

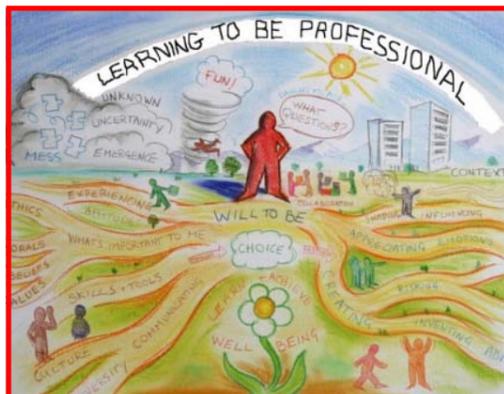


# CoLab Newsletter

## Learning to be Professional through a Life-wide Curriculum Conference

Throughout the conference, the CoLab team who work as part of SCEPTRe, took on the role of journalists. Our main objective was to gather information from the delegates using a variety of mediums including post-it notes, photos, videos, audio recording and general conversations, to then amalgamate the information and prepare a newsletter. The technologists, who are also part of the CoLab team, also played an important role throughout the conference, as they spent the two days taking photographs and video recording the event.

Hosted by **SCEPTRe** the conference was held at the University of Surrey, Guildford, on 31st March-1st April 2009. SCEPTRe believes that a life-wide curriculum maximises opportunity for embracing the most inclusive concept of learning (whole life learning) and for encouraging and valuing learning and achievement from the widest range of experiences available to a learner. In this conference we wanted to encourage exploration of the concept in the context of enabling learners to develop the qualities, skills and personal agency necessary to become a good professional.



A few examples of the events that took place over the two days:

- Digital Storytelling and the opportunity to find out how to make one.
- A workshop with Fred Buining on Developing a Creative Agency—helping learners think like designers for problem solving in complex professional worlds.
- A workshop with Colin Beard for improving student’s understanding of ‘experiential knowing’.
- Professor Ron Barnett from the Institute of Education in London gave a keynote contribution at the start of the conference, with the speech ‘Willing to be a Professional’.

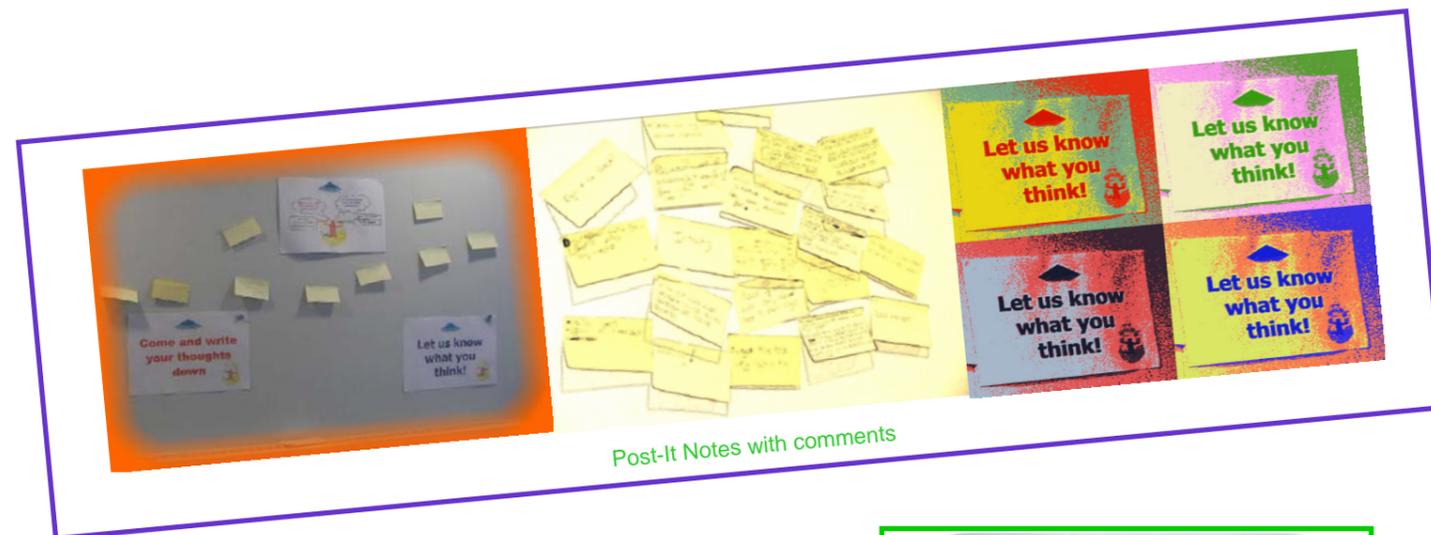
(The full programme for the two days can be accessed [here](#))

