

CETL Final Self Evaluation Report for HEFCE

Part one – statistical information

a) Name of CETL

Aspire (Advancing Skills for Professionals in the Rural Economy)

b) Name of Institution(s)

Harper Adams University College

c) Contact name (someone likely to be in post until July 2010)

Dr Abigail Hind

d) Name of person submitting the self-evaluation

Abigail Hind

e) Start date of CETL

May 2005 (started recruiting / seconding staff)

f) Anticipated end date of CETL (if known, ie will it end with the money, when, will it continue in some recognisable form?)

Aspects of the programme will continue indefinitely beyond the end of the funding period because it has always been central to our Learning and Teaching Strategy. We are yet to agree the extent to which we will continue to use the *Aspire* name for branding purposes, although anticipate that the name will continue because of the currency it has gained.

g) Lead Director(s) and dates associated with CETL

Dr Abigail Hind – co-author of bid and will continue in post beyond funding period.

h) Total amount of award: capital and running

£940,000 awarded for capital costs and £200,000 pa awarded for running costs

i) Briefly describe what the capital was used for (eg refurbishment of three small group teaching rooms and small lecture theatre; building of office and informal social/learning space for students)

Capital was used:

(1) towards refurbishing a building, the *Aspire* Centre, previously used by the domestic services and estates teams, as a one-stop-shop for student support and learning developments in relation to the *Aspire* programme's themes and to refurbish existing /erect new buildings for the displaced domestic services and estates teams and
(2) towards improving the IT infrastructure to better support technology enhanced learning, including contributions to portal development; extension of the wireless network; extending the number of student-facing computers; software acquisition; learner support laptops for loan to students; virtualisation of servers; purchase of online learning resources; additional audio visual capacity so that all classrooms were equipped with data projection; and the purchase of video-conferencing equipment.

j) What will these facilities be used for in academic year 2010-11? (indicative/anticipated)

The *Aspire* Centre will be used to house the increased team of staff that is necessary to focus on the work of one of the five *Aspire* programmes themes, in relation to work-based learning and our growing employer engagement work. Many of the staff associated with the other themes of the programme and who are currently located in the *Aspire* Centre will be relocating to a newly built Student Services Centre in September

2010. This relocation of staff extends the philosophy and associated success of the *Aspire* Centre in that it will enable the co-location of increased numbers of employer engagement staff in one place **and** the continuing co-location of other key support staff, who have been central to the *Aspire* programme's work, alongside each other as well as other key academic support services staff who are also student-facing.

k) Average number over lifetime of the CETL of persons employed at any one time, in FTEs and by type: academic, admin, other (please indicate job type)

The Aspire programme has provided time release for established, full-time staff and has funded part-time staff to undertake additional duties directly related to the *Aspire* programme themes, across the institution. The summary provided accounts only for those staff for whom the *Aspire* budget explicitly covers part or the whole of their salary; it does **not** account for payments made to departments in recognition of the work that staff have undertaken through the *Aspire* Development Fellowship Scheme, typically on a one-two year basis (as item m).

Four academic staff (1.75 FTE)
Two academic support staff (0.6 FTE)
Three administrative staff (2.00 FTE)
Three IT staff (2.5 FTE)
Total of 12 staff (6.85 FTE)

l) What are staff employed by the CETL towards the end of its HEFCE funded life going to do when this funding ends? Summarise, do not name staff, eg 2 part-time academic staff will return to full-time university role; centre administrator has job in private sector lined up; research officer has an academic appointment for 2010-11 in another university; learning technologist will remain employed by host faculty to continue similar work; not yet clear for 1 staff member)

It is anticipated that all staff will continue to work within the university college in identical or similar posts, given that growth in associated activities and students should support such.

m) Number of 'spin out' projects funded: List projects by title and amount awarded, and name institution if other than host.

'In-house'

2005/6

- Sandra Hayes – resources for blended learning awarded £4,560
- Emma Tappin – preparation for placement awarded £4,500
- Sarah Parsons - numeracy support and developing confidence in maths awarded £6,509
- Tric Parrott – video production awarded £3,620
- Susan Ragbourne – blended learning for part-time FdSc REALM awarded £9,990.
- John Adams - e-learning with farm business data awarded £4,500

2006/7

- Greg Rowsell -The development of interactive, reusable learning objects and Computer Aided Assessment tools to support module EC003 CAD & Mechanical Design £5,200 (although £7000 originally budgeted).

