



Project Document Cover Sheet

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Co-genT Project: Baseline Report

Introduction

Recent changes in UK workforce development policy are reinforcing pedagogical processes within higher education that place greater emphasis on constructivist learning philosophies and widening participation (Walsh, 2008). These changes are encouraging demand-led and co-generative curriculum developments in addition to traditional university work-based learning (WBL) provision, which has focused on providing accredited programmes for individual learner needs (Tallantyre, 2008: 3). So, given the recognition for increasing work-based learning opportunities through demand-led provision, there is a need to develop flexible support and delivery mechanisms (King, 2007), *'supporting the learner in 'translating' their prior and current achievements outside the university into a discourse whereby they can be recognised by the academic community'* (Walsh, 2008: 15).

This report outlines how employer engagement activities currently interface with, and impact on, the existing educational provision, processes and structures at the Universities of Gloucestershire and Winchester, as a background document for the Co-genT project.

University of Gloucestershire

Relevant policies

Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategic Framework

The University of Gloucestershire (UoG) approved its new Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy in December 2007. This strategy identified five key principles:

1. learner empowerment;
2. active engagement;
3. learning communities;
4. learning for sustainable development;
5. learning for equality, diversity and intercultural understanding.

The implementation of this strategy is focused on embedding these principles locally within disciplinary communities in the University, enabling local ownership of these terms, and is being led within the University by Teaching and Learning Innovation (TLI), which includes the University's Centre for Active Learning (CeAL) and Learning Enhancement and Technology Support (LETS), the pedagogic support and development unit.

Although employer engagement is not explicitly addressed at this level, central to the TLA Strategic Framework is an emphasis on 'active learning' – the activity of the learner as opposed to content delivery. In seeking to develop students' skills and attributes in the application of knowledge, providing authentic learning opportunities – including through student placements, focused activities or learning in the workplace – is key to University's interpretation of active learning. In addition, work-based learning ties in closely with the University strategy in providing opportunities for learning in context and the development of learning communities.

Personal Development Planning (PDP)

The principles of the University's PDP Policy (<http://resources.glos.ac.uk/pdp/pdpstaff/index.cfm>) will inform the Co-genT project.

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning is a well-established scheme which evaluates employee experience by mapping elements of work experience to the content of existing modules delivered by the University of Gloucestershire and awarding credits against that module. In 2007/8, there were approximately 30 applications under the undergraduate modular scheme; however, there are typically far fewer applications – only 3 in 2007/8 - under the postgraduate modular scheme.

<http://resources.glos.ac.uk/apply/apl/index.cfm>

Supporting structure

Employer engagement has many facets within higher education and accordingly, there is a complex structure of supporting units involved within the University of Gloucestershire. These include:

- *Centre for Enterprise and Innovation (CEI)*
Acts as the gateway to the University for businesses. It supports links with the local community and will be an important part of the Co-genT project user needs analysis.
- *Careers*
The Careers Centre has both a traditional role as a conduit for local, regional and national employers interested in recruiting University graduates, and also a proactive role in encouraging employers to engage with students to improve their employability skills.
- *Gloucestershire Enterprise Network (GEN)*
This is an online network of businesses developed in collaboration with Gloucestershire First and Business Link Gloucestershire, and aims to be a one-stop support network for local businesses, offering a wide range of services, including offline events hosted by the University (further details at <http://resources.glos.ac.uk/businesslinks/cei/gen.cfm>). There are plans underway for GEN to be replaced by a broader network, the Gloucestershire Enterprise Web Portal, which will offer a more structured range of products and services to business.
- *Department of All-Age and Vocational Education (DAVE)*
Equivalent to a faculty of flexible studies, DAVE has been established to provide quality assurance mechanisms and support for the development of the new demand-led provision. DAVE has its own Academic Standards and Quality Committee, with cross-university membership which can validate modules quickly by virtual meetings. DAVE also provides the focus for the support of Employer-based Training Accreditation (EBTA) processes.
- *Employability Forum*
Designed as a forum for business and academics to exchange information and has had some success with initiatives such as Graduates For Business and in the production of a booklet for students in 2008/9 entitled 'Employ: the complete guide to employability skills'. Recently, however, there has been a significant fall in employer involvement and the future of this forum is being reviewed by the CEI and the Careers Centre.