Around 135 delegates attended the conference with the majority arriving on the morning of Tuesday 31st March to stay overnight in University accommodation. Participants were treated to a finger-buffet lunch during the day, where they were able to network with fellow attendees. Evening entertainment comprised of the talented musician [Kai Jansen](#) who performed his own works. This was complemented by a delicious meal and further entertainment from the prestigious [Guildford School of Acting](#).



**CoLab** is a student organisation, that is part of SCEPTRe. It aims to foster a culture of collaboration between students, teachers and the university and the business and local community by forging new connections and building new relationships.

[CoLab](#) employs students as Student Networkers and Technologists. During the conference the technologists were there to film everything that was happening throughout the day. They were also there to help with any technical issues. The student networkers were appointed as ‘journalists’ whose job it was to gather feedback from the delegates present at the conference. The data was collected using various mediums such as Video Recording, Audio Recording, Post-It Notes, Twitter and [Wiki](#). We updated Twitter with all the comments on the Post-It Notes so that people could keep up to date with the feedback. All the information gathered was also used in this E-newsletter.



## Expectations of the Conference

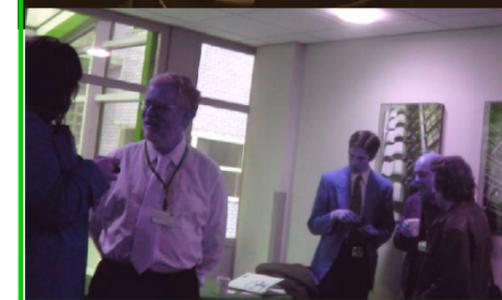
From speaking to those who attended, their expectations of the conference included seeing specific speakers, and to see presentations that related to their work. When asked whether their expectations had been met, the overall consensus was positive, with people commenting that

*“it has both met and exceeded my expectations so far”,*

*“I can say my expectations have been met: good organization, well-prepared speakers... Yes. Very nice!”.*

*“Excellent ongoing concept- the ‘life-wide’ curriculum”*

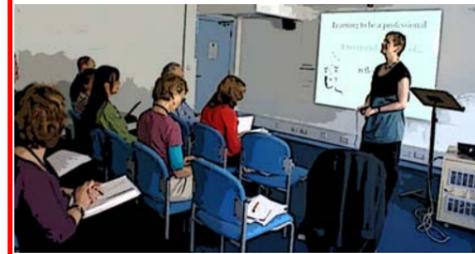
*“Very friendly and well organised. I enjoyed the range of professional context”*



# Throughout the Conference

It is always difficult for a conference to be perfect, nonetheless we believe in trying! And so, the majority of the comments reflected entirely our striving for the best.

In terms of general reflections, many of the delegates were impressed with Colin Beard's workshop on improving students' understanding on 'experiential knowing':



*"The session by Colin Beard was great."*

Also, Norman Jackson's speech was referred to as *"inspiring"*, while the session on CoLab made some guests say *"I am seriously considering starting a CoLab-like enterprise at my university."* That is really rewarding!

Another top-five winner was the workshop by Fred Buining, or better said, both of them, *"Workshop was good: Fred is always very creative"* and another inspirational talker was found in Ron Barrett *"Ron Barrett's speech was very impressive!"*, while Paulo Lopes managed to teach attendees "

*"really interesting things"*.