- David White - Development and evaluation of a chapter for a Harper Adams University College online farm machinery text interactive learning object awarded £4,200 (although £6,900 originally budgeted)
- Scott Kirby & Lin Davies - Increasing access to farm based resources through the use of electronic communication tools awarded £4,100

2008/9

- Emma Tappin – Online support for personal and professional development awarded £5,950
- Peter Kettlewell – An e-learning aid for Agriculture and Animals Honours Research Projects: How to use GenStat to analyse data from experiments awarded £2,507
- Fiona Davies: Developing interactive web-based community and resources to encourage and develop entrepreneurial skills for students using new technology awarded £10,000
- Julie Boone – Web 2.0 for knowledge sharing – towards the creation of learning communities awarded £2,560
- Tom Underhill – Using text-based mobile communication (SMS) to support teaching, learning and student mentoring: a pilot study awarded £5406 (although £6546 originally awarded)
- Jayne Powles – Development of multimedia-based reusable learning objects to enhance student learning in laboratory-based classes and related field classes awarded £4,066.

2009/10

- Roger Greenhalgh, Tony Asson and Aneka Patel – Exploring the use of interactive video technology to enhance student feedback in the digital age awarded £1,440
- Greg Rowsell – An investigation into the development and use of innovative RLOs to promote and support student centred learning awarded £9,410
- Mark Rutter, Graham Scott, Moira Harris, Henry Keil – Creating an interactive, touch screen video encyclopaedia in the Companion Animal House linked to animal behaviour modules awarded £5,620
- Izzy Warren-Smith Creating a flexible learning support community to facilitate the development of independent postgraduate research awarded £8,350
- Kathryn Greaves, Jo Elliot and Curwen Thomas – Developing the information literacy skills of students awarded £10,000
- Sandra Pattinson, John Donaldson and Carole Brizuela – Creating multimedia based RLOs for the teaching of ruminant livestock management awarded £5,850
- Nicky Hunter and Jane Hill – Investigating assessment feedback to establish how effective it is in helping students feed-forward to improve their skills awarded £5,860
- Maxwell Winchester and Tiffany Winchester – Exploring the utility of using a VLE for weekly student evaluations awarded £ 6,650
- Julie Boone and Sandra Turner – Developing learning resources and activities to enhance research skills awarded £5,000

'External'

2006/7

- Peter Green - Reviewing and developing work based activities within Foundation Degree programmes (Reaseheath College) awarded £7,200
- Suzanne Richardson - Developing and Using Peer and Self Assessment in Group Work Assignments (Askham Bryan College) awarded £1,500

2007/8

- Abi Smith – Developing a Learning and Teaching Strategy drawing on lessons from the United States (Shrewsbury College awarded £2,000)
- Angela Peers – Creating placement guidance and a CPD unit for placement practitioners (Manchester Metropolitan University) awarded £4,000

2009/10

- Richard Booth – Formative audio feedback – assessing the benefits of ESOL students (Shrewsbury College) awarded £3,970
- Neil Ridley – Understanding and developing leadership education in farming (Otley College) awarded £3890
- Liz Amesbury – Dyslexia tuition in HE: developing an ILP and study skills audit (University of Wolverhampton) awarded £4,000
- Glenys Tucker - Pilot project to assess the effectiveness of using a Z-pen as a tool to facilitate learning for students awarded £1,400

n) Number of peer reviewed outputs published that relate to CETL work – list in Annex A

Four, including most accessed article in journal for 2009 (Parsons et al. 2009).

- i. If you wish, list up to 5 other outputs that have not been peer reviewed (to be updated)

o) Number of events held to develop or disseminate work beyond the CETL in the last three years internally; externally. Please also draw attention by means of a short paragraph each 3-5 events that have been especially important or noteworthy, eg title, date, size, type of attendees, purpose, why it was important.

A total of 230 separate internal and external events have received input from key *Aspire* personnel since 2005, of which 166 were in the last three years. Internal events include Learning and Teaching Forum sessions (although these welcome partners for which we validate awards) and events run under the auspices of the Moodle User Group. Another key series of events has been run, with *Aspire* programme support, through the REEDNet programme, in conjunction with partners in that work, the Royal Agricultural College. There have been two external events; a conference that was held in May 2008 and which attracted 94 participants (of whom 56 were external, including six employer partner representatives) and a Placement Learning Seminar in April 2010 which attracted 30 participants, of whom 17 were external.

The *Aspire* conference in April 2008 was important as it covered the full range of activities within the *Aspire* programme and helped us identify potential academic and academic support partners for joint development fellowship work, based on sharing some of our earlier work in the first 30 months of the programme. It also provided a focus of celebration internally and there was a real sense of occasion, with large numbers of internal colleagues playing host to our guests.

The Placement Seminar in April 2010 was particularly important in the context of vocational land-based curriculum and an aspect on which responsible personnel in universities and colleges can benefit from sharing good practice and solving problems. This event resulted in the creation of an online community of placement practitioners.

