)
- Testing the usability and accessibility of designs and support materials at the right stages of the curriculum design and documentation process.

The project team will work closely with a team of stakeholders to establish the content and validity of the technical outputs of the project. This evaluation will be primarily formative, with an emphasis on generating data to inform development of technical products that have the best possible chance of being widely adopted by the university community. Criteria are likely to include:

- Appropriateness of software platforms
- Interoperability with university systems
- Usability of tools
- Efficiency

4. Summative evaluation of project approach to institutional change

The overall aim of the project is to help academic and administrative staff to better manage the complex task of creating effective and coherent academic programmes within an institutional context of modularisation and student choice. The project is conceptualised as a proof-of-concept endeavour that will examine what types of design patterns, practice models, methodologies and support materials might be the most useful in supporting academic staff to design effective learning tasks, modules and programmes which reflect university ambitions.

The summative assessment of the project will ask whether this approach to institutional enhancement has the potential to create positive changes in the way that modules and programmes are designed and approved. Evidence sought is likely to include:

- curriculum design and approval activities are conducted in a new way
- the process of change is consistent with and embedded in institutional processes
- the intended outcome is sustainable and is likely to result in long-term changes in activities

The project team are also likely to seek additional evidence in collaboration with the GMAP team at the Academic Office, who are closely involved with the development of project outcomes.