- *Faculties*

Academic faculties at the University of Gloucestershire are engaged in a range of employer-facing activities in different formats. Individual case studies illustrating some of these can be viewed at

<http://resources.glos.ac.uk/departments/careers/engagement/casestudies/index.cfm>. The figure below illustrates the potential range of activities and impact levels involved.

D E P T H O F I M P A C T ↓	Level 1: Little evidence of any impact on any area of activity	Individual Students	Module	Department	University	Sector
	REACH OF IMPACT →					
Level 2: Low	e.g. student discusses employability issues with an aware tutor	e.g. KTP Associate teaches part of a module	e.g. employer involved in course validation and review	e.g. effective Employer Advisory Panel for University	e.g. UoG academic staff on Professional Body's Executive Committee	
Level 3: Medium	e.g. employer meets group of students	e.g. module includes workplace- or community-based project	e.g. employers active on a Departmental committee	e.g. UoG employs many students and accredits the learning	e.g. workforce-based learning; Leitch Report	
Level 4: High	e.g. optional short placement	e.g. course includes compulsory placement module	e.g. Professional Body accredits course(s)	e.g. UoG has policy of compulsory placement for all students	e.g. DIUS/HEFCE requires employer involvement in all HE curricula	

Adapted from KSA Partnership, 2005

Overview of employer engagement within current UoG academic provision

The majority of this activity can be holistically categorised into four areas: enabling individual learners (1); placing resources into business (2); developing businesses strategically (3) and business start-up support (4).

1. Enabling individual learners

This provision operates from a micro to a macro scale. Activities include:

- providing individual seminars or themed conferences¹ which can be attended by employers from local businesses. These events currently carry no academic recognition;
- short course programmes run by the University². These exist as pockets of activity within the institution, and have varying degrees of success;
- modules run within undergraduate programmes eg the Careers Centre run two second year modules, 'Careers and Employability' and 'Volunteering and Employability', aimed at Humanities students who do not yet have a clear idea of their career path. Employers contribute presentations on employability skills within these modules, but student take-up has been low and input to academic programmes very variable;
- the 'regular offering' of professionally accredited courses for institutions. This includes those run through the Business School, eg for the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) and Chartered Institute of

¹ For example see <http://www.genconference.net/>

² See <http://www.glos.ac.uk/courses/shortcourses/Pages/default.aspx>

Personnel and Development (CIPD), courses in a range of health and social care related subjects run through the Faculty of Sport, Health and Social Care, and teacher training provision offered by the Department of Education. These have been traditionally delivered as taught courses;

- the validation of an increasing number of Foundation degrees set up through collaboration between employers and the University since 2003/4. The University currently offers 11 Foundation degree programmes, mainly in the fields of Education, Sport, and Health and Social Care. Recent additions in new fields include Community Engagement & Governance (developed in consultation with the Police Force and recruiting in 2009/10);
- Graduates For Business, a mentoring scheme which has been running for three years, whereby students regularly meet up with mentors in an employment field relevant to their studies.

2. Placing resources into business

- Student work placements - undergraduate

Work placements are used within the Gloucestershire Business School, Faculty of Media, Art and Communications and the Faculty of Sport, Health and Social Care. The Work-based Learning Centre in the Business School has a strong and well-established traditional scheme of undergraduate student work placements, where all programmes have either an optional or mandatory work placement element which contributes towards a four-year 'sandwich' award. Many large national and local employers use this scheme, and in any one year, some two-thirds of the student cohort take up these placements. Up to 25% return to their placement employer after graduation. However, there is an increasing trend away from placements as students now view applying for placement work early in the academic year as stressful and difficult, and dislike moving location and disrupting their social lives. In response to this, the mandatory placement requirement is being removed from all Business School programmes except Hospitality.

The Work-based Learning Centre also runs about 5 or 6 events each year for individual employers to give presentations to students, and twice yearly organises an Employer Panel, where groups of employers meet level 3 students for an informal question and answer session.

Short term placements are used in a number of programmes across the University. Within the Business School, these include Music and Media Management and Events Management. In the Faculty of Arts, Media and Communication, all courses except Public Relations (which has a one year placement) and two theory-based courses have a minimum two week placement. In these cases the students organise the placements themselves in consultation with their academic Course Leaders.