The Learning and Teaching Forum events are run as, primarily, internal events and whilst its existence pre-dates the *Aspire* programme, it has been used as a key vehicle through which innovators have sought to raise awareness and excite interest in aspects of their work that others may wish to take forward. Four day-length events are held annually, with each day made up of a series of individually promoted sessions. Both internal and external facilitators lead individual events. Within the last three years, there have been 308 participations in 21 Forum events focused on at least one of the *Aspire* themes.

The Moodle User Group is an informal grouping of internal colleagues who are keen to make best use of the virtual learning environment. It meets roughly termly and provides a forum through which colleagues share existing practice and also look to solve problems using, or associated with, the VLE.

Another key group that has been meeting regularly is the REEDNet/*Aspire* group of colleagues, associated with developing work-based learning. REEDNet is a HEFCE-funded employer engagement programme, whose work overlaps, and complements, that of the *Aspire* programme. In addition to collaborative working with key REEDNet partner, the Royal Agricultural College, through online tools, there have been frequent 'events' where each institution's relevant staff come together to share their work and look to resolve common issues and problems and identify joint opportunities.

- p) **If any appropriately experienced member of your CETL team wishes to participate in a peer review scheme of CETL self-evaluations, please provide their names and contact details, especially e-mail. (*Participation in the scheme means that you are putting your own self-evaluation up for peer review and indicating willingness to act as a peer reviewer for up to 2 other self-evaluations. These will need to be completed within a reasonable timescale, to be determined once we see how many people wish to be involved.*)**

Not applicable due to competing time commitments.

Part two – evaluative reflection

Question 1

Please reflect on how effective your CETL has been in contributing to the objectives set out for the CETL initiative when it started. Be concise and do not exceed 1,000 words for the whole of the question.

- (i) **To reward practice that demonstrates excellent learning outcomes for students.**

The Staff Excellence Fellowship Award Scheme (www.harper-adams.ac.uk/aspire/excellence.cfm) has run since 2006 and has provided a means by which staff and students can make an online nomination for a member of staff to be recognised and rewarded for their contributions to supporting learning. The Excellent Practice (five awards annually) and Developing & Sharing Excellence (five awards annually) were available in 2006-07 & 2007-08 with an additional award for Supporting the Wider Student Experience (5) in 2008-09 and 2009-10. Individual tax-free cash awards have been set at £500, although some awards have been given jointly between members of staff.

Although recipients of the Excellence awards are clearly pleased with the recognition and reward, (as are some nominees who are not successful), the extent to which the Scheme has a motivating effect on all staff to encourage greater levels of learning development is not clear-cut. Respondents to the Staff Survey reflected the overall staff population in that 40% of respondents had been nominated for an Excellent Practice or Developing and Sharing Excellence Award, with approximately 22% of potential recipients (based on job roles) actually having received an award. When asked, 50% of staff indicated that the Staff Excellence Scheme had no real motivating effect, 'one way or the other', in relation to the included aspects and one or two members of staff said it had a negative effect in relation to each aspect. There were a number of comments to suggest that whilst not a direct motivator it is 'good to have one's efforts recognised'. Other comments reflected the view that, 'Awards for staff are valuable. There aren't many systems through which we, the people on the ground, can get recognition as the rewards tend to be placed with managers so these are a welcome way of recognising the people who are working well'

- (ii) **To enable practitioners to lead and embed change by implementing approaches that address the diversity of learners' needs, the requirements of different learning contexts, the possibilities for innovation and the expectations of employers and others concerned with the quality of student learning.**

The *Aspire* Development Fellowship Scheme (<http://www.harper-adams.ac.uk/aspire/fellows.cfm>) has supported 24 projects (as part 1, question m), and in doing so has harnessed the creative imagination of more than 40 colleagues to innovate through their direct involvement in projects. The extent to which the scheme can be seen as a reward, to those involved is difficult to defend categorically, given the additional time burden that has often been imposed on the individuals involved, in spite of the intention that Development awards should provide time and space to innovate. Staff feedback indicates that although the scheme has been largely ineffective in freeing up time, it is perceived to have been effective in achieving its other ambitions to support student learning, enable innovation, promote collaborative working and spread good practice.

