



Learn**higher**

LearnHigher Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Second annual self-evaluation report, July 2007

This evaluation report is dedicated to Professor Peter Knight (Open University) who was the LearnHigher External Evaluator until his untimely death in April this year. His work with LearnHigher has been invaluable to us all, both individually and to the strength and growth of our network. The report reflects Peter's work with LearnHigher this year and builds on his work and his first LearnHigher Evaluation Report of August 2006. The report is compiled by Jill Armstrong (LearnHigher Director) with contributing evaluation reports from all LearnHigher Learning Area Co-ordinators. Thanks are also due to LearnHigher Manager, Michelle Verity and Administrator, Debra Bell for their respective support in the Report's production.

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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1** LearnHigher is a collaborative CETL involving sixteen English Universities and covering twenty learning development areas. It aims to share learning development resources, some specifically created, and build an evidence base for understanding the effective use of resources in students' study practices and in academics' teaching practices.
- 1.2** The LearnHigher Learning Area Coordinators (LACs) take responsibility for certain learning areas but are all involved in their mainstream learning development jobs, located in various (structural) places within their own institutions. All receive only minimal annual funding and undertake LearnHigher work as part of their jobs. LearnHigher is therefore a collaborative network, striving for excellence in its approach to learning development, not a project team.
- 1.3** LearnHigher has adopted an externally mediated, critical self evaluation approach to its evaluation and has worked with Professor Peter Knight, the external evaluator, from the CETL's inception to embed its evaluative processes within the daily work of the network members. LearnHigher has three face to face evaluation/research meetings each year and LACs create individual evaluation plans and activities to build evidence of the impact of their interventions at local level. The central unit also undertakes evaluative activities in its own work.
- 1.4** This second year LearnHigher evaluation report builds on the Year One Report written by Peter Knight and responds to issues surfaced in that report. This report draws together some of the learning of the network and has been created from over forty other reports including an annual evaluation report from each of the Learning Area Coordinators.
- 1.5** LearnHigher can demonstrate an effect in many of its partner institutions on the student experience, newly developing relationships with lecturers, changes in curricula, and impact on strategy, policy and structures. Not all partners can claim all these changes however, and in particular the large research focussed institutions are a much greater challenge, with effects being more localised.
- 1.6** The formation of LearnHigher as a functioning network as opposed to a set of disparate projects has been evidenced this year, through its collaborative research and development projects, its joint proposals for funding and joint conference presentations. Its collective influence has been far greater than its individual partners carried on their own. The network now needs to understand itself as a change agent.
- 1.7** Learning development, as a concept around which LearnHigher operates, was given a certain amount of foregrounding but LearnHigher now needs to make explicit its agreed underpinning theoretical position (s).
- 1.8** The challenge of effectively spending capital funding for all LearnHigher partners, some from the additional allocation, mainly on creating new student learning spaces, dominated much of the year's work for many LearnHigher partners. These spaces are already showing impact in some partner universities, not just for students' use, but including creating greater influence for LACs and opportunities for creating new working relationships with other staff.
- 1.9** LearnHigher has been very productive in its learning development work this year but still needs to revisit and agree its central role around resources and develop a sophisticated message, and research understandings to its stakeholders about the 'reality' of shared resources.
- 1.10** A successful symposium showcasing LearnHigher's research work demonstrates a growth in capacity and endeavour and LearnHigher now needs to focus its collective efforts to building and disseminating a core of understanding about learning development and resources.
- 1.11** The leverage LearnHigher gets from all its minimal institutional funding demonstrated by the efforts and outputs achieved by all the partners can only be described as good value for money.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Purpose

This report follows from the LearnHigher Year One Evaluation Report written by the LearnHigher External Evaluator, Professor Peter Knight. It attempts to address the issues raised by Peter Knight's report and then report on the continued evaluation work of year two. LearnHigher has a continuous formative approach to its evaluation and those processes are embedded within its daily work. This report helps to bring together the learning achieved this year to provide a focus for the issues to be addressed in year three and beyond. LearnHigher sees itself as a developing network, and possibly a community of practice. It is concerned to understand itself as it evolves, evaluate its own development, as well as evaluating the impact it has on its constituent universities and the wider sector. The report is to inform not just itself but its wider sets of stakeholders.

2.2 Structure and audience

The report outlines the aims and scope of the LearnHigher CETL and what it sees as its purpose. It outlines from where this year's goals have arisen and the objectives developed as a consequence, (Appendix Four). The sixteen LearnHigher partners and twenty learning areas are detailed and an outline of collaborative activities described. Greater details of partner activities are included in Appendix Five. The LearnHigher approach to evaluation is described, with reflections on the process and comment on the foci of LearnHigher evaluative work this year. Self evaluation findings are outlined and then comment is drawn together from reports of LearnHigher partners to consider evidence for effect on student experiences, impact on teachers, impact on learning designs, impact on strategy and partner university policy and structures, and impact on external agencies and the wider sector. The final section is concerned with new learning, emerging changes in practice and implications for LearnHigher partner universities and the wider sector. This final section suggests that LearnHigher offers a unique model as a change agent.

The report is written for LearnHigher partners, their local Steering Groups and Senior Managers. In addition it can inform LearnHigher local networks and stakeholders, HEFCE and the central CETLs' Evaluation Team. Some explanatory details have been included for these external audiences to provide a better sense of LearnHigher work.

2.3 Connection with our 2006 report

This report builds directly on the LearnHigher 2006 Evaluation Report which details the setting up of the LearnHigher evaluative process and the issues that were identified as in need of being addressed by LearnHigher in year two and beyond. Given LearnHigher's commitment to its (externally mediated) critical self-evaluation approach, the 2006 Evaluation Report is included as Appendix One, and this Year Two Report seeks to build forward from this learning. Specific issues raised in LearnHigher Year One Report are reported on at section 5.

2.4 Our evidence

LearnHigher sets out its objectives annually to meet its overall aims listed in the original bid document. These aims broadly address the aims of the CETL programme. Each of the sixteen partner universities create local objectives that meet both their institutional needs and their work for LearnHigher. Evidence for the successful outcomes of these objectives is collected and reported on by each of the LearnHigher Learning Area Coordinators. Eighteen of the nineteen expected local reports have been collected at the time of this writing. Work on methods for collecting evaluative evidence was led by Peter Knight at a LearnHigher day event on January 18 2007. This built on our previous year's work when we collectively explored potential success indicators and attempted to create LearnHigher success criteria.

Central data is also collected in evidence against the LearnHigher objectives for which the central team has responsibility and a central report produced. Evidence is drawn from Steering Group meeting reports and reports compiled from partners' work during the year. The central team collected evidence from LearnHigher partners on:

- a. The purpose and use of physical space (created with LearnHigher capital funding)
- b. The purpose and use of virtual spaces
- c. Location of LearnHigher within the University formal structures
- d. The range of people involved in LearnHigher work within the University
- e. The impact of LearnHigher on University policy
- f. The impact of LearnHigher on learning development practices
- g. Unexpected outcomes of LearnHigher work and existence

In addition evidence is drawn from a workshop LearnHigher ran in June 2006 that was for reflecting on personal experiences as well as providing an opportunity for collective thinking about what LearnHigher might become. See 'Shaping our Future', Appendix Two, page 31

3.0 LearnHigher's aims and scope

To meet the overall CETL aims as outlined by HEFCE (Appendix Three, page 37), LearnHigher created itself around seven central aims:

1. Building mechanisms for sharing excellent materials and resources
2. Building capacity in the LearnHigher Network
3. Creating Institutional impact in each of the partner institutions
4. Evaluation of its own work for supporting its own development
5. Research to build an evidence base for 'learning development'
6. Dissemination through other networks to the wider sector
7. Effective CETL programme management

These have provided the basis for LearnHigher's first two year's work. Each year the LearnHigher central team has developed a set of objectives against these overall aims. These are shared, further developed and agreed by the LearnHigher partners. Each partner then sets their local learning area objectives against the year's agreed central objectives. Local area and central activities at Liverpool Hope are then designed to meet these objectives. The local activities to meet the objectives can be quite varied depending on the particular role held by the Learning Area Coordinator, and their location within their own university structures.

LearnHigher is a collaboration of sixteen universities with identified learning areas that act as a focus for local LearnHigher work. The Learning Area Coordinators (LACs) drive the local activities to meet their objectives, but many work with others who either have contributions made to their salaries from the LearnHigher revenue or are part of their local learning development teams. The model of LearnHigher as a CETL is not one of a project team, but of collaborating individuals who hold mainstream jobs in their own institutions. Each Learning Area receives only £15000 (plus 3% increases per year) and activities are part of their mainstream work, facilitated by additional funding.

A small central team of a 0.5 Director, a full time Manager and a 0.5 Administrator support the operations of LearnHigher.

There is a wide range of locations within institutions for LearnHigher members, including working in student services, staff development, quality enhancement, educational development and faculty units. Equally there are different pedagogical models for learning development operating across LearnHigher universities. Nine of the partners have been subject to re-structuring within their University since LearnHigher began. Five of the original LACs have moved on to new jobs since the

inception of LearnHigher, but in each case have been replaced with a new member as the University has retained its commitment to LearnHigher.

3.1 Purposes

LearnHigher describes itself as:

... the country's biggest collaborative HEFCE funded Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), we are a partnership of 16 Universities and the Higher Education Academy. We are committed to improving student learning through practice led enquiry, building a research base to inform the effective use of 'Learning Development' resources.

We are a network of expertise seeking to enhance professional practice and student learning, and build capacity both within the network and across the wider sector.

The LearnHigher partnership has substantial and diverse expertise. Each of the 16 partner universities is engaged in enquiry led practice which aims to build a sound evidence base in learning development across a broad spectrum of learning areas that underpin activity across all academic subjects.

Throughout our five-year programme we will be taking a strategic approach to research to build and disseminate a sound evidence base in learning development. We will enable practitioners across the sector to share in and contribute to current pedagogic understanding.

LearnHigher will also be a gateway to tried and tested resources in a broad range of learning areas. Each of our 16 partner institutions contributes research driven, peer reviewed and evaluated resources in twenty learning areas. In conjunction with the Higher Education Academy, LearnHigher will create a virtual service providing resources and materials to the whole of the sector. Staff in both support roles and/or teaching roles will be able to use these resources in their course delivery, and in time, resources will be available for students to support their studies. (<http://www.LearnHigher.ac.uk>)

3.2 Specific goals, 2006-07

The objectives for work in 2006-07 arose both from the original plan outlined in the LearnHigher bid document, and from the learning achieved in 2005-06. This was established both from the year one Evaluation Report and from a reflective workshop 'Shaping our future', that we ran in June 2006 after a full year, to focus on our year's achievements and give consideration to what we wanted the LearnHigher network to become. (A summary report of this workshop is at Appendix Two, page 31). LearnHigher programme objectives for the year were created to cover our seven overall aims and each partner developed a local programme with their own year objectives, to meet LearnHigher's programme objectives. A list of the LearnHigher programme objectives for year two and comments on progress made is at Appendix Four, page 39.

3.3 Roles and participants

Learning Area Coordinators take responsibility for a particular learning development theme which reflects their interests and specialism but not their entire learning development work. The focus gives opportunity for LACs to lead on particular activities. In addition 2006-7 work has involved collaborative projects across partner Universities where common interests between LACs exist and their broader expertise is shared. Learning areas are:

1. Academic Writing;
2. Assessment;
3. Critical Thinking and Reflection;
4. Doing Research;
5. Group Work;

6. Independent Learning;
7. Information Literacy;
8. Learning for all (Inclusivity);
9. Listening and Interpersonal skills;
10. Maths, Numeracy & Statistics;
11. Mobile learning;
12. Oral Communication;
13. Personal Development Planning;
14. Problem Solving & Creative Thinking;
15. Reading and Note Making;
16. Referencing;
17. Report Writing;
18. Time Management;
19. Understanding Organisations;
20. Visual Practices.

Partner universities, co-ordinated by Liverpool Hope, are:

- a. Bournemouth (With Exeter)
- b. Brighton
- c. Brunel
- d. Bradford
- e. Kent
- f. Lincoln
- g. Liverpool
- h. London Metropolitan
- i. Leeds
- j. Manchester
- k. Manchester Metropolitan
- l. Nottingham
- m. Plymouth
- n. Reading
- o. Worcester

The central team which operates from Liverpool Hope takes both a coordinating and a leading role. LearnHigher came from a self selected group of the Learning Development in Higher Education Network (LDHEN). They came together and were supported by the LTSN Generic Centre funding to develop a 'swap-shop' of learning development support materials. This highly motivated group from the beginning operated with a consensual and collective approach, and this remains.