- Student work placements - graduate

The Graduate Challenge is a 4-month placement scheme supported by the newly created Economic Challenge Investment Fund (ECIF), funded through HEFCE in response to the recent economic downturn. The UoG scheme will offer up to 150 Gloucestershire graduates short-term funded placements with local businesses. Participating companies will benefit from a qualified graduate, working with them for four months on a live project designed to

complement and develop their recent degree award, with access to UoG business support services.

- Student projects

Many discipline areas, in their support of active learning approaches, seek to incorporate live student projects working with local businesses into their programmes. Examples include small design projects, community history projects etc.

- Careers and vacancy advertising

Look@Work events, with invited employer participation, have been run for the past 4-5 years by individual faculties, with variable impact. It is currently proposed that the Careers Centre will provide University-wide co-ordination for a main annual event, to be presented as a Virtual Jobs Fair, and possibly one or two themed mini-fairs.

In collaboration with other HEIs in the south west, the Careers Centre offers a free vacancy advertising service to local employers via Gradsouthwest.

3. Developing businesses strategically

- The Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) programme run by the Business School places students with businesses for between 9 months and two years to work on a project of strategic importance to the company. This programme is not restricted to University of Gloucestershire graduates, and the key element of the scheme is to facilitate consultancy links between the academic staff supporting the students and individual businesses.

4. Business start-up support

- The University currently provides an accredited 13 week Business Planning module for entrepreneurs.

Evolving demand-led provision

With the exception of the Knowledge Transfer Partnership programme, the examples of employer engagement activity within UoG given above illustrate that, in common with the sector as a whole, the University's work-based learning provision has focused primarily on supporting the individual needs of learners to meet their personal and professional development needs. Over the past few years, however, the University has been developing more flexible policies and structures to enable it to move towards a model of provision which is more strategically demand-led.

Work-based Learning

Some professionally-accredited courses which traditionally have been delivered by taught programmes are now being delivered via work-based learning, eg CIPD, as are some of the new Foundation degrees, eg Logistics Management (developed in consultation with the British Army and running from 2008/9). Departments are actively exploring moving towards more local, flexible provision, proposing ideas, such as accredited short courses, that are now possible as a consequence of processes that have been enabled through the Gloucestershire Framework (see below). For example, the Department of Human Resources are proposing a range of short courses (weekend delivery) that can be taken in any combination with the potential for accreditation. These courses can also be attended individually. This allows flexibility in provision but within a clear structure. There are concerns in some departments, however, over the resource implications of wholly work-based learning courses.

Gloucestershire Framework for Personal and Professional Development

Willis (2008) identified that HEIs need to establish a framework '*designed to facilitate the accreditation, within higher education, of work based and work-related learning*' as a means of ensuring academic integrity and flexibility within the system. The University validated its own Shell Framework, called the Gloucestershire Framework for Personal and Professional Development, on 7th May 2009. This framework is designed to allow maximum flexibility for employers and learners whilst maintaining academic standards. It has the capacity to have nested within it small and distinct learning events such as CPD opportunities as well as standard module length credits. These can be built up into different awards including certificates and diplomas, Foundation Degree, Honours top-up and Masters level qualifications. This enables multiple exit points and avoids problems with attrition.

The Framework includes generic material which is necessary to meet the requirements of the regulatory Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). Assessment and 'delivery' will be through a mixture of WBL based on employment-related material, APEL and off-the-shelf modules. These elements can be delivered via relevant departments in UoG or Gloucestershire College (GC), by Nexus partner providers, or by employers.

The sector-specific elements inside the framework allow for coverage of sector and employment specific professional content which can be provided as traditional modules, work-based learning projects, or through Employer Based Training Accreditation (EBTA).

The Gloucestershire Framework was informed by a county-wide study into Gloucestershire Higher Education provision undertaken in conjunction with Gloucestershire College, Royal Agricultural College and the University of the West of England. Based on the outcomes of this project, these partners submitted a successful bid to HEFCE for the Nexus project.

Initial developments that will employ the Gloucestershire Framework are:

1. Nexus project

NEXUS Project: *Demand-led Higher Skills Provision in Gloucestershire*. A HEFCE-funded project, whose focus is on the achievement of sustainable employer-focused HE provision in Gloucestershire. This involves the development of a demand-led, commercially-focused organisation that will deliver flexible third stream HE and FE level programmes to employers and employees. Project partners in the NEXUS project are: Gloucestershire College; Royal Agricultural College; University of the West of England and Business Link.