This difficulty was illustrated by some, although not universal, views arising from interviews with ten staff members, as illustrated: *'Development Fellowship awards are good as they inspire innovation but they are taken up by the people that would probably do it anyway. Also though, the Fellowships do not allow time to be freed up because of workload issues so it is work on top of work rather than released time. No real time is allocated for Fellowships. This is the main problem.'* Another interviewee indicated that, *'They have allowed me to develop new skills and progress an idea, but not through the provision of time,'* and another that, *'The Fellowship Scheme is a driver for innovation but it must be changed so that sufficient time is really freed up'.*

The contributions of colleagues to support others in innovation have generally been welcomed. Each of the e-learning, placement, learner support and work-based learning themes have benefitted from additional staff capacity and capability. These appointees and secondees not only pursued their own activities to support students, but have also provided a source of guidance and encouragement to others. Quotes from some staff interviewees are as follows: *'Some innovators within the College see Aspire as unnecessary; they can get on without it, but for others (like me), the set up enables me to get things done, because I can draw upon expertise that otherwise I wouldn't have access to',* and *'Some staff will continue to need (or benefit from) the 'creative people' in Aspire, to progress new ideas and push boundaries'.* Another commented that, *'The Aspire staff all seem to work to boost others and this helps get things off the ground I think, like with the Fellowship Awards. They are a good way to get things started'.* The work of the e-learning team is particularly focused on collaborative working to enable others to make more effective use of technology enhanced learning, with and without with Development project plans. The Moodle training sessions run by the team are also seen as one of the most effective ways of supporting staff in this area.

(iii) To enable institutions to support and develop practice that encourages deeper understanding across the sector of ways of addressing students' learning effectively.

Eight external colleagues have taken up the Partner Development Fellowship Scheme, which provides funded time to work on projects of mutual interest with colleagues based at Harper Adams. The uptake of the scheme has been a little disappointing as a target of 20 was set out in the initial project. A similar number of expressions of interest and bids were made but did not eventually come to fruition, largely because of the changed roles, employment or increased workload of those who had successfully secured funds. Whilst the collaborative working opportunities the scheme has created have been useful, to both partners, it is not possible to indicate the extent to which these projects have affected student learning in other institutions.

(iv) To recognise and give greater prominence to clusters of excellence that are capable of influencing practice and raising the profile of teaching excellence within and beyond their institutions.

See response to Part 2, Question 1 i-iii. Additionally, the draft report arising from Harper Adams' institutional audit in March 2010 notes, in relation to quality enhancement, that, "The *Aspire* programme has been an important catalyst, in particular, through the fellowship scheme and associated projects, as described above (see paragraphs 62-63; 75). The evaluation reports on *Aspire* reviewed by the audit team showed a wide range of activity with detailed progress monitoring using performance indicators. The outcomes of *Aspire* projects have been well publicised

internally and externally through numerous events, which have served, in the team's view, to make *Aspire* a valued brand." (paragraph 86)

(v) To demonstrate collaboration and sharing of good practice and so enhance the standard of teaching and effective learning throughout the sector.

See response to Part 2 Question 1 iii

(vi) To raise student awareness of effectiveness in teaching and learning in order to inform student choice and maximise student performance.

With the creation of the *Aspire* programme, increased focus has been given to the development work undertaken in relation to placement learning, work-based learning, learner support, technology enhanced learning and skills for employment. This has been highlighted through applicant open days and to students through a range of student achievement awards linked to the *Aspire* programme themes.

Growing applicant numbers for full-time places over each of the five years since the creation of the programme cannot be attributed solely to the promotion of the *Aspire* CETL, but analysis of the responses to open questions put to new students on their choice of university suggests that applicants and their parents are influenced by the activities in these areas. Likewise, the growth in employer engagement developments has been supported by the innovative work undertaken under the auspices of the programme.

The contribution of the student achievement award scheme in core components of the curriculum has not been clearly demonstrated to act as a clear motivator to improve student performance, based on staff feedback, although a number of recipients have indicated their pleasure in being recognised because of the high levels of commitment that they had individually made, sometimes overcoming personal challenges in doing so.

Question 2

Please set out the aims and objectives specific to your CETL at the start; and for each one reflect how well these have been achieved. Be concise and do not exceed 1,000 words for the whole of the question.

The *Aspire* programme aimed to develop approaches to learning and student support across five overlapping themes: work-based learning, placement learning, learner support, technology enhanced learning and academic and professional skills development. At the programme level, as opposed to within each theme for which there were supporting goals, the objectives were as follows:

- i. To create a physical centre in the heart of the campus that, within the context of a curriculum related to the changing needs of the rural economy and food chain.*

The *Aspire* Centre, a refurbished building, which provides a base for key (but not all) members of the placement, work-based learning and learner support teams is situated in the heart of the campus. It is widely used by a cross-section of staff and students, including work-based learners. Table 1 summarises responses to the Staff Survey on perceptions of the *Aspire* Centre.

Table 1: Staff response to question 'How important has the *Aspire* Centre been for each of the following?'