LearnHigher, and the central team in particular, has benefited hugely this year from having a Visiting Professor for five months, Professor Ian Scott of the University of Cape Town, who joined LearnHigher in February 2007.

3.4 Activities 2006-07

LearnHigher activities to meet this year's objectives across all partner universities have been substantial. A summary of partners' activities is available at Appendix Five, page 47.

Most of the partners were heavily involved this year in spending their capital allocation and creating their University LearnHigher spaces. Some had underestimated the time this would take and most were on a learning curve dealing with financial processes and Estates departments. A few got into political places they did not anticipate. All however, successfully completed their expenditure effectively and almost all now have a dedicated LearnHigher space. All of these spaces are of high quality and well equipped, and many have high profile locations. Most were opened by their University's VC. (For details of these spaces see Appendix Six, page 49.)

LearnHigher also worked collaboratively in a variety of other ways:

LearnHigher collaborative face to face meetings.

LearnHigher funds six days of face to face meetings with all partners each year: This year we switched our six annual meetings to three, two day events to facilitate greater opportunity for informal collaboration and learning as well as more LearnHigher social space. Steering Group Meetings were followed, or preceded by research and evaluation capacity building days. The capacity building days are to build both individual capacity and to build LearnHigher capacity as a network. The first two research and evaluation days were lead by Peter Knight and the third involved contribution from the LearnHigher Visiting Professor, Ian Scott.

LearnHigher funded three collaborative projects:

- a. 'Making Group-Work Work' (Brunel, Leeds and Bradford)
- b. 'Learning Development – Past, Present, Future' (Plymouth in collaboration with LDHEN)
- c. 'Visual Assessment' (Brighton and Kent) Pauline Ridley gained matched funding from ADCLTSN

LearnHigher jointly presented at a number of conferences (including):

Bradford, Brighton, Liverpool Hope and Plymouth presented a Roundtable, 'Student realities and academic practices, or "we know less than we think we do"', at the Society for Research in Higher Education (SRHE) Annual Conference, in Brighton. December 13 2006.

http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/pages/past_events.html#three

Brunel, Liverpool Hope, London Met, and Manchester Met. jointly presented a talk on 'Innovative learning spaces for Learning Development' at the Second Symposium on Learning Space: Redesigning Universities - University of Warwick, 20th March 2007.

http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/pages/past_events.html#three

LearnHigher research collaboration groups were also initiated to build towards 2007-08 work:

- a. Students' use of resources, (Liverpool Hope, Reading, London Met, Plymouth, Nottingham Trent, Bradford)
- b. Student induction, (Nottingham Trent, Bournemouth, Liverpool Hope)

LearnHigher showcased its research activities at its Research Symposium on 26 June 2007. See Appendix Seven, page 53 for details of the papers presented.

4.0 Our self-evaluation framework and approach

LearnHigher takes a distinctive approach to evaluation, which increasingly integrates evaluation with its normal work of enquiring, developing, learning and disseminating.

4.1 Our self-evaluation approach

LearnHigher is a complicated operation, involving twenty learning area co-ordinators, from sixteen partner Universities, and a central operation based at Liverpool Hope University. Evaluation research needs to consider the achievements and capacity of each local operation, as well as the work of the CETL as a whole. At its first meeting as a CETL in June 2005 LearnHigher agreed to have a distributed evaluation, which became everyone's responsibility. It chose an externally mediated critical self-evaluative approach, designed to inform and become central to its work processes. Peter Knight was appointed as external evaluator and was present at this first meeting. In his first evaluation report Peter Knight noted, 'Rather than being an add-on, evaluation increasingly looks integral to LearnHigher's intellectual life and purposes'.

This approach was preferred, largely on the grounds that involving everyone is more appropriate to a partnership operation, such as LearnHigher and that it makes good management sense for the people

who have to respond to problems and opportunities to be charged with identifying them. It was also seen that this approach could build shared capacity and contribute to LearnHigher's achievements.

It was understood that evaluation research can be valuable and that the LearnHigher evaluation could distinctively add value because:

- It recognises that evaluation is research, in the sense that it is an enquiry into the state of play in a domain, which meshes with research-informed deliberation about future actions.
- It is formative, in that it creates feedback to help the CETL team to consider possibilities and areas for further attention.
- It is long-term, in that it runs alongside the CETL for its whole life.
- It is summative, in that annual, public reports on achievement will be produced
- It is collaborative, in two senses. First, evaluation directions, practices and indicators have been agreed over five meetings involving all LearnHigher colleagues. Secondly, the evaluation is designed to capture evaluation data that are created in good operational practices in all sites of activity. A consequence of adopting this approach is that LearnHigher colleagues are evaluating in the normal course of their work.
- It builds capacity in two ways. First by involving LearnHigher colleagues in modern, research-informed evaluation practices. Second, by sustained activities to enhance the capacity of LearnHigher for rigorous and relevant educational enquiry.
- It is externally directed.

Three evaluation/research meetings were held during year one involving the whole CETL. Each of the meetings to date has seen almost-full attendance. Follow-up documents have been placed on the evaluation or research meetings page in the LearnHigher VLE, 'Fronter'. Year two has followed the plan found at Appendix Eight, page 59.

In year one the purposes of LearnHigher evaluation were explored and agreed collaboratively through the use of Saunders' (2000) RUFDATA model (Appendix Nine, page 61). This process and the baselining work undertaken by LearnHigher are discussed in the year one Evaluation Report, (Appendix One). These purposes have not changed but will be reviewed at the LearnHigher October 2007 meeting, alongside our questions, foci and methods.

4.2 Reflections on the evaluation process

Despite the early formation of the LearnHigher evaluation purpose and process, the capacity building and clear and purposeful leadership of Peter Knight, the LearnHigher evaluation processes are complex and challenging for the following reasons:

- a. There are tensions/disconnections between the local evaluation of LearnHigher activities (and local expectations of impact), the evaluation against the LearnHigher overarching questions (see table below), and the evaluation against the overall aims of CETLs.
- b. There is a need to build capacity and understanding of a theoretically driven evaluative process within LearnHigher itself.
- c. There is a need for LearnHigher to look inward and evaluate itself as a network so it can come to better understand its potential and how to make an impact.
- d. There is minimal resource for specific local evaluation activity as each LAC receives only £15,000 per annum.
- e. There is minimal central resource for evaluation as most revenue goes to the LACs.
- f. There are methodological difficulties in determining 'impact', and we prefer not to 'pretend'; (plus it's too early to say).

- g. There are spaces in which real evidence can be potentially damaging for those who work in 'learning development'. "The learner developers are hidden workers – those that do but don't share – don't tell – dare not tell".

LearnHigher over-arching questions

Parameters	Times of greatest attention to these questions
What is current practice in learner development, learning development and supporting learning in general?	Local baselining activities, 2005/06.
What are the practices and concepts we prefer as a result of our scholarly and other research work? What are effective intervention strategies?	Throughout.
How do and can we embed preferred practices? (Developmental work with a research edge.)	A concern throughout but suggest giving this high priority in 2008/09 and 2009/10.
What are students' academic practices?	Suggest two rounds of enquiry, one 2006/07 and one 2007/08.
Why have they adopted these practices?	
What (a) sustains and (b) discourages these practices?	

The foci of LearnHigher evaluation work as described in our RUFDATA framework is listed below and comments about this year's work added.

Foci of LearnHigher evaluation	Comment
Monitoring activities against plans and success indicators, as shown in the tender document and as revised from time to time.	<p>This system of monitoring activities against local year plans, developing success indicators and producing reports of the outcomes is now well established in LearnHigher. This year all evaluation plans, (except one, from a LAC off work) were completed on time and although variable in content, most monitored their objectives to at least 'success in having achieved an outcome' and some beyond, towards a measure of success. Success criteria are very difficult when change occurs as a result of many things, not single interventions.</p> <p>The main challenge for this is to establish success indicators that are meaningful and then to find extra time to collect meaningful data.</p>
Investigating effects of activities on participants (teachers, students and others directly involved) through telephone and e-interviews; questionnaires; focus groups.	<p>LearnHigher partners have attempted to investigate some effects of their activities but need to re-visit what can be done more effectively in years three to five. This needs both more resources allocated by LearnHigher and a greater theoretical understanding by the LearnHigher central team and partners.</p> <p>It is simple enough to set up various activities for gaining information from participants, but investigating effects is a huge challenge, and often impossible because assessing the 'effect' of one intervention is usually unrealistic when individual change processes are much slower.</p>

Establishing relations with national and international groups with a stake in these areas.	This process has begun as evidenced by our Visiting Professor from Cape Town, but LearnHigher needs to re-visit what it means for other groups to 'have a stake' in the CETL.
Continually thinking about the implications of evaluation processes for effective actions to support good student learning practices.	LearnHigher's plan which was pursued as laid out (Appendix Eight), until our loss of Peter, demonstrates that we keep returning to our thinking about evaluation and keep addressing our central question as a network about what makes for good interventions. This thinking goes beyond the face to face meeting days and is carried on through both the LearnHigher and LDHEN jiscmail list, and through our research practices.
Reflecting on evaluation processes and tuning them so that they remain fit for present and future needs.	It must be remembered that individual LACs all work in their mainstream jobs and do not spend all day thinking about LearnHigher and its work. It is really only through the growing development of the network through meetings and the collaborative activities that LearnHigher comes to have a 'bigger' sense of itself and its potential as a network and a CETL with a distinctive mission. The central team however, does give endless thought to LearnHigher processes and to moving them forward to meet our evaluation ambitions. The October 2007 meeting will re-visit our evaluation framework and discuss opportunities for additional resource to go into particular evaluation activities. LearnHigher development money is however limited because of its commitment to funding people.

5.0 Our self-evaluation findings:

The LearnHigher year one Evaluation Report highlighted issues that LearnHigher needed to address if it wanted to properly develop its potential for impact. It argued LearnHigher needs:

- A robust description of learning development that can be adopted,
- Projects to collaborate so that developments and enquiries cluster to each one's benefit,
- Projects to become seen as locally-valuable activities that directly contribute to a coherent vision of LearnHigher. (Peter Knight, Year One Report, page 3)

Each of these has been addressed in a number of ways. The lack of consensus about what 'learning development' means was addressed at three levels. A common definition was forged, discussed and published, (see www.learnhigher.ac.uk). This is helpful but lacks reality unless it is being played out both within practice and through developing some agreed underpinning theoretical assumptions. These have been addressed through LearnHigher engagement in collaborative project work and common research initiatives. These give space for a consensus about learning development to become meaningful. The work that has been done collaboratively gives rise to a greater sense of LearnHigher partners as 'learning development' professionals, and what that role entails. These comments from LACs were given as 'unexpected outcomes':

"The project established a new working relationship between teaching and learning support providers."

"[My] Awareness of differences between HEIs has prompted more thinking about resource content and methods of delivery."

"[LearnHigher has] Increased my professional confidence from recognising the value of learning development."

“Opportunities [afforded by LearnHigher] to step out of stressful workloads facilitated more creative thinking and problem solving.”

The increased involvement in research undertaken by LearnHigher has also led to an engagement with the concept of ‘learning development’:

“[The] Project was not as successful as we had hoped – [it] has prompted a rethink about research methodology for next year.”

LearnHigher has made some progress this year in building a consensus about ‘learning development’ but this needs to be taken to another level, possibly through more systematic and shared focus on theoretical underpinnings. As noted in the year one Evaluation Report, this requires a central steer.

Three collaborative projects were funded out of the LearnHigher development fund this year. Whilst this has been found by LACs to increase workload more than anticipated, it has led to rich working relationships being developed between LearnHigher partners and a greater experience of being part of a network.

“Contact with colleagues elsewhere continually throws up useful areas for discussion and leads to new insights about the nature of Learning Development work.”

“Steering group meetings provide significant opportunities for broadening personal knowledge and building capacity – they are an exceptionally creative and stimulating experience.”