2. Cathedral Workshops Fellowships and Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment

Conversion of existing Apprenticeships in Heritage Stonemasonry and Stone Conservation and Heritage Building Skills to Foundation Degrees (Faculty of Media, Arts and Communication).

3. Every Child Matters and the Common Assessment Framework

Collaborative project to develop a training strategy for a county-wide initiative relating to the broad Every Child Matters agenda. This involves accrediting and developing existing training packages. The initiative involves Gloucestershire County Council, the Gloucestershire Constabulary, the Child Protection Agency, the Local Education Authority, the Area Health Authority and a range of community and voluntary organisations. A significant element of the project relates to training in inter-agency working (Faculties of Sport, Health & Social Care and Education, Humanities & Sciences).

Relevant systems

The University of Gloucestershire has a range of e-learning systems. These include WebCT and Moodle (WebCT will cease to be used from September 2009), Questionmark Perception, PebblePad and ELLI (Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory)³. The most relevant to this project are PebblePad and ELLI.

PebblePad

PebblePad: the University of Gloucestershire was the first commercial user of PebblePad and has been using this system since 2005. PebblePad is now being used across all Faculties in the University primarily to support PDP developments.

ELLI

ELLI is a personal development tool based on a questionnaire developed by the University of Bristol that is designed to find out how learners perceive themselves in relation to seven 'dimensions of learning': Changing and Learning, Meaning Making, Curiosity, Creativity, Learning Relationships and Strategic Awareness. The resulting ELLI profile gives information which can be used to indicate how a learner, or a group of learners, may develop their learning capacity.

UoG has acquired the intellectual property rights (IPR) to ELLI by taking over the Lifelong Learning Foundation and through transfer of IPR from the University of Bristol. Under the new arrangements, there will be close links with the University of Bristol, which will conduct research on ELLI, whilst the University of Gloucestershire will develop ELLI as a tool for adult learners. The intention is to link the learner profiles generated by ELLI with PebblePad in order to enhance personal development planning.

University of Winchester

The University of Winchester has many different lines within which employer engagement is sought and gained. These engagements have varied from the curriculum development of a programme of study between the University and Logica CMG to supporting students and staff gaining business start-up awards to support enterprising minds.

Within the curriculum there are a range of different opportunities on specific programmes of study for students to reflect on practical experiences of workplace and work-based learning. Similarly to the University of Gloucestershire, our curriculum engagements with employers occur through all levels of the curriculum.

The University has always been motivated to engage with communities wider than the one in which we work, and in bridging a gap between higher education and employers, we have looked at implementing several different initiatives to increase the dialogue with businesses. All of these can be found on our website⁴ and include:

- Consultancy;⁵
- Research;
- Business Start-Up Award Scheme;
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses;

³ <http://www.ellionline.co.uk/>

⁴ <http://www.winchester.university2business.co.uk/>

⁵ http://www.winchester.university2business.co.uk/search_industries.asp?i=0

- Work Placements/ Volunteering Opportunities;
- Graduate Employment
 - for instance, recently becoming part of Graduate Jobs South⁶;
- Conference Facilities.

Some of the curriculum areas the University offers (ranging from Foundation level up to postgraduate degrees) include:

- Education (Advanced Educational Studies);
- Education (Early Years Professional Status);
- Education (Professional Enquiry);
- Health and Social Care;
- Marketing;
- Human Resources;
- Psychology;
- Disability;
- Mentoring;
- Theology and Religious Studies;

Moodle and PebblePad @ Winchester

The University selected a Moodle-based Learning Network which also has integrated Wimba software to increase the flexibility of our delivery where needed and appropriate. The University will also be trialling PebblePad for one year with a view to implementation across the University. The PebblePad system will then be utilised for the Portfolio for Employment and the Winchester Passport.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy @Winchester

The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy⁷ has 4 main foci:

1. Learning Opportunities;
2. Teaching within the University;
3. Assessment and Feedback;
4. Employability and Lifelong Learning.

Within the strategy, these are then broken down further into 9 key objectives which have been subsequently written into the University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Implementation Plan to identify very clear actions to achieve the objectives stated.

Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network (WVLLN)

WVLLN are involved in a number of curriculum initiatives with institutions from across the region. These provide examples of the projects that Co-genT can link with during the lifetime of the project. Details of the projects can be found at <http://www.wvlln.ac.uk/employers/curriculum-update>. In summary, they include:

- the University of the West of England (UWE) working in close partnership with the Great Western Ambulance Service to develop a Foundation Degree designed to meet the needs of

⁶ <http://www.graduatejobsouth.co.uk/home.aspx>

⁷ <http://www.winchester.ac.uk/?page=10193>

paramedics. This initiative incorporates the development of work-based coaching and mentoring;

- the Royal Agricultural College (RAC) is developing bespoke training for the dairy industry utilising a combination of WVLLN and Higher Level Skills Pathway Project (HLSPP) funding and has developed a Foundation Degree in Environment and Conservation Management.

National/regional situation

South West Regional Shell Framework

The South West Regional Shell provides a framework for the acceptance of credit from other awarding bodies as a formal part of an integrated professional development award. It also allows the integration of short courses/CPD and experiential learning into a higher education qualification. <http://www.herda-sw.ac.uk/currentprojects/HigherSkills/ShellFramework.aspx>

Relevant JISC projects

Work undertaken on the Co-genT project will draw upon past and present JISC projects. Current JISC projects under the Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development strand will provide obvious points of overlap, notably in:

1. use of e-portfolios;
2. development of a vocabulary;
3. flexible delivery;
4. tool development;
5. personalised learning.

The following projects, showing the areas of related interest, have been noted:

- [An e-Portfolio based Pedagogy for SMEs](#) [1, 3]
- [Middlesex University Skills and Education Planning Tool \(MUSKET\)](#) [2, 4]
- [Partnership Investigations into Accredited Prior/Previous \(Pineapple\)](#) [1]
- [Personalised systems supporting IPD and CPD within a professional framework \(CPD-Eng\)](#) [1, 5]
- [Shared Architecture for eEmployer, Student and Organisational Networking \(SAMSON\)](#) [2]
- [Technology Enabled Learning Support for Training and Accreditation Recognition \(TELSTAR\)](#) [1, 4, 5]
- [Workforce Engagement in Lifelong Learning \(WELL\)](#) [1, 3]

Past JISC projects that have been identified as potentially relevant to Co-genT include:

- Mod4L Project (<http://www.academy.gcal.ac.uk/mod4l/>): part of the Design for Learning programme, this project provides an overview of visual representations of learning designs which will inform the development of the Explain and Share tool.
- Xcri: eXchanging Course Related Information (<http://www.xcri.org/>): a means of describing course information, which could potentially be used to standardise modules available through the Gloucestershire Framework and to provide examples of courses created. Its use will need to be discussed in conjunction with the University of Gloucestershire's JISC-funded Supporting Learner Administration Processes (SLAP) project.

- MyPlan (<http://www.lkl.ac.uk/research/myplan/>): this project, with its aims to develop and deploy tools and techniques for personalised lifelong learning, will be monitored by Co-genT.
- Future Skills for Creative Industries in West London (<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/bce/futureskills.aspx>): looking at the development of workforce development services across more than one institution.

Other projects

The Co-genT team will monitor progress of other workforce development projects, such as those identified at the Higher Education Academy's 'Better Together' event (Higher Education Academy, 2009) and through the Academy's employer engagement links (eg <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/institutions/engagement/eemap>).

Identified 'gaps': the role of Co-genT

Eyres *et al* (2008: 99) observe that '*positive responses to this agenda [workforce development] are to be embedded within institutions, it will require transformational change to the traditional models of delivery in higher education*'. Two significant 'gaps' that they identify are the need for effective means of communication between academia and employers, and secondly, for quality assurance and enhancement processes (QATG, 2008). In addition, Willis (2008) has noted the need for frameworks that will support the second gap. In essence there is a need to develop procedures over and above the existing work-based learning provision which has been embedded within traditional curricula and associated processes.

Co-genT will address these gaps through:

- establishment of procedures ensuring flexibility and responsiveness within a rigorous academic framework that ensures appropriate standards are met;
- vocabulary to facilitate communication and alignment between academic standards and occupational standards;
- development of a Toolkit that supports the development of individual learning programmes.

Stakeholders

This baselining activity was undertaken in consultation with stakeholders from CEI, Careers, Gloucestershire Business School, UoG Faculty of Media, Arts and Communication, TLI, LETS, CeAL, Student Union, UoG Academic Frameworks, Nexus project staff, and project partners at the University of Winchester and the Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network (WVLLN).

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