***Aspire* Centre Importance**

Very/Important

Providing a one-stop-shop of better integrated support for students	67% (91%*)
Enabling people from different departments to come together to work more closely	49%
Acting as a hub of information or support to support your own practice	49%
Symbolising the importance of learning and teaching at Harper Adams	78%

* academic staff response

Comments from individual staff interviews on their impressions of the *Aspire* Centre include:

- A 'Creative hub'
- 'Vibrant with student traffic'
- 'Students associate the building with the brand. The brand signifies help, a place to get help'
- 'Appealing and professional centre which conveys a good image of Harper'
- 'The name is even inspiring! It sets a good tone for discussions and meetings'
- 'Useful hub for external clients – allows us to appear professional'
- 'It looks business like and efficient – it gives a good impression that we are a modern institution with a range of facilities.'

See Part 1 Question j for an outline of how the Centre will be utilised from 2010/11. The *Aspire* Centre is considered a considerable success and one which we hope to replicate in a new and much larger Student Services Centre.

- ii. *To improve our IT platform so that learning technologies can be fully exploited in improving both the learning environment and support for campus-based and distant students.*

The *Aspire* programme is considered by colleagues, including the Head of IS¹, to have facilitated a faster implementation of the Harper Adams information strategy and the effectiveness of technology-enhanced learning. This has been based on a shared vision with innovative approaches to learning and widening participation using technology.

Table 3 provides a summary of the change in provision.

Table 3: Technical data relating to IS infrastructure over time

Description	2003-4	2008-9
College student facing computers	291	425
Wireless based student own computer connections	40	750
Total computer connections on campus	331	1175
Students per connected computer	4.39	1.52
Engineering workstations processor	2.8 GHz	Xeon2.93GHz
Engineering workstations memory	0.5GB	6.0GB
Engineering workstations disk	80.GB	250.0GB
Network availability (% of 24/7)	72.0	99.98
Local network bandwidth	100MBps	1000MBps
JANET link bandwidth	<10MBps	310MBps
Data storage capacity	1.7TB	14.0TB

¹ Internal report by Head of IS: Strategic developments in IS between 2003-4 and 2009-10

Whilst there can be no doubt from the data in Table 3 that the IT platform has been strengthened to support much greater use by on and off-campus based learners, including external access to email and network files over the period, the growing demand for use means that, on occasion, the infrastructure still struggles to supply services speedily at busy times, including for work-based learners. These challenges relate to greatly increased expectations of a much larger and much more diverse group of users. Notwithstanding these remaining challenges, substantial development has taken place both in the technological infrastructure of the College and through innovative systems developments in a wide range of areas, on which it is considered the *Aspire* programme has helped to catalyse progress.

- iii. *To provide a Fellowship and Staff Development Programme to encourage and reward staff who engage and disseminate outcomes of planned CETL developments.*
- iv. *To provide the specialist support, staff development, time and rewards to encourage and facilitate staff and students to develop and evaluate learning and teaching innovations*
- v. *To harness the imagination and creativity of all academic staff to develop and reflect on innovative approaches to learning and learner support, through Aspire fellowships.*
- vi. *To support staff to disseminate their evaluation findings, internally, and externally through speaking at learning & teaching events, contributing to research-based publications and by providing opportunities for inward secondments.*

See response to Part 2 Question 1 ii and Part 1 o, in addition to the summary of development and dissemination activity in Table 2:

Table 2: Summary of *Aspire* development and dissemination activities

	<i>Aspire</i> programme	Learner support	Placement	Work-based learning	e-learning	Professional skills	Totals
Development days (no days)	26	107	77	16	14	55	295
Dissemination (to internal participants)	2081	435	139	162	453	198	3468
Dissemination (to external participants)	1598	289	461	310	545	1411	4614
Other external activity (no events)	9	2	4	9	3	41	68

Our assessment is that, on the basis of 24 internal development projects, eight partner development fellowships, 295 staff development days and a total of 8282 dissemination 'hits', the programme has supported significant levels of development and dissemination activities. Whilst this level of activity is reflected in feedback from the staff survey which indicates that most people feel well equipped to support students, a significant minority need further assistance. Unsurprisingly, given that it is the newest area of provision, some staff have less confidence in their ability to support work-based learning. Feedback through the staff survey also indicates that many staff feel better prepared to support the various areas of work than before the commencement of the programme.

Our assessment is that, with modest levels of additional resource, these objectives have been largely met.

Question 3

Please add any objectives that emerged as the CETL developed, and reflect on these as for question 2 (500 words maximum).

No specific objectives have emerged although planned developments have evolved, and typically extended, over time. Because the work of the programme is so central to the Learning and Teaching Strategy, and because most postholders do not work exclusively towards *Aspire* programme objectives, it is difficult to separate CETL work from other work.