LearnHigher partners were urged by Peter Knight to have their projects become seen as locally-valuable activities that directly contribute to a coherent vision of LearnHigher. The face to face meetings held by LearnHigher partners greatly contributed to the cross fertilisation of ideas that could feed into practices:

“Being part of LearnHigher has given me an insight into the benefits of a more varied and wider ranging approach to educational research. I have learnt that it is far more effective to draw on the expertise of others than to try and re-invent the wheel.”

“Have ‘paired up’ with Leeds LAC and have been sharing, using and feeding back on each others’ resources. Materials and ideas have also been shared and evaluated through video resource project as all resources from these Learning Areas will be incorporated into that web-based resource.”

Contributing to building LearnHigher as whole rather than as a set of disparate but related activities has been the individual capacity building that has been supported by both meetings and collaborative work. Partners have learned not only about managing finances and their estates departments, but also have developed new skills:

“There was new media skills and script writing development for all members [of our project team]. Learning about professional video production (staging, editing etc.) and developing skills in script writing.”

“Producing video resources is very time consuming!”

The experience of being part of a network and the collaborative projects has helped to meet this challenge of becoming a ‘whole’ rather than a set of disparate and individual projects. LearnHigher needs now to give focus to how to use the ‘strength of the network’ for greater impact on learning development practices and improving student learning. The network has provided possibilities for bidding for joint externally funded projects, and has been successful with three HEA projects and one JISC funded research project.

5.1 Student experiences in LearnHigher universities

LearnHigher partners work in different ways with students, some involved in face to face sessions outside the (subject) curricula, others working within modules or running modules, across their university or within their faculty. Some partners work directly with academics or other staff to develop their practices.

Probably the greatest impact on students from LearnHigher to date has been from creating institutional LearnHigher spaces. These have largely been for student use, (see Appendix Six). These high quality spaces have been thoughtfully designed and had input from (CETL) people not normally asked about their ambitions for student learning.

*“The **LearnHigher room** and the re-developed **Learning Workshop** space are practically completed, (two minor technical glitches to overcome). The room is very successful with both staff and students. We are having to control access to the room otherwise it could be booked continually. The room has allowed the trialing of the **Breakfast Club** – an early morning drop-in session with refreshments and an ethos of getting students to access support from each other and key resources as well as tutors. An unexpected outcome is that the Workshop space has proved so popular with students that it really became a **Social Learning Space**. Indeed sometimes it is difficult to remove students not attending Learning Workshops.”*

One tension created by the high quality furniture and equipment in these spaces has been the need for partner universities to find the right balance between security and open access/use of these spaces. The aim was often to make these learning spaces as accessible as possible to students, so they could see them as belonging to themselves, to inhabit for their own needs. This has effected a shift from the original intention of full accessibility towards a less ‘open’ facility. The high quality has also attracted many other users:

“[...now we] need to defend the dedicated ‘Learning Space’ room against allcomers”

The high quality and creative provision has however had an immediate impact:

“Students love using the high quality Workshop space – even when sessions are not running – and they are astonished by the quality of the LearnHigher room.”

“[The creation of this suite made] an immediate difference to the way in which students study in the physical space. It created a more ‘relaxed and academic environment’ (from student feedback). There has been considerable synergy and better productivity for department staff and students in relation to co-operative study.”

A variety of methods for collecting evidence about the use of the LearnHigher spaces has only really begun this year and this will take on a more concentrated focus next year:

“Confidence logs have been developed and implemented so that students’ confidence can be monitored as they make use of the learning opportunities offered via the LearnHigher centre. For this current academic year, the confidence logs have only been used on a trial basis to identify their use as a monitoring process and been used for workshops and one-to-one sessions.”

Evaluative work has been done to make sense of the student experience of learning development and both Reading and Nottingham Trent have found that students prefer embedded advice to add-on advice. Kent has had strong support from their Students’ Union for their work on formative use of Turnitin. Elsewhere it was reported that the development and provision of more useable resources helped to build the confidence of students in using the service provided. Liverpool Hope research demonstrated that students look to their tutors rather than to their institutional central services to support their use of resources. Worcester research expects a direct impact:

“Once completed and reported, research in progress will have a direct impact on the student experience through:

- *Revisions to the dyslexia screening and assessment process in UW*
- *Amendments and changes to teaching/learning/assessment practices for disabled students*
- *Better informed, more aware staff on how to develop inclusive curricula.”*

But not all interventions work as intended:

“The uptake of the diagnostic tests was not as successful as anticipated. One of the main reasons being that students had scheduled diagnostic tests to do as part of their course and hence did not want to spend time doing additional tests.”

Research work has also highlighted fundamental issues about learning development provision to students:

“Research demonstrated a real motivational problem at the core of most HEI academic support systems. This (and related research) showed that for a number of first year students there are problems with the model of going and asking for help when coming from an environment in which they are used to receiving support without having to go and ask for it in a mature fashion.”

LearnHigher continues its commitment to understand the student experience of learning development and to understand where and how effective interventions can be made. The network needs to re-visit what it has now collectively learned to further inform its work.

5.2 Impact on teachers in LearnHigher universities

There is a largely unexplored set of relationships at work between academics and learning developers. The power relationships are seen in the research undertaken at Liverpool Hope where it became clear students value most their tutors' inputs. Tutors may speak highly of various learning developers and send their students to see them on occasion, but this reinforces the notion amongst students that they need some form of remedial help. In addition the research done at Nottingham Trent points to a student culture which does not expect to seek advice outside their formal sessions as this has not been part of a culture from which they have come. The existence of LearnHigher has however given opportunities for new types of relationships to be built and in some instances has had a positive impact.

“[Our] project established new working relationship between teaching and learning support providers.”

“[I] co-taught on History level 1 module.”

“The use of a topical learning area (exam prep) gave us receptive audience and established principle of mediated teaching resources”

“Talking to people who previously had no idea what we do in this area but are keen to refer students to us and work on curriculum design.”

One LAC undertook an email survey which showed that staff within the department (where this LAC is located) have begun to think more about how students learn in relation to information seeking and processing skills. Collaborative project work had been undertaken with staff and students to formally look at incoming students' information skills and then to follow through the progress of the development of these students' information skills. The time and resources from LearnHigher funding made this work possible.

With each LAC only receiving £15,000 per year for their activities and this often used as part of their or someone else's salary to enable LearnHigher work, there is very little money for spreading within the partner HEIs. Some have decided however, to spend some of their LearnHigher funding on small scale projects. Kent has created a fund for academics to develop innovative assessment practices and Manchester University has levered substantial additionality through funding several evaluation projects. Academics bid for these Manchester University LearnHigher funds where they had created a resource for teaching but not evaluated its use. As a condition of funding they shared the resource with LearnHigher, which added to our understanding of the impact of such resources in use. Brighton also had a lot of success with small grants:

“Relatively modest amounts of funding generate a lot of creative activity and goodwill!”

Funding is not always essential and sometimes it just needs a good idea. We have a few very successful interventions with academics. At Nottingham Trent a LearnHigher colleague has initiated

an 'Academic writing readers group'. Articles about academic writing are circulated prior to a meeting, which occurs as an hour's discussion group, raising interest, knowledge and issues about academic writing. This has proved a success and other HEIs are seeking to learn about the model. Academic writing has proved to be an issue that many want to engage with. Liverpool Hope ran a well attended day workshop for both internal and external delegates exploring 'writing in the disciplines'. Elsewhere:

"We have a project ('WrAssE') in Plymouth, supported by the LearnHigher CETL, designed to raise awareness of 'good' student writing. It has enabled a group of 16 academics from a range of discipline areas to look in some detail at selected student texts from their own groups. This has prompted some interesting insights - about writing, about assignment tasks and about the assessment of writing. The group (which only met once in a 'workshop') is still in contact via email."

Where the learning development issue is one of common current academic concern LACs have had success in running workshops for academics:

"Academics really appreciated the opportunity to see the range of practice in marking and giving feedback across a number of disciplines. The project team were pleasantly surprised to find that so many staff were interested to participate and we had to be quite selective!"

But not all ideas work and learning developers still find it a challenge to both reach academics as an audience and attract their time for engaging with LearnHigher:

"[We] Need to conduct more research into best ways of disseminating mediated resources and advice on their use."

"[We have had] difficulty in reaching certain academic departments"

"[It has been] difficult to advertise the site to staff and to encourage the use of new design ideas"

"The poor response of students and difficulty of engaging academics in [our research] project has prompted a rethink of research methodology and timing of future projects."

"Students prefer embedded advice to add-on: we need to train academic staff in embedding study advice in module teaching."

5.3 Impact on learning designs in LearnHigher universities

LearnHigher has at the centre of its work learning development resources. It seeks not only to create (where there is a gap) or signpost good resources, but also to understand their effective use.

"There was a positive academic response to [our] resource and its immediate application."

"LAC has already been able to increase the use of video materials in teaching sessions."

"Brighton and Kent are interested in using the online templates that we have developed for their Development Fund project."

There are however, issues that LearnHigher needs to agree about its resources focus. It is common to suppose that good resources are good for everybody and easy to share. The reality is often different. A tension for this CETL is found in its desire to share and its anxiety about 'excellence' in the resources it creates. Most are happy to use their resources locally but anxious to 'put them out there'. There is also some institutional reluctance.

"Many materials seem very context-specific and not easily transferable to other situations"

"The evaluation of learning materials is often highly subjective and hard to measure"

LearnHigher needs to resolve its anxieties and promote a clear and more sophisticated message about the use of resources. LearnHigher sees resources situated in the context of their use, so are concerned with the broader study practices of students and academic practices of teachers. LearnHigher aims to find out circumstances for effective interventions with resources. Liverpool Hope has led some LearnHigher research that has given focus to students finding and use of resources

which has given rise to a project that will involve academics, librarians, Write Now CETL and the Liverpool Hope Writing Centre during the next academic year.

Various LearnHigher partners operate different pedagogic approaches and some were already working directly with academic staff to embed learning development work within formal curricula. Others have found the existence of LearnHigher has raised awareness of possibilities of doing this.

“The impact of LearnHigher membership on shifting attitudes to new approaches to learning development has exceeded expectations (though also taken time away from core Visual practices work)”

“[I was] approached by one department to collaborate in developing a new assessed module in study practices including advice on teaching reading and writing.”

“[Academics wanted] embedded skills content within the subject context. [I] provided good examples of embedding writing skills”

“At my own School (Management), the publicity given to the new Referencing website, has focused attention of staff on referencing issues and the need for consistency in marking and feedback to students.”

“To identify the exact errors students are making, past examination transcripts for a maths module (mechanics) have been analysed – errors have been categorised based on an error taxonomy that was produced while students exam scripts were being analysed. This has led to better designs of CAA questions (in particular to the distracters that have been used for multiple-choice and responsive numerical input type questions).”

Other work impacting on the curriculum could arise from both new course provision for academics and collaborative research projects:

“[We are] Planning a course on embedding study practices for new lecturers.”

“The implementation of an on-line information audit has better informed staff of the success or otherwise of embedding information literacy strategies within the curriculum & the effectiveness of intervention during the academic year by MMU library practitioners. This research will be continued for the three years that the cohort (originally tested) remains at MMU. Results will be analysed and co-operative ventures with the HEA LIMES project and James Maddison University in the USA should produce a generic information literacy audit for use with UK HE students.”

Other forms of learning collaborations are also evident:

*“[We] Trialled a model using student academic writing mentors and staff member support.”
(Plymouth)*

The impact of new space on learning is yet to fully emerge as many of the spaces are still being ‘inhabited’ in new ways. Some spaces have been promoted to build awareness and use of the learning development services offered:

“Anticipate that the establishment of informal training opportunities provided by LearnHigher Workshop room will contribute to ‘normalising’ the use of Study Advice.”

“The space has been promoted by using it for a wide range of learning development opportunities aimed at students, for example, a week long programme of workshops (known as Effective Learning Week) took place in the LearnHigher Centre, as well as Maths workshops, which ran on a weekly basis during term time and presentation workshops.”

Other spaces have offered new learning opportunities such as the Breakfast Club at London Met, and these have led to changes in student experiences. The Manchester Met LearnHigher space has given rise to new collaborative working patterns with staff and students.

5.4 Strategic and other impact on constituent universities

The impact of the LearnHigher spaces has gone beyond changing student experiences and learning design to have wider effect on our constituent universities. Some e.g. London Met have seen an increase in the use of learning development services by students as a result of upgraded facilities; some spaces have prompted new opportunities:

“The resources of the LearnHigher room have provided a starting point for networking with others involved in learning development. As a large institution it’s difficult to identify others with interests in learning development issues. By offering space we have been able to engage interest and work towards sharing resources.”