As far as the one-on-one sessions are concerned, both the Twitter Experiment and the Digital Story Telling were seen as helpful and the facilitators as providing valuable insights *"Good idea to have the drop-ins."*, *"Catchy twitter experiment!"*, *"I received really good and customized advice at the one-on-one sessions."*

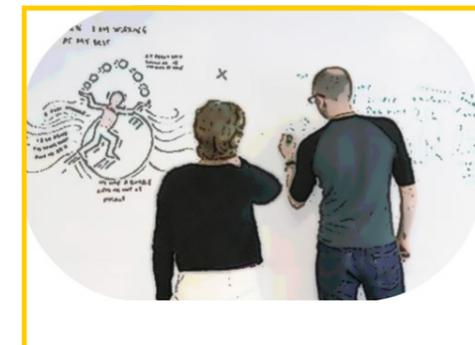
Overall, the sessions were mostly appreciated and positive comments were received on them *"Came for key speakers and was impressed"*, *"The sessions I've attended were even more interesting than I imagined"*. The only challenge seems to have been the lack of time in order to attend more sessions

*"There were too many parallel sessions. I wish I could have attended more."*

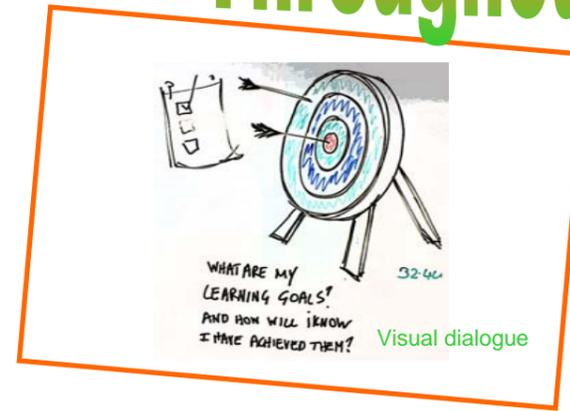
Also, the sessions seem to have given rise to stimulating discussions and brainstorming *"Very interesting sessions generated quite a lot of questions"*, *"Very stimulating sessions"*. And so, delegates were able to network and create new relations *"I have met lots of interesting and new people"*, *"I met some really interesting people and even got emails for further contact, that's great!"*

The majority of guests were satisfied with the accommodation and thought it was nice to be reminded of when they were students themselves *"My room on campus was very quiet. Loved it!"*. *"Room was lovely. It reminded me of when I was a student."*

Other comments mostly indicated that our guests had a good time and were really impressed with the overall conference organization *"Overall verdict: good job!"*, *"Best day ever!"*, *"We were made very comfortable."*, *"Good organising!"*, *"Good organizing: reactions and promptitude. Congratulations!"*



# Throughout the Conference



**Lunch** was hosted at Wates House consisted of a finger buffet.

*"was a great time to network - as well as being excellent food"*.

## Entertainment

at the Conference Dinner consisted of a performance by the Guildford School of Acting and the songwriter Kai Jansen. Forty students from The Guildford School of Acting performed scenes from popular musicals and the guests found it enjoyable with people commenting that it was *"very impressive"* and *"spot on"*. Kai Jansen then performed his song "Professionally Challenged", which he wrote especially for the conference.



Guildford School of Acting



Conference Dinner



*"Students (GSA) entertainment at conference dinner excellent"*



Kai Jansen

**Accommodation** Delegates stayed at University Court and Twyford Court on the University Campus. Although it was a bit of a trek, guests found the accommodation pleasant, with one guest commenting,