Question 4

Irrespective of your answers to questions 2 and 3 above, please reflect on, and draw out the achievements and benefits of the CETL (1000 words maximum). (Think about different audiences, types of output, impact internal and externally, on professional/staff development, on student learning, work over an extended period, use of money for facilities development etc).

In addition to the responses given in Questions 2 and 3 in Part 2, please find a summary in relation to each of the *Aspire* programme themes.

Work-based learning

- Understanding the different needs of work-based learners.
- Understanding of the range and depth of challenges face by students.
- Understanding best practice for student documentation/information for work-based learners (e.g. student handbooks).
- Flexible approaches to provision have been developed across a range of programmes.
- Evidenced impact (personal and professional impact) on individuals of engaging in work-based learning.
 - Impacts evidenced within the data collected included improvements in personal confidence, professional competence development, identifying and opening up career paths, financial reward and the development of a sense of increased professional respect from colleagues.
- Online provision is beginning to form – early initiatives have been made operational.
- Access to a network of providers built up initially through relationships built up over the *Aspire* years - making access to provision more convenient.
- A committee infrastructure to ensure a proportionate route to validation for employer engagement provision.
- An internal network of staff working collaboratively to develop, and to support others in developing, innovative provision.
- Guidance (written and oral) and work-based learning specific documentation to support the construction of employer engagements.
- Access to national communities of practice to support and inform developments.
- A growing culture of collective confidence in the area of work-based learning.
- A deeper understanding of possible curriculum solutions, and a culture which has a preparedness to experiment appropriately.
- Greater understanding of assessment practices for work-based learners.

- Interaction with staff from other institutions during joint development events.
- Benefit from Harper Adams' engagement in external communities of practice (critical friendship and shared experiences).
- Exemplary practice developed at Harper Adams has been recognised at relevant events (e.g. REEDNet initiative cited by HEFCE at UVAC 2009).
- Working relationships with staff in other institutions have been built through the development of networked provision.
- Tangible benefits to the work of employees impacts on business (efficiency, excellence, learning culture).
- Businesses benefit from meeting legal requirements where provision is legislation driven.
- Employers have received training (or have been partners in building training) which pioneers new approaches to learning. They have benefited from *Aspire's* investment in innovation.

Placement learning

- Support before and whilst on placement - enhanced support before and on placement through additional staffing on placement administration, sharing of good practice, enhanced training of Placement Managers (through Placement Co-ordinator) and ancillary support through E-learning provision and Learning Support.
- Learner support provision - the enhanced provision in this, together with an increased emphasis on college-wide dissemination of information has improved the support offered to students both in the process of obtaining a placement position and whilst out at work.
- Enhanced interaction between staff both within the Placement Team and related areas (particularly WBL and Careers) through the function of the Director of the *Aspire* programme and the Placement Co-ordinator.
- Assessment of placement outcomes - the college-wide co-ordination of placement has resulted in improvements in the evolution of placement assessments and the analysis of student and employer feedback on the content, timing and format of assessments.
- Health and safety - closely monitored systems implemented college-wide on the pre-placement health and safety assessment of employers, briefing of Placement Managers and visiting tutors, guidance for employers and systems to ensure the capture of, and reaction to, information from students.
- The development and enhancement of good practice in the fulfilment of academic, pastoral and legal obligations through the appointment of a college-wide Placement Co-ordinator.

Learner support

- The new location increased the profile of Learner Support and enabled it to provide a more professional service in a discreet but accessible environment. The concept of a 'one stop shop' has encouraged students to use all aspects of the service and in particular it has proved to be a very suitable environment for students to book and utilise 1:1 support sessions.
- Feedback from a recent survey² of service users indicated that overall students were very positive and they felt that the LST encouraged and supported learners to

² Learner Support Survey June 2007

overcome their difficulties, was well organised, worked efficiently and communicated exceptionally.

- The Learner Support Team was short listed in October 2009 for a 'THE' award in the category 'Outstanding Support for Students' recognising the support delivered to students across the institution in a holistic manner.

Technology enhanced learning

- The *HarperMoodle* VLE provides a robust and reliable infrastructure for online learning both for campus-based and increasingly for off-site learners. As a result it has been possible to make considerable progress in regards to usage by staff and, flowing from that by students.
- Usage of the VLE has surpassed the initial targets set out in the initial *Aspire* plans, leading to increased levels of student satisfaction in its use.
- The noticeable increase in the number of non-credit bearing modules will support all students regardless of the modules and courses they are enrolled in and many modules are provided and maintained by both academic and support staff.
- The e-learning team has been involved in supporting a large number of *Aspire* Development Fellows in relevant project. The number of collaborative projects has increased in the final years of the programme and this is to be celebrated.
- Confidence in the use of learning technologies to support campus-based learners should prepare tutors to support greater numbers of work-based learners.