“Work on the LearnHigher capital project (the LearnHigher suite) and negotiations with University colleagues regarding the project has created much improved working relationships at faculty administrative and central level. Over 100 people were involved in the design, implementation and subsequent use of the new facilities.”

The high quality LearnHigher spaces have attracted other institutional users in almost all cases, from Senior Management meetings, HR, to a student poetry group:

“[We had] unexpected requests to use the LearnHigher Centre by the Disability and Dyslexia Service, Volunteer BUSS and Brunel International wanting to pilot new one-off and regular sessions e.g. Global Gossip.”

Despite the low level of funding received by each LearnHigher LAC, being part of the largest collaborative CETL has provided many of them with real influence in their institutions.

“The existence of LearnHigher coupled with my role in ALDinHE has contributed to a full review of institutional structures to support student learning development. This is now on the agenda of the university’s Teaching and Learning Development Committee...”

“Review of all learning support systems across the university being conducted” (Nottingham Trent)

“Brighton undertook a systematic review of their learning development support mechanisms and as a consequence a new post was created”

“Kent is focusing on assessment issues in the coming year prompting the support for a whole new website to be developed on assessment.”

“The Skills Plus strategy will remain a key document for the next three to four years at least. All programmes will therefore need to consider critical thinking and reflection when validating new programmes in the future.”

The existence of this collaborative Centre for Excellence in promoting learning development and the visible impact of the LearnHigher spaces has carried weight far beyond the resources they bring. The institutional support for LearnHigher has been high, as evidenced by five of the original LACs all being replaced by their respective universities when they had moved on to other jobs, when financially the Universities had little to lose in not replacing LACs.

As well as having strategic influence within constituent universities LearnHigher has made impact within some institutional structures.

“LearnHigher has been instrumental in raising the profile and prestige of the work done by the Learning Development team at UoP. The additional funding has effectively widened the scope of the team, added to our diversity and flexibility, and improved our resources and our ability to evaluate materials. Overall these indirect outcomes have impacted favourably on the support we provide for students.”

“We hoped it would stimulate the formation of a central learning development and support unit, and it did.”

“[We were given an] active role in a new Steering Group for Academic Skills.

“[LearnHigher has] “increased collaboration between support providers.”

"[There has been] Impact on L&T forum, committee, strategy across learning, teaching & assessment. [We have been given a] Voice for learning development, students and good practice across all learning areas."

At some universities, e.g. London Met and Reading, the LACs were invited onto committees that had previously ignored their work. LearnHigher could not claim impact everywhere though. Manchester and Liverpool Universities are large decentralised universities where research is always the priority and learning development work is largely ignored. Manchester has been reorganising and the LearnHigher partner, being originally located in their Continuing Education unit was on the edge of disappearing along with the unit for a good while. Generally however, the re-structuring (seven universities since the CETL began) has not seen LearnHigher or learning development work sacrificed, though often moved about, and has sometimes helped shape thinking about 'what next'.

Institutional practices have also seen changes come as a consequence of LearnHigher. New associations have been created, particularly within universities that have other CETLs, e.g. Plymouth, London Met, Leeds, Liverpool Hope, Manchester and Reading. Student conferences have become established at two universities, Leeds and London Met.

"[There has been an] impact on institutional approach to pedagogic research and involving students in research. Student conference as an annual event that works to raise awareness of CETLs – and raises image of learning development and the students' use of learning development."

"LearnHigher enabled substantial collaboration with other CETLs, separately & together valued for producing research, resources, interventions and voice in pedagogic research and the student experience: valuing (non-traditional) students and practically supporting staff."

But also with other groupings:

"[LearnHigher has] provided a vehicle and staff time to initiate projects with other student support providers in [our] university (e.g. Library, Centre for Development of Teaching and Learning, Skills Opportunities at Reading, Student Union)."

LearnHigher is found in a number of partner's Learning and Teaching Strategies but could give focus to its growing power to influence and develop a range of its own strategies to seek more sustainable impact.

5.5 Work with and impact on external partners

The limited funding received by LearnHigher partners prohibits opportunities for extensive work with external partners. Time funded is mostly consumed by collaborative activities within LearnHigher. If an impact is made on its sixteen universities however, LearnHigher will have achieved more than most CETLs. That said, there are some natural alliances, local, national and even international that could be productively forged, and there is some evidence for this. Some of these opportunities revolve around the specific work and organisation of learning development, others with learning area themes themselves, and some as a consequence of the wider CETL community.

"LearnHigher facilitated extensive active involvement with RLO & Write Now that might not have been permitted by my new line manager. Further, the two other CETLs have more financial clout within London Met than LearnHigher – being a substantial collaborator has raised the profile and status of LearnHigher and the Learning Development Unit."

"[Unexpected] links with new people brought together through CETLs – the All Leeds CETLs includes 2 big Institutional CETLs on ethics, assessment and enterprise and two smaller ones. The Student Conference in March 2008 will be an example of joint working with an impact on students' personal and professional skills."

"The most significant development this year is the collaboration that is developing with the Reading-based CETL-AURS (Applied Undergraduate Research Skills)."

<http://www.rdg.ac.uk/cdotl/cetl-aurs/>

"[We] Have planned meetings with colleagues at Sheffield Hallam, UCE and Bournemouth to share and evaluate materials"

"LAC has fostered strong links with US, European and (in 2008) Australasian and African information literacy practitioners."

The development of LearnHigher local or 'Learning Area' networks is part of LearnHigher's business plan and these have begun to emerge through various alliances. Bournemouth's excellence in its PDP work and membership of LearnHigher helped its building of connections and joint work with the Centre for Recording Achievement and the Higher Education Academy. Other LACs are pursuing local networks:

"There has been an increased focus on assessment issues at Kent, and the formation of our local assessment advisory group has facilitated joint work between local institutions. I think it is a bit early to determine how this has impacted policy etc, but good working relationships have been formed across several previously completely separate institutions."

The creation of the CETL has attracted outside interest in LearnHigher's work and this year LearnHigher has benefited from a Visiting Professor (five months) from the University of Cape Town. Next year there will be a PVC from an Australian university visiting LearnHigher. The LearnHigher network provides a ready made collaboration of sixteen universities and this has proved attractive to external funders. A number of collaborative projects have been funded by both the JISC and HEA, and LearnHigher is now attracting international interest through the work of one of its LACs:

"The Qatar University, College of Education have expressed interest in taking forward a match funded project with LearnHigher "

LearnHigher originally came into being as a consequence of an approach to the LTSN Generic Centre by the University of Liverpool, and the LTSN funded its first three network meetings. The partners self-selected at the first Learning Development in HE Network (LDHEN) Symposium and LearnHigher remains embedded in the LDHEN work and community. Its relationship is symbiotic, with LDHEN benefiting from the learning and opportunities it provides LDHEN's key players to meet and financial support for its Symposia, and LearnHigher benefiting from being part of this wider dynamic learning community. Two LACs have become involved in book writing with the first about to be published by the OU and the second invited to write the 3rd edition of *Effective Organisational Communication*. Other LearnHigher members have received invitations to present externally, both nationally and internationally.

6. What we have learned and its influence on our plans for 2007-2010

It is difficult to summarise the wealth of learning that has been achieved by LearnHigher and it is doubtful if any single player knows it all. If we accept the Vygotskyian notion that development (to higher psychological processes) follows learning (Vygotsky: 1978) then LearnHigher must address the issues outlined in 6.5. Similarly adopting Vygotsky's notion of the 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky: 1978), LearnHigher can make sense of the impact of learning development together as a network and seek to develop new understandings about learning development. This is its central challenge but there is a huge commitment and individual LACs keep on making sacrifices in their busy lives to continue engaging with LearnHigher meetings and activities. Real evidence of 'effect' still needs to be achieved in its evaluation processes.

6.1 Overview of new knowledge about how student learning might be enriched

LearnHigher in its reviews of learning support structures, research into student study practices, evaluations of interventions, and sense making of the use of resources in learning and teaching is beginning to surface new understandings that could impact on how student learning might be enriched. Recognising what makes for effective learning development interventions with either students or staff however, is happening in pieces, some of which have surfaced in this report, but time is still too short to claim genuine new knowledge that can have application across contexts. In the Autumn of 2007 the report from the LearnHigher research symposium held in June 2007 will be published on the LearnHigher website. <http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk> This will support LearnHigher's on-going dialogue about what it 'knows' and where it should focus its research to further build its expertise.

6.2 Emerging teaching practices

The work of learning developers and impact on changing teaching practices is still marginal, even in HEIs that are embracing other than remedial models of learning development. There are insights being gained from various interventions and LearnHigher is beginning to raise the profile of some of these. The new models may be more to do with students learning with other students in new ways rather than a large shift in the teaching practices of academics. Pressures on academics' lives, even those most committed to teaching, make it easier to live with remedial solutions than fundamentally change their own practices. For LearnHigher to even challenge the discourse is a large challenge.

6.3 Implications for participant universities' systems and practices

LearnHigher can claim impact on some of its participating universities, but this is often a consequence of the LAC's particular location within the HEI structure, not merely the influence of LearnHigher. A number of HEIs are looking at their structures, processes and practices and what LearnHigher can offer is the opportunity for others in the network to quickly learn of these interventions and adapt what is transferable. Most LACs have local steering groups that involve senior HEI staff and there is much interest amongst these in the work of other LearnHigher HEIs, particularly around addressing common concerns about retention, progression and success of students. Collaboration, for instance around induction practices is beginning to show impact in the adoption of good practices in a number of LearnHigher partner institutions. Outcomes from reviews of learning development practices will emerge this coming year and will be fed back into the learning of other partner universities.

6.4 Achieving sector-wide impact and any multiplier effects

Sector wide impact from CETLs is unlikely in two years of existence and it will be hard to judge what specific work has led to which specific change, since change is a complex process. Many of the issues that LearnHigher is concerned with are however, those which concern wider groups within the sector and LearnHigher can tap into this need to change. LearnHigher is well placed to lever additionality as an established network and has done so already in its success in creating a number of sub-networks and attracting externally funded joint projects. Within its own wider community of learning developers it has added weight and opportunities and can continue to develop this. To create real and sustainable changes requires LearnHigher to develop a stronger and clearer sense of itself as a network and that learning development grows into a knowledge base that can impact on improving learning beyond the confines of its community.

6.5 Adjustments and future plans

There are a number of issues that emerge from this report that LearnHigher colleagues will address collectively. The LearnHigher network was formed on the basis of consensus and strives to maintain this approach in its operations. But its model is unique with twenty (at least) mainstream workers

collaborating across sixteen universities and the whole of England, and it does not conceive of itself as a project. LearnHigher needs to revisit its long term goals and consider the issues that have emerged as it has grown over the last two years into the dynamic network it has become. LearnHigher needs to:

Understand change strategies:

- Needs to develop a theoretical basis for understanding itself as a change agent,
- Needs to focus on its growing power to influence, and develop a range of strategies to seek more sustainable impact at local level,
- Needs to consider how to influence the wider policy agendas.

Revisit the foci of its activities and its evaluative activities in the light of current learning:

- Revisit its central evaluation question,
- Re-visit what it means for other groups to 'have a stake' in the CETL,
- Develop methods for collecting evidence about the use of the LearnHigher spaces, (and collect some).

Take its understanding of learning development to a new level:

- Build further a consensus about 'learning development' and this needs to be taken to a higher level,
- Needs to develop a consensus on a clear theoretical model(s) for learning development.

Understand the nature of itself as a network:

- To give focus to how to use the 'strength of the network' for greater impact on learning development practices and improving student learning,
- To recognise its unique role in the learning development community.

Share what it has collectively learned:

- LearnHigher needs to reflect on what it has come to understand about resources and to agree about its resources focus so it can promote a clear and more sophisticated message about the effective use of resources,
- To review what it understands about effective learning development interventions,
- Needs to review its research focus and activities in the light of what it has learned.

