

## Section 3 Placement Learning Evaluation Report (Carrie de Silva)

### 1. *Aspire* aims, objectives and intended outcomes.

Given the mandatory sandwich period on all Harper Adams undergraduate degrees, the preparation for, successful management of and post-placement development is key to the core CETL focus relating to WBL, employability, career management and employer engagement.

The *Aspire* CETL bid included a considerable number of goals, objectives and activities in which directly or indirectly relate to placement. Key areas to be highlighted from the document are :

- Provision of a one-stop, accessible student learning centre co-ordinating learning technologies, placement, work-based learning, learner and disability support and professional skills development.
- Co-ordination of WBL support including the introduction of the intranet resource of *Harper@Work* to support both students before, during and after placement, and as a resource for employers.
- Further development of the Professional Scholarship Programme.
- A Fellowship and staff development programme to encourage and reward staff to engage with the outcomes of planned CETL developments.
- Enhanced learner support - being vital in both the process of gaining a placement and support on placement particularly for those students with needs relating to disability, be that dyslexic students given the 'tools' to cope with office life to those students with sight or mobility problems.

### 2. Evaluation of the above using quantitative and qualitative data and anecdotal evidence.

Table 1 Extract from *Aspire* Key Performance Indicators, November 2010.

Objectives	Actual 05/06	Actual 06/07	Actual 07/08	Actual 08/09
<b>Impact on student experience and achievement</b>				
<b>Placement Learning</b>				
Student satisfaction with placement learning will improve <sup>1</sup> :	80%	81%	81%	80%
Placement employer satisfaction with placement learners' achievements will improve:				
award top grade	56%	56%	58%	<b>58%</b>
fail	<1%	2%	1%	<b>1%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Based on better than 'satisfactory' ratings ie good and excellent ratings. Satisfied rating maintained at 95% over period.

Improvement has been modest but it must be noted that placement at Harper Adams started from a position of strength and success, in terms of student satisfaction, employer satisfaction and graduate employability. It is pleasing to have maintained these levels with increased student numbers.

Other KPIs have key relevance to the placement function but will be dealt with by those with direct responsibility for those areas: Professional Skills Development, Learner Support and E-learning. Mention will be made below of Development Fellowships which directly relate to placement.

Detailed data, resulting in the above summary, is obtained from students via an annual Student Placement Feedback Form completed on return from placement. This data is analysed both statistically and qualitatively by individual Placement Managers, the Placement Co-ordinator and the Head of Educational Development and Quality Enhancement. Results are fed into annual Course Monitoring and individual issues are followed up where appropriate.

The general measure of 'student satisfaction' results from the collation of questions in a variety of areas, including:

- Preparation for placement
- Support whilst on placement
- Assessment of placement outcomes
- Benefits of placement
- Health and safety

Feedback from employers is obtained through annual Employer Feedback. Data is in narrative form and utilised by Placement Managers, feeding into both Course Monitoring and Placement Co-ordinator reporting.

The questionnaires are reviewed annually for relevance, methodology of data collection and in response to both previous results and new developments, either generally (e.g. *Harper@work*) or course specific (e.g. professional accreditation requirements).

The above monitoring takes place on a college-wide basis. Individual courses may also obtain valuable data in the form of focus groups.

Some courses have held employer focus groups on the placement process, the results of which were collated for dissemination to the course team and, where appropriate, the Placement Manager group (e.g. REALM after the 2008 Placement and Careers Fair).

The Placement Co-ordination role has resulted in the above information being disseminated and discussed among the placement team (Head of Educational Development and Quality Enhancement, Placement Co-ordinator, Placement Managers and Placement Administrators) to share good practice and be aware of and seek to improve any weaknesses.

The *Aspire* Evaluation Survey indicated that 38% of staff who responded felt better equipped to support students through the placement process as compared to their

position before the Programme started in 2005. Although not a dramatic result, It may be noted that 27% of respondents were 'not sure' .

### **3. Unintended Outcomes**

Development of Placement Handbook and Codes of Practice for both staff and students. Not a specifically planned outcome but a key tool in ensuring college-wide implementation of systems and support.

Negative unintended outcome of the over-reliance by students on placement support in the preparation of CVs and job search and application process.

Negative unintended outcome of enhanced Learner Support resulting in students successfully completing academic studies but finding it difficult to succeed in the workplace without such a network of support.

### **4. Contribution of placement work to the overall *Aspire* aims :**

#### **Development Fellowships**

Two of the Development Fellowships awarded under the *Aspire* programme have directly related to placement:

*2005 Adapting to Work Practices* by Emma Tappin (HAUC) and Janice McNamara

*2008 Placement Guidance / Placement Staff CPD* by Angela Peers (MMU).

The results of both Fellowships have impacted placement management and broader dissemination in the form of Conference input and development.

#### **Dissemination of good practice and research**

Placement staff have spoken at the in-house Learning and Teaching Forum, the *Aspire* Conference (2009), the ASET Annual Conference (in 2008 and 2009) and a number of other events.

#### **Improvement of IT platform**

E-learning provision - *Harper@work on Placement*: the development of supporting materials to enhance the student experience before, during and after placement.  
*Harper@work for Employers*: the development of a web-based resource for employers, both for advertising positions and information about Harper Adams' courses, the placement process and other supporting material such as basic employment law, health and safety requirements and professional accreditation information (where appropriate).

### **5. Collaborative working and sharing of good practice**

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 Centre* 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.

Support whilst on placement - enhanced support on placement through additional staffing on placement administration, enhanced training of Placement Managers (through Placement Co-ordinator) and ancillary support through E-learning provision and Learning Support.

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.

Learning support provision - the enhanced provision in this Department, 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. Students with disabilities from dyslexia through to those with very restricted mobility or sight have been ably supported through the placement process, to the benefit of employers, the College. Students have succeeded in their chosen industries, which they initially considered unattainable due to their constraints, as a direct result of the support offered to them and, importantly, their employers, whilst on placement.

## **6. Key achievements**

Key achievements to be extracted from the above information would be:

- 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.
- The opportunity of staff to undertake and disseminate research through the Fellowship programme.

## **7. Legacy of *Aspire***

Placement systems and liaison between course areas and support staff will continue through formalisation in the Placement Managers' Code of Practice (for Placement Managers) and the Placement Handbook (for students, visiting tutors and employers), ensuring that the good practice developed as a result of *Aspire* is embedded into the placement process for the future.