Professional skills development

- Students have benefitted from support to develop not only their academic skills but also their professional employment skills. Despite increased numbers of students and a difficult economic climate, placement employment and achievement levels have remained as high as ever, as have graduate employment levels.
- The introduction of the Rural Skills Programme has complemented the support of transferable skills by equipping placement students with relevant license to practice skills.

Question 5

Have there been any disappointments in how the CETL has developed/what it has achieved. What are they, why did they happen? (600 words maximum).

Whilst work-based learning has become an increasingly important priority for the institution, and is an area in which great headway has been made, there is some disappointment that employer engagement activities and work-based learning still appear to be perceived as a marginal activity by a number of tutors. Whilst greater numbers of staff have, undoubtedly, become increasingly engaged in this work, a significant number remain unengaged, due to their individual commitments in other activity areas.

The uptake of the Partner Development Scheme has also been a little disappointing as a target of 20 was set out in the initial project, against eight awarded and taken up. A similar number of expressions of interest and bids were made but did not eventually come to fruition, largely because of the changed roles, employment or increased workload of those who had successfully secured funds.

A further area of frustration, rather than disappointment, is related to the need to give priority to deal with unplanned operational imperatives, which hinder the development plans of those for whom development time and space has been set aside.

Question 6

Please reflect on the difficult and easier aspects of getting the CETL going and of getting your messages across. For example: has action/change followed; where and why did you meet success or resistance. What worked, how did you discover this, how do you know it worked? (1000 words maximum).

Difficulties have been, in large part, overcome through persistence and reiterating the opportunities that can accrue to individuals and their host departments. In the early period, some academic leaders perceived the programme as a potential burden on their resources, rather than as a source of support and additional resource. In making a strategic decision, for future embedding and sustainability, to rely wherever possible on secondments rather than new appointments, there was competition for the time of highly experienced and skilled staff. The key to unlocking these tensions related to identifying potential projects of mutual interest, although this can take a long time to establish.

The start of the programme coincided with the launch of a new cross-college curriculum, which although provided plenty of potential development opportunities, resulted in high levels of workload associated with the transition.

Colleagues have been able to embrace more quickly the development work that has been initiated by themselves within the broad auspices of the *Aspire* programme, rather than that which has been more closely directed to them on a more prescriptive basis.

Question 7

Has your CETL adopted/used/been based around any specific theories, eg of change, or of student learning? If so, what, how have these underpinned your work, have they been useful? (1000 words maximum).

Our programme has been based on existing identified excellent practice across a number of areas. Given this wide-ranging work of the programme, we have not based our activities on any specific theories of student learning or change management, although theoretical insights from a number of sources have continuously informed the breadth of our work. The five strands of our work have progressed through the trajectories identified in the HEFCE formative evaluation from different starting points and at different rates, although can all have been assessed as having reached one of the two final stages.

Question 8

Reflecting on the last five years what other important messages are there that you want to convey about your CETL – its successes, difficulties, impact etc. (1000 words maximum).

On a cross-programme basis, the focus given to supporting students in a way that not only differentiates Harper Adams from other universities, but does so in a way that prepares students for future success is key. The *Aspire* programme has given a sharper focus to this point of differentiation for Harper Adams. The Institutional Audit of Harper Adams University College that took place in March 2010 paid especial interest to the work of the programme and concluded as follows:

“From the instances of good practice that the audit team considers to make a particularly positive contribution to the management of academic standards and/or of the quality of learning opportunities, the draft report is likely to highlight the following:

- *the active involvement of employers and other professional advisers in planning and developing the curriculum and in devising approaches for its effective delivery*

- *the enhancement of the quality and accessibility of a range of activities supporting the student learning experience through the implementation of special programmes under the collective name of 'Aspire' (Advancing skills for professionals in the rural economy)*
- *the development of employer-linked provision through an approach that seeks to integrate it with the College's other collaborative provision in respect of quality assurance requirements."*

All of these three features relate directly or indirectly to the work of the programme, which serves to reinforce its centrality to Harper Adams' operations and the CETL's achievements.

Staff feedback on the predicted legacy of the programme was varied and included: the *Aspire* Centre as a focal point for excellent learner support services (and to be replicated in the new Student Services Centre); developments in work-based learning and the associated REEDNet programme; strengthened placement support systems; encouragement for and support of innovation, including in e-learning. The awards schemes were generally considered desirable but with some caveats around needing to find the ability to release time for project work and being more transparent in making Excellence awards. Key institutional performance indicators that have been monitored since the commencement of the programme are undoubtedly grounded in work associated with the programme, although it is difficult to make direct causal links, given the inter-relationships between the work of the *Aspire* programme and many other College activities. The indicators are, nonetheless, pleasing in the context of both increased student numbers and diversity of student base over the period of the programme.