6.6 Reflections on CETLs as agents of systemic improvement in teaching and learning in English higher education

CETLs were not set up specifically as agents of change but rather as rewarding excellence, with some expectation that this excellence could impact on further improving student learning. Tracking developments of CETLs from announcement in the White Paper on Higher Education to today's implementations one would encounter shifts in ideologies, growing incoherencies and now of course an 'implementation gap', (Trowler and Knight, 2001). CETLs themselves had to define their own excellence, that is, their past excellence. The CETLs that came into being may well be different individuals from bidders and without knowledge of original intentions. How far CETLs can become change agents depends on how they construe themselves now as change agents and how effectively they organise themselves with a coherent and consistent view of change, and a set of strategies for change that match. They may have a very clear idea of what fundamental problem they are trying to address, but they may also find themselves with little influence or power beyond their immediate circles. As a wider group of centres CETLs have little chance of impacting as a whole as they have no real existence or purpose as a network. Some collaborations between CETLs with common interest have potential to create impact. The opportunities created for learning from the capital spending on new 'spaces' could be productive though.

LearnHigher provides a different model to many CETLs and those that FDTL and other L&T initiatives have seen. Most of these have been project team based and have been good at building local capacity, but many innovations and resources that they supported disappeared once funding finished.

Elton (1999) argues that we should expect innovations to disappear and re-emerge but often the principles get lost along the way and new projects have to begin afresh to regain the principles. Values and beliefs too need to be changed if changes are to sustain, and this is hard to do from inside a project team. This feeding into the organisation of new principles, values and beliefs and new understanding rather than specific innovations might be what LearnHigher can aspire to, as its members all work in mainstream jobs within their HEIs. Mainstream staff are better placed than project teams 'on the fringe' to effect new thinking and learning in mainstream work.

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APPENDIX ONE

LearnHigher Evaluation

Year 1 Report

Peter Knight, the Open University

15th August 2006

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Acknowledgements

It has been possible to produce this report by the agreed date thanks to the efficiency of local area co-ordinators who produced their documentation by the end of July. They have supported the evaluation work in another, important way – by keen participation in the four evaluation and research days held since 17 June 2005. Without their lively engagement it would have been much harder to get a sense of LearnHigher achievements and aspirations.

Thanks also to Michelle Verity, who ensured that documents were with me in good time.

Summary

This report precedes the September reports from the twenty local area co-ordinators to the LearnHigher programme as a whole.

It is based largely on partners' self-reports of their work, complemented by participation in four research & evaluation days since June 2005, search of LearnHigher web sites, correspondence with partners, discussions with the Centre director and manager, and perusal of other documents.

LearnHigher has made a great deal of progress and the level of activity is impressive – there is good value for money here. All involved are to be congratulated on the undoubted achievements. The tender to run LearnHigher set out eighteen objectives and there is no doubt that these are being seriously addressed and that Year 1 progress has been good. Judged against its year 1 priorities (page 22), LearnHigher is exceeding plans.

These achievements are summarised in this document, which also invites attention to matters for reflection as year 2 plans are firmed up. It is argued that LearnHigher's potential is related to its success in brokering an agreed operational account of 'learning development'. It is a complicated operation and there will always be centrifugal forces at work because there are so many partners working on diverse topics in different settings and with reference to several scholarly traditions. While LearnHigher can make a considerable contribution to the quality of teaching and learning in England simply by delivering on the twenty projects currently in train, it has the potential to do a great deal more if:

- A robust description of learning development can be adopted
- Projects collaborate so that developments and enquiries cluster to each one's benefit
- Projects become seen as locally-valuable activities that directly contribute to a coherent vision of LearnHigher.

The LearnHigher CETL

Organisation

LearnHigher is a constellation of partners, each led by a local area co-ordinator (LAC). Each partner has a speciality within the area of student learning development.

Areas or specialties are¹:

1. Academic Writing;
2. Assessment ;
3. Critical Thinking and Reflection ;
4. Doing Research ;
5. Group Work;
6. Independent Learning;
7. Information Literacy;
8. Learning for all (Inclusivity);
9. Listening and Interpersonal skills
10. Maths, Numeracy & Statistics;
11. Mobile learning
12. Oral Communication;
13. Personal Development Planning;
14. Problem Solving & Creative Thinking;
15. Reading and Note Making;
16. Referencing;
17. Report Writing;
18. Time Management;
19. Understanding Organisations;
20. Visual Practices

Partner universities, co-ordinated by Liverpool Hope, are:

- a. Bournemouth (With Exeter)
- b. Brighton
- c. Brunel
- d. Bradford
- e. Kent
- f. Lincoln
- g. Liverpool
- h. London Metropolitan
- i. Leeds
- j. Manchester
- k. Manchester Metropolitan
- l. Nottingham
- m. Plymouth
- n. Reading
- o. Worcester

A strength of LearnHigher is that it has precipitated out of an established group, the One Stop Swap Shop, initiated by the University of Liverpool and funded by the LTSN Generic Centre. The group was self-selected from the wider Learning Development in Higher Education Network (LDHEN) at their first Symposium meeting in 2003. This has made the development of working practices easier than it would otherwise have been; indeed, it might otherwise have been unrealistic to expect an operation with sixteen partners to cohere in its first year.

Central operations are based at Liverpool Hope University. Once central service costs have been met funds are distributed amongst partner organisations, each of which has received capital funds through LearnHigher and recurrent 'reward funding' to support work in the nineteen areas or specialties.

¹ The website says that there are twenty areas but lists nineteen. The missing area is 'Listening and Interpersonal Skills', which submitted a report.

Purposes

LearnHigher describes itself as:

... the country's biggest collaborative HEFCE funded Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), we are a partnership of 16 Universities and the Higher Education Academy. We are committed to improving student learning through practice led enquiry, building a research base to inform the effective use of Learning Development resources.

We are a network of expertise seeking to enhance professional practice and student learning, and build capacity both within the network and across the wider sector ...

The LearnHigher partnership has a large amount of diverse expertise. Each of the 16 partner institutions is engaged in enquiry led practice which aims to build a sound evidence base in learning development across a broad spectrum of learning areas that underpin activity across all academic subjects.

Throughout our five-year programme we will be undertaking a strategic approach to research to build and disseminate a sound evidence base in learning development. We will enable practitioners across the sector to share in and contribute to current pedagogic understanding.

LearnHigher will also be a gateway to tried and tested resources in a broad range of learning areas. Each of our 16 partner institutions contributes research driven, peer reviewed and evaluated resources in twenty learning areas. In conjunction with the Higher Education Academy, LearnHigher will create a portal service to provide resources and materials to the whole of the sector. Staff in both support roles and/ or teaching roles will be able to use these resources in their course delivery, and in time, resources will be available for students to support their studies.

(<http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/index.htm>, accessed 8 August 2006)

Its first year plan had the following priorities (described as objectives on the website):

- Identify, quality assure and share existing materials & resources across the network
 - Establish baseline in practices / outputs
 - Develop the CETL, dissemination and portal service infrastructures
- (<http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/pages/developmentplan.htm>, accessed 8 August 2006).

More credence should be given to the set of eighteen objectives in the tender document. They are set out in appendices 2 and 3 on pages 22-25, below. Two of them (numbers 9 and 13) are not objectives for the first year.

The evaluation approach

LearnHigher is taking a distinctive approach to evaluation, which increasingly integrates evaluation with its normal work of enquiring, developing, learning and disseminating.

Rather than being an add-on, evaluation increasingly looks integral to the LearnHigher's intellectual life and purposes.

An approach to evaluation

LearnHigher is a complicated operation, involving twenty local area co-ordinators, from partner Universities, and a central operation based at Liverpool Hope University. Evaluation research needs to consider the achievements and capacity of each local operation, as well as the heft of the CETL as a whole. Two broad approaches can be envisaged. One is to fund an evaluation research team to work its way through the CETL, collecting and synthesising data. The second is to have a distributed evaluation, which becomes everyone's responsibility.

The second was preferred, largely on the grounds that involving everyone is more appropriate to a partnership operation, such as LearnHigher and that it makes good management sense for the people who have to respond to problems and opportunities to be charged with identifying them. It was also seen that this approach could build shared capacity and contribute to LearnHigher's achievements.

The LearnHigher team considered that they did not have quite as much evaluation research expertise as would be needed and recognised that there would be value in having an external evaluation research adviser. Peter Knight, one of the principals in the Open University's practice-based professional learning CETL, was appointed.

It was understood that evaluation research can be valuable and that the LearnHigher evaluation could distinctively add value because:

- It recognises that evaluation is research, in the sense that it is an enquiry into the state of play in a domain, which meshes with research-informed deliberation about future actions.
- It is formative, in that it creates feedback to help the CETL team to consider possibilities and areas for further attention.
- It is long-term, in that it runs alongside the CETL for its whole life.
- It is summative, in that annual, public reports on achievement will be produced, the first in August 2006, which is the end of the first operational year.
- It is collaborative, in two senses. First, evaluation directions, practices and indicators have been agreed over three meetings involving all LearnHigher colleagues. Secondly, the evaluation is designed to capture evaluation data that are created in good operational practices in all sites of activity. A consequence of adopting this approach is that LearnHigher colleagues are evaluating in the normal course of their work.
- It builds capacity in two ways. First by involving LearnHigher colleagues in modern, research-informed evaluation practices. Second, by sustained activities to enhance the capacity of LearnHigher for rigorous and relevant educational enquiry.
- It is externally directed.

It was agreed to have three evaluation research meetings a year involving the whole CETL. Each of the meetings to date has seen almost-full attendance. Follow-up documents have been placed on the evaluation or research meetings page http://fronter.com/learnhigher/main.phtml?content_page=%2Flearnhigher%2Fmain.phtml%3Fcs%3D61600.

Clarifying evaluation research purposes

Professor Murray Saunders, past president of the UK Evaluation Society, has an established record of evaluations related to teaching quality enhancement. He has evaluated the LTSN network (2002-05), the Scottish quality enhancement framework (2003-2006) and contributes to national and individual CETL evaluation activities.

The LearnHigher evaluation began by taking his RUFDATA template, which identifies issues that need clarification in the early stages of evaluation research, and applying it to LearnHigher's needs and activities. It was recognised that if the RUFDATA template could be applied to the LearnHigher programme, then it could contribute to the cohesion of the CETL by establishing shared understandings and a shared language.

Meetings of all partners in June and September 2005 considered RUFDATA templates developed in another CETL. Local partners drafted versions that described their thinking about evaluating their own local activities. From them emerged an agreed version of RUFDATA that described the overall LearnHigher evaluation and which was also applicable to local evaluations. It is at Appendix 1 on pages 20 and 21.

Identifying early evaluation research purposes

The RUFDATA description shows that the LearnHigher team wished to have an extensive evaluation, which is to say an evaluation that adds to thinking about learning development and its advancement, and which is sensitive to unexpected outcomes, as well as those anticipated in the team's bid to HEFCE.

However, it was clearly appreciated that the evaluation should also keep watch on LearnHigher's progress against its declared objectives. An early task was to consider indicators of achievement against these objectives. Appendix 2, pages 22 and 23, shows indicators arising from the September 2005 meeting and confirmed by the January 2006 one. Indicators for the whole CETL are expressed in terms of goals for the end of July 2006. Local partners developed their own indicators to cover areas not described by the central indicators.

It was recognised that collecting data and monitoring achievement against these indicators could be a substantial and expensive task, since the activities of sixteen partners would need to be monitored. It was also understood that local partners might see any central monitoring as intrusive, as well as insensitive to their particular aims and situations. However, discussion of project management practices in September 2005 and January 2006 led to agreement that good practices naturally involve creating data and using them to watch one's own progress against central and local targets. It was agreed, then, that each local partner would take responsibility for monitoring its own progress against targets and, as part of good project management practices, create evaluation data in the process. The central LearnHigher team would collect all of these data by the end of July each year and produce a composite for comparison against the central indicators.

Some objectives, though, need to be addressed centrally. The table at appendix 3, pages 24 and 25, shows the distribution of data collection responsibility between the central team and local partners. It was agreed at the January 2006 evaluation research meeting.

Baselining

Baselining is important for two reasons: to establish gaps in current thinking and practice that might need to be addressed; and to give a point of comparison when judging LearnHigher progress in 2007 and 2010.

Three forms of baselining were discussed at the January 2006 meeting:

- Describing the state of play in a university or college in relation to that partner's LearnHigher Learning Area.
- Describing the state of play nationally in relation to each LearnHigher Learning Area
- Describing the evidence and understandings contained in the national (and, perhaps, international) literature in relation to each LearnHigher Learning Area.

