

Developing Learning and Assessment Opportunities for a Complex World



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Project Summary

LJMU's National Teaching Fellows Professors Tim Cable, Sue Thompson and Phil Vickerman have been awarded £200,000 by the Higher Education Academy for a 3 year project *Developing Learning and Assessment Opportunities for a Complex World*.

The employability and skills agenda has highlighted a range of curriculum design challenges for the learning, teaching and assessing of what have been described as 'wicked' competences or soft skills, graduate attributes and complex achievement most valued by employers. These competences are often hard to define and problematic to teach and assess and require development of a pedagogy for supercomplexity.

The project will examine the role of the curriculum in developing students' self awareness and ability to articulate their skills. It will do this through a triangulation of employer, academic and student perceptions in order to identify gaps and dissonance in their respective linguistic frameworks.

Close-up research will be utilised to develop new integrated learning models via professional practice, interviews, student and staff immersive experience stories and reflective accounts. As an outcome, the project seeks to establish how gaps can be narrowed to produce authentic assessment strategies, new learning opportunities and more closely aligned learning and assessment models.

At a glance

This Higher Education Academy funded National Teaching Fellowship project seeks to identify aspects of dissonance and congruence in perceptions, understandings and expectations of staff, students and employers in relation to preparing students for employability in the 21st Century.

The project will examine the role of the curriculum in developing students' self awareness and ability to articulate their skills.

As an outcome, the project seeks to establish how 'gaps' can be narrowed to produce authentic assessment strategies, new learning opportunities and more closely aligned learning and assessment models.

Objectives

Our project objectives are:

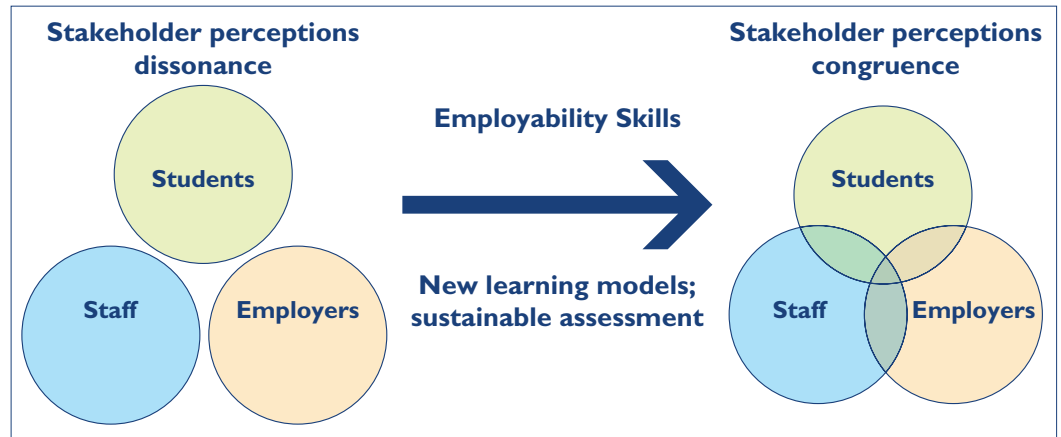
- i. To identify dissonance and congruence in the perceptions, understandings and expectations of academic staff, students and employers of the employability skills and competences expected of 21st century graduates
- ii. To use outputs from (i) as a basis for working with key stakeholders to develop and evaluate aligned learning and assessment opportunities that will bridge perceived gaps in stakeholder perceptions and understandings.

This will also involve:

- iii. investigating how complex attributes and skills can be meaningfully demonstrated by students (and who should be involved in the assessment)
- iv. determining how the curriculum can be designed to develop higher-level skills and build in a more structured reflection process
- v. evaluating whether the attributes for integrating taught and applied aspects of experiential learning are best supported by whole programme delivery or through modular based learning activities.

Employability and real-world complexity

Fig. 1 New learning models



Our approach:

Close-up research to illuminate the problem and inform intervention strategies and further debate. This will include observation of professional practice, interviews, student and staff immersive experience stories and reflective accounts and use of the university's innovative, creative facilitation space, 'The Automatic' www.ljmu.ac.uk/automatic

The project will draw on existing theoretical frameworks for professional learning and assessment, current regulatory frameworks (codes of practice, benchmark statements, professional competency frameworks) and work on the teaching of ethics and critical thinking.

It will triangulate the perceptions, understanding and expectations of key stakeholders (academic staff, students, employers) in relation to the employability skills and competences expected of 21st century graduates and build on research expertise within the university on reflective practice and the research outputs from the university's Centre for Excellence in Leadership and Professional Learning

Student Fellows will capture the student voice as partners in research, dissemination and evaluation.



Phase 1 (Year 1)

Research key stakeholder perceptions and understandings (involving all levels of identified student cohorts in Education and Science, recent graduates and Alumni that offer placements). Conduct further specific close-up research to examine the nature of the dissonance; identify how gaps can be narrowed through authentic assessment strategies, new learning opportunities, more closely aligned learning and assessment.

Phase 2 (Year 2)

Design and piloting of intervention strategies for enhanced curriculum and assessment design. Evaluation of initial outcomes.

Anticipated outputs:

- piloting of new / refined curriculum and assessment models
- case studies describing approaches being developed
- student-led dissemination activity
- evaluation of stakeholder feedback (student, staff, employers).

Phase 3 (Year 3) Implementation and dissemination of outcomes

Anticipated outputs:

- implementation of new / refined curriculum and assessment models
- evaluation of impact
- dissemination to include a student conference, examples of curriculum and assessment models, case studies, exemplars of employer engagement strategies, reflections on what worked and why and what did not work, research outputs.

Further information

www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/professional/ntfs/projects

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