Question 9

Reflecting on the last five years what important messages are there that you want to convey about the experience of being part of a wider 'movement'/experience of other CETLs. (600 words maximum).

As a cross-institutional programme, across a breadth of activities, it has been difficult to relate to many of the CETLs that have been very focused in their philosophy or range of activities. Our work has tended to focus on improving the provision in practical ways that make sense for our quite unique context, including with increasing student numbers. Accordingly, our external relationships have tended to focus on other land-based HE specialists and employers, rather than other CETLs. Having said this, we have ensured that we are familiar with the work of other CETLs working in broadly similar areas, so that we could capitalise on their learning. We have used the networks and resources of two other CETLs in particular to this end.

We have never intended that peer reviewed publications would be an important intended outcome of the work, although we have been keen to share our work through speaking at external events and making connections in this way. The peer reviewed publications that were achieved are considered a bonus (as annex A). It is likely that, in the future, we will produce a body of peer reviewed work, sharing our developing insights into work-based learning.

Question 10

Please reflect on work emerging from your CETL that has been 'transferable', ie useable beyond the home audience for which it was originally developed. (You may

wish to comment in terms of materials produced, a community created, understandings that CETL work has illuminated and which are useful to others, etc). (1000 words maximum). It would be useful to hear ‘messages’ and lessons learnt that you would like to continue to be disseminated.

We plan to continue to support the programme’s webpages with hosting the lessons learned from the funded Development Fellowship Awards (www.harper-adams.ac.uk/aspire), which, at this stage, we plan to continue funding on a more modest scale. Other work that emerged from the programme and that will continue is that in relation to work-based learning and the employer engagement agenda, through the REEDNet programme. This programme will continue, utilising staff who developed some of their expertise through the *Aspire* programme to introduce approaches to work-based learning that will be of value to the entire HE sector, not just that related to land-based studies (www.reednet.org).

Question 11

How will the work and achievements of your CETL continue after HEFCE funding ends (1000 words maximum)? Please reflect on how far you think CETL work has become embedded in your institution or discipline and indicate if any structures have been put in place to ensure its legacy is not lost (1000 words maximum).

It should be clear from the answers to the preceding questions that the *Aspire* programme was conceived and organised as a group of activities that are central to the institution’s arrangements. It is utterly embedded and the work will continue, albeit at a potentially less accelerated pace than has been possible with the additional funding. The programme has enabled us to transform our approaches to work-based learning, technology-enhanced learning and learner support; this includes staffing organisation, committee mechanisms, reporting structures and insights into our approaches. As a consequence of this, the impact of these areas of work has increased greatly. The programme has also enabled us to strengthen the consistency of approaches to supporting students in placement learning, at all stages of their journey.

Question 12

Do you think there are any emerging aspects of your CETL activity that will have greater importance in the future? (600 words maximum).

The work associated with employer engagement is likely to assume greater importance in the future. The other development work undertaken to date should ensure that we are well placed to meet the challenges ahead, especially in relation to the use of learning technologies to make more efficient use of staff time to support effective student learning, both on and off-campus. In the context of a more difficult funding climate, this is likely to be an important driver of future curriculum development.

Question 13

Any other comments (600 words maximum).

None.

Part 1 - n

Arnold A, Williams T, Thompson K, 2009 'Advancing Patchwork Text - the Development of Patchwork Media Approach'. The International Journal of Learning, Volume 16, Issue 5, pp.151-166. Article: Print (Spiral Bound). Available from:
<http://ijl.cgpublisher.com/product/pub.30/prod.2169>

Arnold A, Thompson K, 2009. 'Learning to learn through real world inquiry in the virtual paradigm'. NEXUS Journal of Learning & Teaching Research Volume 1, March 2009, pp.6-33. Available from:
http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/cltr/Events/pdfs/02ArnoldThompson_6-33.pdf

Parsons, S. 2006. In D. Green, ed. CETL-MSOR Conference 2006. 'Pedagogic Research into Non-specialist Learning of Mathematics and Statistics: Factors Affecting Success'. Loughborough pp 120-125. Also available from:
http://mathstore.ac.uk/conference2006/Final%20Proceedings%202006/Conference%20Proceedings_WEB.pdf

Parsons S.J., Croft A.C., Harrison M.C. 2009. 'Does students' confidence in their ability in mathematics matter?' Teaching Mathematics and its Applications 2009 28: 53-68. Available from:
<http://teamat.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/hrp010?ijkey=OpoFI140az5RZhs&keytype=ref>