The first baseline allows Learning Area Coordinators (LACs) to describe progress in their learning area in their institution; the second allows them to describe any impact on other UK institutions; and the third allows a description of any changes in research knowledge and understandings in each project area.

Discussions of baselining showed some diversity of understandings of the CETL's core business. It was agreed that it was not 'learner development' although learner development was certainly expected to be an outcome of its work. However, agreement that its business was 'learning development' was compromised by a lack of agreement, mirrored in the educational literature, as to the meaning of 'learning development'. Although evaluation and development work are not dependent, at this stage, on shared understandings of the term, it was appreciated that LearnHigher could be more cohesive if there were greater agreement on the term. At the April 2006 evaluation research meeting it was proposed that

1. LearnHigher is a collective of people who want and, to an extent, have the means to enhance learning development practices
2. 'Learning development' is a concern that programmes of study, especially at undergraduate level, contain the opportunities and entitlements that help all students to become skilled in a set of academic practices.
3. 'Learning development' is concerned to provide opportunities and entitlements that accustom students to trying to transfer learning to fresh contexts.

Attempts to clarify the meaning of the central concept of learning development were taken further at the June 2006 operations meeting in Lincoln and sustained through on-line exchanges. Agreement had not emerged by August 2006, which leaves LearnHigher without a point of reference for use in designing and coalescing its activities.

Evaluation research plans

Sixteen local evaluation plans for the period to the end of July 2006 were produced and may be viewed at the password-protected site <http://fronter.com/learnhigher/main.phtml?cs=61600>². Evaluation reporting responsibilities are described in appendix 3.

Year 2 evaluation will continue the direction of year 1 work but variations will arise from:

- Year 1 evaluation findings and their discussion
- Opportunities that arise, including new lines of enquiry or development that stem from local or national work.
- The completion of baselining work.
- The HEFCE evaluation of the whole CETL project.

There will also be variation because the focus of evaluation should change as LearnHigher matures. Saunders argues that there are three sets of evaluation indicators; enabling (are the necessary tools, resources and expertise in place?) process (is the project doing the sorts of things that are likely to lead to the desired outcomes) and outcome (what effects is the project having or has the project had?).

While it is appropriate in the early stages of an evaluation to concentrate on enabling and process outcomes, as projects mature, attention needs to shift to outcome indicators. This is far from simple and needs to be understood as a CETL programme lifetime task. Even so, year 2 should see serious consideration of ways of identifying LearnHigher effects and of describing them convincingly. It is suggested that the January 2007 meeting might take this as its theme, beginning by examining models of the different sorts of effects that innovations typically have and considering ways of evaluating LearnHigher effects against a preferred model of innovation impact.

Research

Evaluation has been taken to be a form of research that contributes to LearnHigher's commitment to creation and enquiry in the field of learning development.

It is recognised that LearnHigher partners have a range of understanding of research processes and possible outcomes. It was therefore decided that there would be considerable value, for evaluation and wider LearnHigher purposes, in taking a systematic approach to the development of research capacity.

² The LearnHigher public website does not have a section on evaluation and research

Although formal work to enhance research capacity has only just begun, taking second place to the need to secure a robust and participative evaluation design, progress has been made. There has been development of shared understandings of evaluation designs and practices, which have been complemented by greater understandings of some of the more common research methods. These understandings will be extended in the October evaluation research meeting.

Accompanying greater awareness of enquiry methods has been increased attention to themes and concepts that are influential in the literatures on higher education. The beginnings of enquiry interest groupings can be seen – consolidation is planned for Autumn 2006, along with early consideration of publication possibilities.

Appendix 4, pages 26 and 27, outlines a way of beginning to map the territory of learning development. It is clearly understood that LearnHigher, even over five years, will not chart all areas – some will still be labelled *hic dragones sunt*. LearnHigher can reduce the amount of uncharted territory, though.

The first column is for recording the LearnHigher studies into students' academic practices: partners' interests are converging to identify a number of academic practices to be studied. Research groups are invited to nominate their three main enquiry methods in the second column, assuring themselves that the methods will give good purchase on one or more of the LearnHigher research questions, shown in column 3. Column 4 is intended to sensitise enquirers to the possible range of explanations for the academic practices they find, which will also have implications for the design of the enquiry and selection of research methods. The final column is an invitation to note, while the research is in progress, ideas for future enquiries. The October 2006 meeting will take this schema and concentrate on firming up enquiries and methods, revising the provisional explanations, and contemplating publication and dissemination possibilities.

Greater expertise in formal research methods contributes to the evaluation work by empowering colleagues to ask better questions about the effects of their work and to envisage better ways of creating data to address them. It also contributes to the LearnHigher enterprise as a whole and promises well for its intention (objectives 12 and 13) of attaining research standing.

Fit with LearnHigher's five-year plan

It is a year 2 objective to begin the research and evaluation programme. LearnHigher is a year ahead of plan in this respect.

Baselining

Partners were encouraged to keep the baseline documents short. In the event, none was less than a page long and three were around ten pages long. Variation can be explained in terms of the use to which local area co-ordinators intended to put them, so shorter documents could be as insightful as longer documents but without the detail and the references.

As was said earlier, the baseline reports have two main functions. The first is to provide the partners and LearnHigher as a whole with a point of reference for the 2007 HEFCE two-year evaluation and for the end-of-project evaluation in 2010.

The second function is to help in the identification of gaps, leading to identification of development priorities and enquiry possibilities. As partners lay plans for their second and third years and as the Centre, as a whole, prepares to meet HEFCE calls for more detailed operational plans for year 3 onwards, this gap-and-opportunity analysis should be useful.

Incidentally, sharing these documents will help local area co-ordinators to see fresh collaborative opportunities.

Institutional baselines.

Reference was made in the baselines to many sources of information, including: email enquiries of university colleagues; specially-mounted student surveys; national Student Survey data; QAA institutional audit; deliberations of university working groups and committees; institutional strategies, policies and codes; intranet and internet sites; analyses of relevant resources; mapping of take-up of provision; descriptions of relevant provision; and internal reviews, including programme reviews.

There was relatively little by way of analysis of the student experience and where there was analysis it was not clear that it was based in recent enquiries in the university. Comments on provision were sometimes also rather generalised. An exception is the groupwork document:

The University currently has 3581 undergraduate and postgraduate modules listed in the module catalogue. Analysis of this shows that 232 (6.5%) contain an element of assessed groupwork. Of these identified modules, 75.4% assess the groupwork element with coursework, 19.8% with presentations and 14.2% are assessed solely using groupwork. 51% of assessed groupwork modules are delivered within two academic schools, Management and Informatics. A further 860 modules use groupwork in their teaching strategy. From this we can ascertain that groupwork is used in at least 30% of modules. The evidence we have of the success of the use of groupwork is anecdotal rather than empirical.

Less detailed but still useful for baselining purposes are these comments on information literacy learning:

A search of the MMU internal document database (available from the home page) revealed that MMU did not have an overall policy document relating to Info Lit ... Academic departments and LSU made no specific mention of Information Literacy, though documents existed in relation to "Study Skills", Citations, Referencing, Academic Writing, Avoiding Plagiarism and the like ... [However] a number of departments had produced WebCT modules/ tutorials and printed materials relating to Study Skills, Citations, Referencing, Academic Writing and Avoiding Plagiarism. Aspects of the learning area elements were also embedded in a number of units. Active departments included the Department of Information & Communications (my own department) and the Philosophy Department (Humanities Faculty) and assorted departments within the MMU Business School. All staff email requests and a scan of the Teaching and Learning Unit site failed to reveal any further evidence of activities.

And on time management:

Time Management is rarely taught to students at the University of Reading as an embedded part of their modules. Only one degree programme handbook out of 31 mentions it although 3 other references to time management were found on

“Blackboard” and in course handouts. The Study Advisers ran workshops on this topic at the request of module convenors in Land Management and Foundation Science and there was a generic workshop early in the Autumn term for new undergraduates which was attended by 45 individuals. A study guide for organisation and time management is available on the website <http://www.rdg.ac.uk/studyskills/study%20guides/time.htm> which was accessed by 169 individuals during the year. Approximately 400 paper copies of the guide were taken from leaflet stands in the library.

It must be appreciated that establishing local baselines can be time-consuming and, whatever the long-term benefits, could seem to be a marginal activity to partners coping with capital projects and establishing a presence at the same time as working out their own pattern of working. This comment from the independent and self-directed learning area captures some of those difficulties:

There is an emphasis at Manchester on independent study underlying all learning. As Learning Development is generally expected to take place at course level, however, it has been difficult to gauge the full extent of activities aimed at developing self-directed learning ... Given the size of the institution it is difficult to maintain an overview of activities. The Teaching Research Development Network within the institution promotes sharing of good practice. In addition faculty Teaching and Learning networks organise workshops for sharing of ideas and resources. However, while these are well attended by staff who support learning it is difficult to gauge the commitment of academic staff. Evidence of student engagement with resources is limited to small scale studies of course based provision.

One or two baselines reports seemed to be complicated by too-extensive or ill-defined views of the topic area in question. The danger is that colleagues working in these areas might find themselves spread too thin to make the impact they might make if they took a narrower view of their territory.

Overall, these institutional baselines do provide a serviceable point of reference for future evaluation, spotlight gaps and opportunities and will help others in LearnHigher to see possibilities for collaboration.

And, to state the obvious, they remind us that all partners are clearly in the business of change management, a theme which is developed in the final section of this report.

National baselines

National baselines were usually much less well developed than institutional baselines because it is far, far harder to get information about practice in some 150 institutions. Although there was some use of mail lists and subject groups to ask about practice in other universities, it was more common to refer to others working in the area, including other CETLs, Higher Education Academy projects; subject centres, and the Quality Assurance Agency. UK research literature was sometimes mentioned in this section.

By and large these documents said enough, albeit in outline, about UK provision and practice to be a useful point of comparison in future evaluations. It was not clear whether any of the partners had used their analysis of national provision to identify gaps that they might try and fill.

A typical example of a national baseline is:

The national picture appears to reflect the one at Liverpool Hope University. The Higher Education Academy’s ‘Imaginative Curriculum Network’ has done a considerable amount of work nationally to encourage HE to give greater attention to its role in developing students’ creativity.

... My own mapping activity of the subject benchmarking statements looked to see where problem solving was explicitly referred to (usually in the generic skills section)

and where a descriptor was given to indicate the attainment of a level of problem solving skills. Of the 72 subject statements, I found that only 7 did not mention problem solving either as a generic skill developed by students of the subject or identify a threshold or modal standard. Where subjects are directly related to professions such as Medicine and Engineering, Problem Based Learning is widely used as a teaching method and students have much opportunity to develop and practise problem solving skills. Enquiry-based learning (in which students develop amongst others enquiry skills, research skills and information retrieval skills) is also becoming more widely used in disciplines such as Veterinary Science, Architecture and Information Technology as well as many more non-vocational subjects.

A search of HEI study/student support web pages found that creative thinking and problem solving were not widely resourced though some interesting examples were found.

I regard it as typical because of the statement that national provision rather mirrors local provision; reference to HEA and QAA sources; the use of web searches. Notice, although it was not common in baselines, the mention of opportunities for further work.

Similar is this extract from the report writing area:

A survey at Reading shows that for about half of the students taking modules in which Report Writing is required, information on this topic is not included in course material. Nationally, less than half of all students have useful LDI [Learning Development Information] available on their own university web pages and information on Report writing is comparatively rare.

The resources available to students in HEIs in England are very variable. A survey of the 141 HEIs in England found that 35% (46) had Learning Development Information (LDI) (e.g. information on essay writing) accessible on their HEI website. Students are likely to find that LDI from their own HEI is more closely linked to the jargon and aims of their coursework. Universities with larger student populations were more likely to have LDI websites, however, HEFCE figures show that only 47% of students have LDI on their own HEI website.

The availability of information on Report Writing was limited to 11% of HEIs (15).

A distinctive feature of this baseline is its overt reference to 'learning development'. It would be interesting to know how the university web pages that did refer to LD defined it.

Absent from these baseline statements was any judgement of how the partner was seen nationally – as a fledgling, a pioneer in a particular area or a leader overall. And, absent because it was not asked for, is a judgement of the position of LearnHigher in the UK learning development terrain. These baseline documents may be useful resources as LearnHigher constructs a baseline statement that it can draw on when considering, in 2010, how much of a difference it has made to the UK learning development world.