*"I didn't think campus rooms can be this comfortable!"*

**Breakfast** was given in Seasons restaurant and was received warmly, with comments such as,

*"enjoyed the breakfast!"*

*"breakfast was great"*

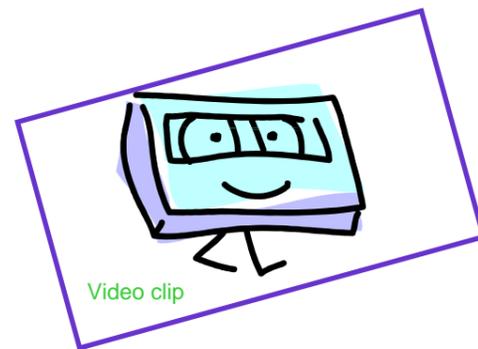
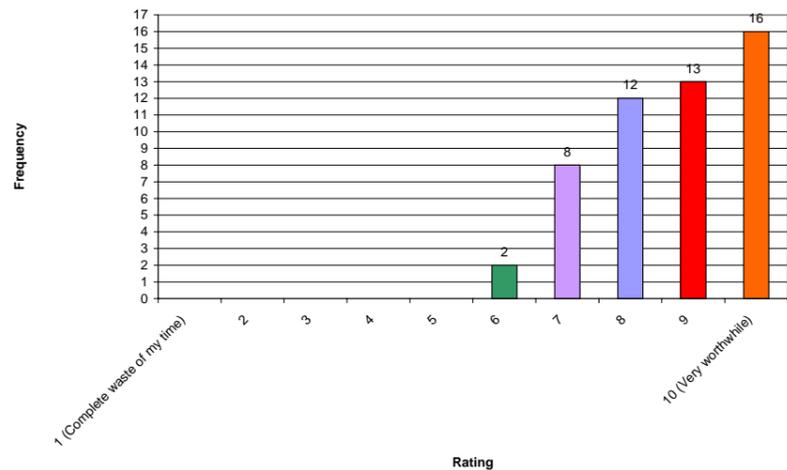


Twyford Court University of Surrey Campus

# Your thoughts of the conference



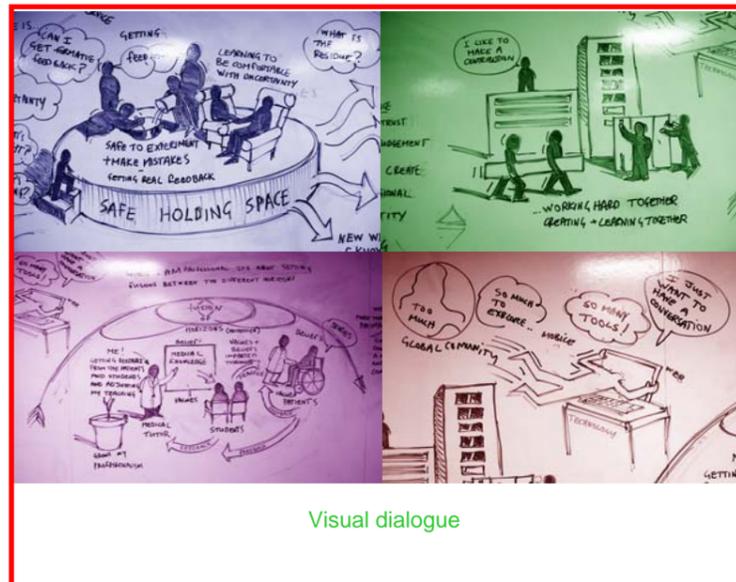
Has the conference been a worthwhile experience?



## Generally good or excellent ratings

were given for:

- Quality of information provided about conference
- Administration
- Catering
- Support from CoLab students
- Entertainment and conference dinner
- Keynote presentations
- Workshops
- Presentations
- Consultancy services – digital story telling and visual dialogue
- Conference Wiki



Visual dialogue

# Recommendations

From the feedback received from the delegates we have put together some recommendations/suggestions that could be incorporated in future conferences.



## General Comments and Suggestions

- There were too many parallel sessions.
- Too little time.
- Some confusion regarding the rooms.
- It would be very nice to be able to not only keep but comment and continue discussion on what we've learnt.
- I feel that it is good but there is not enough time to develop the ideas in the workshops.
- It would be useful to have more helpful maps in the place!



The feedback that we received about the conference was on the whole very positive. Delegates were complimentary about the organisation of the conference and some commented on the usefulness of having the networkers scattered around so that they knew where they were going. However, there were suggestions that the room allocation for the workshops and presentations could have been clearer, as there were changes to the timetables that they were sent. Also there were complaints that the rooms were cold.

There were also complications for the special dietary needs at lunch times. Participants also enjoyed the presentations and workshops and were complimentary about the interactive and drop in sessions. There were also confusions about whether they could attend sessions that they had not booked in advance.

**Overall, the conference was a huge success. People were very impressed with all aspects of the event; having been exposed to new, inspiring methods of teaching and learning, meeting other professional people and going away with interesting and thought-provoking ideas for the future.**