Conceptual baselines

In some respects this was the most challenging baseline to do because it meant getting to grips with boundaries, essences, connections, assumptions and epistemologies.

One good approach was to summarise the literature:

A review of literature [on groupwork] suggests very limited development of new models and theories in groupwork in recent years. The main focus is on theory and models that may be out of date and there is little evidence to validate their use with modern student groups. In addition, the literature seems to limit groupwork to relatively small groups where members are assumed to be relative strangers. Recent changes in student demographics suggest that cohorts are generally larger and students form friendship groups early in the year. In some cases existing friendship

groups apply to do the same course at university and arrive together. There is a lack of evidence relating to the current education climate covering such things as online and blended learning, access to materials, students who work part-time, technological changes and strategic learners who study just what they need to get through an assessment or complete a course. There has been extensive work undertaken on online collaboration, however this is focussed on the needs of distance learners rather than students working in groups. The literature contains a number of general theories that lack empirical evidence.

This neatly lays out some interesting research possibilities and offers a direction for developmental work. There is, on this analysis, territory to be staked out. The following comment on problem-solving shows quite clearly where future work should be directed, although it is not nearly as clear whether the analysis suggests any original enquiries:

It is also recognised now that problem solving is more than a series of cognitive processes directed at devising solutions to well-defined problems. The broader view recognises that we are more likely to encounter problems that are neither well-defined nor entirely problematic. Creative thinking as a problem solving tool is a popular topic in the business management and pop- psychology literature but texts looking at the concepts in the context of education are emerging. Problem solving is one of the top 10 skills required by organisations in their employees. Higher Education is recognising this though it is largely only being addressed by the more vocational disciplines using PBL methodologies. Recent research concludes that it is possible to enhance creativity in students by teaching them to seek new ideas, recognise novel approaches and assess the effectiveness of novel solutions. What is growing in recognition is that creativity can not be developed by students through a bolt-on lesson once or twice a week, but is a general principle that should be a part of the pedagogy underpinning the whole curriculum.

A rather nice analysis in the oral communication document focused on four key concepts or, perhaps more accurately, disputed areas:

- Embedding opportunity to develop oral communication skills in the curriculum.
- Reliability of teacher assessment of oral presentations
- Encouraging and improving student assessment of peers' oral presentations
- Making the oral communication aspects of the curriculum more inclusive

In some cases this section turned into musings on the development and enquiry agenda for the coming years:

The main elements of our thinking here are:

- The need to identify missing mathematical skills, competencies and understanding that are needed to underpin students' learning, build their confidence and get them to a position from which their regular taught modules with mathematical content become accessible ...
- The need to promote awareness of the existing (excellent) cal resources beyond the confines of the maths support centre setting so that they become embedded within students' and staff members' normal activities and thinking.
- The need to understand more fully, in a conceptual and practical way, why it is that students find the mathematical components challenging and worrying ... we are developing, and reporting on, a taxonomy of errors that we hope will give a useful framework for interpreting a student's errors and difficulties, possibly across a range of topics, in terms of a mapping to his/her underlying problem(s) and as a predictive tool for estimating what the student may not know or find difficult. It is possible that this taxonomy will be able to inform curriculum design and teaching methodology.
- The need to understand more fully what makes a particular topic more difficult than another. In the highly-structured area of elementary mathematics we have been able to identify assumed and tested skills in a fairly explicit way and identify a possible difficulty measure (the robustness and utility of this measure is

unknown at present). Again such concepts may be able to inform curriculum design and teaching methodology.

These analyses should help partners to identify issues, assumptions and ideas they have in common – or about which they trenchantly disagree. They also help to disclose enquiries that might be supported in the medium term.

The most significant shortcoming of this analysis is that there is no LearnHigher account of the concepts, assumptions, research and epistemologies underpinning learning development research and practices. Not only will such a view be necessary as LearnHigher develops its research presence but producing it will also be a way in which the partners can re-view their own statements and beliefs and, in doing so, bring their views of learning development into greater alignment.

This clarification process would also bring to the fore topics about which there appear to be a variety of assumptions made by LACs. Topics that might be addressed include:

1. Relationship with equal opportunities, diversity and accessibility research and development.
2. Rejection of the deficit model of learners, especially of those learners who benefit most from learning development provision.
3. Are there student entitlements and, if so, what are they?
4. Mainstreaming learning development. What is the unit of curriculum action? The course (module or unit) or the programme (award)? Different answers have radically different implications for action.
5. The integrity of the learning development territory. A single territory or a set of baronies?
6. Change processes (with respect to curriculum and pedagogy)
7. Model of students. Eager consumers? Inertia-bound bodies? Individualistic people coping with too many demands³?

³ Nathan, R. (2005) *The Freshman Year: What a professor learned by becoming a student*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Partner evaluation reports

Central⁴ evaluation criteria were agreed with the Centre Director and Manager between December 2005 and January 2006 and are shown in appendix 2, referenced against the 18 objectives contained in the LearnHigher tender. Appendix 5, on page 28 shows the objectives that fall primarily to partners and offers an opinion, based on the reports available at the time of writing, on the degree to which they have been attained, using the central evaluation criteria as the point of reference.

Empty cells indicate that the evidence to hand did not allow me to make a judgement. Empty columns indicate that no report had been received from the local area co-ordinator in question.

Some objectives seem to be somewhat problematic, including:

6. Building capacity across the network. This was often – and reasonably at this stage – interpreted as building the LAC's own capacity. Responses do invite thought on ways of sharing expertise amongst LACs and their associated teaching fellows, assistants and networks.

7. Establishing a reward mechanism. It is not surprising that this is proving difficult when the funds allocated to each partner are not sufficient to fund its basic activities, let alone support any system of rewards. In some cases the 'reward' objective is being interpreted as rewarding the LAC for work over and above the job description, which is understandable. LearnHigher might wish to re-visit the issue of how it, as a centre, can approach the business of rewarding engagements in teaching and learning excellence, which was one of the basic intentions of the HEFCE CETL scheme.

9. Further institutional embedding strategies. This is only a pointer to a year 2 priority. It might be useful, when considering how to take this forward, to share knowledge of the ways in which different partners have already insinuated LearnHigher into their institution's systems.

12. Building a research community. There is a high level of commitment to this objective. A concern is that there are few hints that there is anything collective – shared amongst the sixteen partners – about it. Earlier comments about LearnHigher coherence apply.

13. Becoming an international centre of excellence. This is a year 3 priority. However, groundwork needs to be done soon, especially as there were few indications that current research and development are being shaped by knowledge of evidence, conceptualisation and developments outside the UK.

14 & 15. Dissemination. Patchy evidence of raising LearnHigher's profile outside individual universities.

On the basis of the available evidence, there is a great deal to celebrate at the end of the first full year.

⁴ That is to say those being applied in this report. Local area co-ordinators will apply more particular criteria to judging their own performance in their institutional and specialist contexts.

The central operation

Operational co-ordination

Co-ordinating LearnHigher is a complicated business. I have noticed the extraordinary level of attendance at meetings and commitment in general and conclude that co-ordination is working. On the other hand, evaluation and baseline reports that were due at the end of July 2006 were not received from all nineteen areas, which means that they are missed from this report⁵. Some data that it had been hoped the central operation at Liverpool Hope University would produce were not available at the time of writing this report.

Appendix 6, page 30, reports my judgement, on the basis of the evidence I have, of the central operation's performance in terms of agreed criteria against objectives in the tender document that we agreed to be central responsibilities. Lack of data at some points should not cast serious doubt on the operation's effectiveness.

Electronic co-ordination

Fundamental to the co-ordination work are two electronic resources:

- A JISC mail list, which can be very busy
- A web site, which is based on the Fronter service. It has a public side, which under-represents the amount of LearnHigher activity, and a password protected area.

It is not clear when it is best to use the password-protected site for conversations and when to use the JISC list. It is arguable that email is used more than is comfortable for some partners and that the web site is under-used for this purpose.

LearnHigher faces the endemic problem of keeping the web site up-to-date and comprehensive. This is all the more complicated when twenty projects are all pursuing agendas that may not have given priority to maintaining the LearnHigher web site.

Intellectual steer

A major challenge is to stop LearnHigher from becoming an arrangement to fund a score of local projects. Such projects might be worthwhile on their own terms but there are half-a-dozen missed opportunities if localism prevails:

1. *Conceptual incoherence*: in the absence of shared understandings of key concepts research and development activities operate on diverse assumptions and therefore lack cumulative impact
2. *Incommensurability of research outcomes*: individual projects produce data that cannot be cumulated to allow a bigger story to be told about learning development
3. *Indigestibility*: if learning development is practically defined as the sum of the outputs of twenty projects, then there is scant chance of academic staff in general making sense of the area if the Centre declines to do so.
4. *Loss of quality enhancement*: less experienced partners do not raise their game as a result of developing plans with other partners.
5. *Missed opportunities to represent the area nationally and internationally*: wider impact depends on bringing local activities together to make strong claims about the area (the sum of the twenty specialties) in general (based on conclusions drawn from a set of related studies).
6. *Waste*: caused by duplication of enquiries and activities.

By default it falls to the Director and Manager to provide a steer around these pitfalls. There has been action here: the Director has been pressing towards a shared account of learning development; there are shared discussions of research intentions and methods; the evaluation process involves clarifying and sharing; the web site, LearnHigher meetings and conferences all add to a sense of shared purpose. However, it is debatable whether there is sufficient agreement on:

⁵ The date for completion of this report, 15 August, was common knowledge since January and mentioned twice in the June 2006 evaluation report to the LearnHigher steering committee.

- A useful⁶ description of learning development
- Alignment of research plans

Some progress has been made with describing learning development, not least by agreeing that LearnHigher's focus is on learning development and not on learner development, academic literacies or academic practices. However, there remains ambiguity, seen in the summer 2006 discussions about what learning development isn't, what it is and its relationship to competing accounts of similar territory.

It is fair to say that other CETLs are as vague, or even vaguer, about their intellectual foundations – what, exactly, is meant by 'work-based learning', 'enquiry-led learning', 'active learning', 'interdisciplinary learning' or 'professional learning'? The point is that ambiguity that might be tolerable, albeit at a price, in a single-institution centre with few aims beyond affecting that institution's practice, is punitive when there are twenty projects spread across sixteen universities. Complexity turns uncertainties into handicaps.

Planning

Although there is a great deal of planning by partners and no shortage of ideas about the directions that LearnHigher should take, it falls to the project director and manager to think about strategy for LearnHigher as a whole. I have observed discussions with partners about future directions and have agreed with LearnHigher a detailed evaluation and research plan for the coming year.

However, the current Year 2 plan (<http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/pages/developmentplan.htm>, accessed 7 August 2006) now needs attention, It says that the priorities are:

- Identify gaps and develop new resources
- Begin research and evaluation programme
- Work with other CETLs for mutual benefit

Notably absent in this plan is attention to the intellectual leadership of LearnHigher. There is also scope for up-dating the plan in the light of year 1 achievements.

Outward-facing

A great deal of outward-facing work is done by the individual partners as they raise LearnHigher's profile in their universities and through their regular networks of contacts in other universities, associations and groups. The existence of a strong logo helps to tag these contacts with LearnHigher.

As a whole, it positioned itself well with its successful launch event of 4 April and by means of contacts with the Higher Education Academy and other national bodies.

However, there comes a point at which impact will be limited by ambiguities. The name 'LearnHigher' doesn't say what it is *for* and a sub-title on the lines of 'developing learning development' would add little because, to echo an earlier section, there is deep ambiguity about the operational meaning of 'learning development'.

The research programme has an aim of encouraging partners to align their enquiries and publish their conclusions but it will probably be three years before papers appear in the education journals. LearnHigher may wish to consider how it can establish its distinctive contribution to higher education in the more immediate future.

⁶ A useful definition makes it clear what is not included (avoids academic megalomania) and describes precisely what is included (avoids empty rhetoric). Useful definitions can be operationalised.

The effects of LearnHigher

Local effects

Evidence in appendix 5 implies considerable local effects. In terms of the three-fold classification of evaluation indicators⁷,

- All reporting projects do well as regards the *enabling* indicators – the wherewithal is in place for local project success
- The *processes* necessary for success seem to be generally in place. This is particularly so where LAC reports describe ways in which they have secured increased influence in their universities.
- *Outcomes* data do not tend to be robust. There is a great deal of evidence of activity but little by way of good evidence of effects. This is exactly what should be expected at the end of the first year.

In a year's time, the evaluation report should comment on robust evidence from each local area co-ordinator on the effects of their developments and enquiries. Creating this archive of evidence will be raised at the 20 October 2006 research and evaluation meeting and addressed in depth at the 11 January 2007 meeting.

National effects

Defining the territory of learning development

The importance of this issue has been recognised and discussions have begun.

Representing learning development interests

While local partners participate in many networks, especially those directly related to their own themes and areas, LearnHigher's power to represent the interests of learning development are circumscribed by uncertainties about how to describe the territory.

There is no doubt that learning development interests are being represented but this work may not be publicly recognised as learning development work but taken as work on information literacy, oral communication or personal development planning. At the moment it is not clear that LearnHigher is able to position itself as *the* centre of expertise and authority in learning development. It is able to position itself as a portal to a gallimaufry of projects that could be huddled under the umbrella of learning development but they could equally be seen as free-standing enquiries.

This is a distinctive challenge for LearnHigher; managing a federal system with a fair balance between the diverse and local, on the one hand, and forming consensus brokered by the Director and Manager, on the other; between letting twenty flowers bloom and making a flowerbed.

Advancing knowledge of learning development

The successful bid that led to the creation of LearnHigher said that a number of projects would be supported, out of which would come knowledge of possibilities, practices and potential. This has happened and the energy of LearnHigher's partners is a great testimony to the wisdom of this strategy.

Whether this advances knowledge of learning development as an area is moot. The intention of the evaluation and research plan is to take a programmatic approach to enquiries, such that distinctive local enquiries converge on shared questions (which have been identified and agreed), draw from a set of shared methods (work has begun to raise colleagues' awareness of methods of enquiry) and refer to a set of shared concepts and themes (work has begun on this too). The hope is that this will allow small-scale enquiries to have greater-than-expected heft because any one enquiry can be located with others in the research programme.

⁷ Enabling (are the necessary tools, resources and expertise in place?) process (is the project doing the sorts of things that are likely to lead to the desired outcomes) and outcome (what effects is the project having or has the project had?)

Threats to this approach come from LearnHigher's federal structure and the fissiparous tendencies that arise when partners spot opportunities and needs and respond quickly to them. The two days a year spent discussing research matters is necessary but it may not be sufficient for LearnHigher to be in a position to advance knowledge of learning development.

The value of LearnHigher, one year on

Unlike some CETLs, LearnHigher works; more than many, it is prodigiously active, as the baseline documents and year 1 evaluations show⁸.

It is good value for money because distributing relatively modest sums of recurrent funding to sixteen universities levers commitment of time, resources and reputation to the LearnHigher venture. There is no evidence that money allocated to any project partner has been wasted and there is significant evidence that it has stimulated disproportionate levels of excitement and activity. At the end of year 2 it should be possible to begin a commentary on the effects of those activities.

It is too soon to judge whether the capital spend is good value for money.

Change management

LearnHigher sponsors change in learning development thinking, knowledge and practice. Particularly in the participating universities⁹, the project is a change agent and local area co-ordinators are in the business of change management.

They may not all be sufficiently prepared for this role. While a sketch of change management thinking can be given in a research & evaluation meeting, or can be had by reading introductory works¹⁰, more intensive preparation may be needed. LearnHigher may wish to consider commissioning the Higher Education Academy¹¹ or the Leadership Foundation to provide customised support for this work.

⁸ On the other hand, we should not forget those areas for which no reports were available.

⁹ It is, of course, in the business of sponsoring change on a national scale. However, at this stage, attention will be focused on achieving specific changes in particular universities.

¹⁰ For example *Change thinking, change practices*, at http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/embedded_object.asp?id=18740&filename=CHA005

¹¹ A version of its 'Change academy' programme might be appropriate.

Appendix 1. The RUFDATA description of LearnHigher evaluation research

What are our Reasons and Purposes for evaluation?
To ensure that we make appropriate use of allocated funds (capital and recurrent spend).
To help keep us on track against objectives and schedule, especially regarding dissemination.
To appraise the effects of LearnHigher activities on student learning and institutions generally.
To identify directions for further development.
To help us make sense of what partners and LearnHigher as a whole are doing.
To inform small-scale inquiries and other research activities.
What will be the Uses of our evaluation?
Symbolic: showing that we manage responsibly.
Regulative: keeping LearnHigher on track
Informative: identifying effective practices that can be celebrated and disseminated.
Cautionary: identifying areas of potential or actual difficulty; refining priorities.
Illuminative: helping Learn Higher to make sense of its work and environment and to shape its plans accordingly.
Supportive: providing data and interpretations that will lead to publications.
Cohesive: to keep us together.
What will be the Foci for our evaluations?
Monitoring of activities against plans and success indicators, as shown in the tender document and as revised from time to time.
Investigation of effects of activities on participants (teachers, students and others directly involved) through telephone and e-interviews; questionnaires; focus groups.
Establishing the extent of involvement with national and international groups with a stake in these areas.
Reflecting on data and other evidence in order to create understandings of effective actions to support good student learning practices that can be disseminated in research and practice outlets.
What will be our Data and Evidence for our evaluations?
Annual reports and other public documents
User views <i>via</i> telephone and e-interviews; questionnaires; focus group; Delphi studies.
Effects on users <i>via</i> performance data (where valid): telephone and e-interviews; questionnaires; focus group; Delphi studies.
Number of briefing papers and other resources + reviews where available.
Number of projects funded and completed.
Awareness amongst national and international groups with a stake in these areas. (Telephone and e-interviews).
Developmental and educational capacity of partners and their host institutions.
Number of contacts and collaborators within the university.
Number of conferences and refereed publications.
Comparisons over time with baseline accounts.

Who will be the Audience for our evaluations?
LearnHigher colleagues
Local L&T development committee, officials and colleagues
HEFCE and HEA, as contribution to overall CETL evaluation
External evaluator
What will be the Timing for our evaluations?
Continuous at the local level, with twice-yearly reports to LearnHigher project as a whole.
Annual public LearnHigher report
Contributions to HEFCE's scheduled evaluation
Who should be the Agency conducting the evaluations?
Local LearnHigher partners with various reporting lines additional to reports to central LearnHigher team
Central LearnHigher team
External evaluator

Appendix 2 LearnHigher objectives and indicators of achievement

Objective	Central evaluation indicators as at 31/07/06
<i>Building mechanisms for sharing excellent materials and resources</i>	
1. Working with the HE Academy to create a LearnHigher portal (Connect) service that can be embedded in all HEI sites	a. Local Area Co-ordinators (LACs) have agreed to put the free-text search function on their university site. Some will have completed by 31/7. b. Where appropriate, a thin-slice of Connect will be embedded in LearnHigher area pages.
2. Building a technical framework and support to enable the distributed sharing of materials and resources to be effectively and reliably handled.	As above, <i>plus</i> a. Fronter in use. b. Central strategy developed for hosting these functions if it proves to be difficult to do locally.
3. Sharing existing good materials, identifying or developing new learner development materials and resources for learners and staff.	This will predominantly be a local activity. Central indicator is whether monitoring shows that the local activity is being done.
4. Developing a more robust quality assurance process for materials and resources.	a. Monitoring of Fronter activity, which enables electronic quality assurance. b. Completion of agreed quality assurance strategy for materials and resources.
<i>Building capacity in the LearnHigher Network</i>	
5. Strengthening the current network of practitioners.	Evaluate May and June data on Fronter usage.
6. Building practitioner capacity across the LearnHigher network in terms of broadening expertise and staff skills.	a. Levels of participation in project, evaluation and research meetings (e.g. Fronter induction).. b. Completion rates for shared tasks and evaluation activity (e.g. recent production of local evaluation activities). c. Level of CETL director and manager activity in visiting, contacting and networking the LACs. d. Evidence of project management effectiveness. e. Levels of engagement with 4 April launch.
<i>Creating Institutional impact</i>	
7. Establishing a reward mechanism in each HEI	
8. Raising the profile of LearnHigher work across the HEI partners for greater institutional impact.	Data from central monitoring that suitable local arrangements are being made.
9. Having opportunity to create further institutional embedding strategies.	Year 2 onwards
<i>Evaluation</i>	
10. Creating baseline data and develop effective monitoring strategies for use of the resources.	Evidence that baseline data exist. [Effective monitoring strategies to

Objective	Central evaluation indicators as at 31/07/06
	establish patterns of resource use = year 2.]
11. Enhancing current evaluation work.	a. Central organisation of evaluation workshops and activities. b. Enquire of LACs about any differences in local evaluation thinking and practices as a result of LearnHigher.
<i>Research</i>	
12. Building a research community and portfolio of evidence-based research that helps develop our understanding of effective strategies for supporting learners into new areas of higher education study.	For year 1, evidence of a. An outline research plan for years 1-5. b. Beginnings of research clusters c. Enquiries in progress or in planning.
13. Becoming an internationally recognised centre of excellence for learner development.	Year 3 onwards. International conference Year 5.
<i>Dissemination</i>	
14. Providing an opportunity for all HEIs to access materials and resources.	Evidence of existence and use of: a. Fronter b. Full-text search
15. Engaging others in LearnHigher sub-networks that are creating excellent materials, undertaking research or involved in embedding in their own institutions.	a. Existence of local advisory groups. b. Evidence of local events and other dissemination activities. c. Evidence of materials and resource production.
<i>Programme management</i>	
16. Building an administrative structure to support the LearnHigher activity.	Survey LACs to establish the degree to which they see such a structure in place, to establish satisfaction and suggestions for enhancement.
17. Managing a centrally coordinated approach to operationalise and develop the programme.	As with objectives 2, 3 and 6.
18. Branding, marketing and launching the LearnHigher CETL	Evaluation of 4 April launch: a. Delegate evaluation forms b. Press and on-line coverage.

Appendix 3. Central and local valuation research responsibilities

Objective	Distribution of responsibility for providing evaluation research data, 2005-06
<i>Building mechanisms for sharing excellent materials and resources</i>	
1. Working with the HE Academy to create a LearnHigher portal (Connect) service that can be embedded in all HEI sites	[NB Objective affected by change in HEA policy] Central team
2. Building a technical framework and support to enable the distributed sharing of materials and resources to be effectively and reliably handled.	Central team
3. Sharing existing good materials, identifying or developing new learner development materials and resources for learners and staff.	This will predominantly be a local activity. Central indicator is whether monitoring shows that the local activity is being done.
4. Developing a more robust quality assurance process for materials and resources.	Central team to organise, local teams to provide evidence of operation of the policy
<i>Building capacity in the LearnHigher Network</i>	
5. Strengthening the current network of practitioners.	Central team, plus local evidence, where available
6. Building practitioner capacity across the LearnHigher network in terms of broadening expertise and staff skills.	Central team and external evaluator, plus local evidence, where available
<i>Creating Institutional impact</i>	
7. Establishing a reward mechanism in each HEI	
8. Raising the profile of LearnHigher work across the HEI partners for greater institutional impact.	Local teams
9. Having opportunity to create further institutional embedding strategies.	Local teams, year 2 onwards
<i>Evaluation</i>	
10. Creating baseline data and develop effective monitoring strategies for use of the resources.	Local teams
11. Enhancing current evaluation work.	Local teams. Central team provides data on LearnHigher evaluation research workshops and activities.
<i>Research</i>	
12. Building a research community and portfolio of evidence-based research that helps develop our understanding of effective strategies for supporting learners into new areas of higher education study.	Local teams provide evidence of enquiries in progress or in planning. Central team provides data on LearnHigher evaluation research workshops and activities.
13. Becoming an internationally recognised centre of excellence for learner development.	Although mainly year 3 onwards Central team and external evaluator provide data on enhancement of LearnHigher evaluation research capacity.
<i>Dissemination</i>	

Objective	Distribution of responsibility for providing evaluation research data, 2005-06
14. Providing an opportunity for all HEIs to access LearnHigher materials and resources.	Local teams
15. Engaging others in LearnHigher sub-networks that are creating excellent materials, undertaking research or involved in embedding in their own institutions.	Local teams
<i>Programme management</i>	
16. Building an administrative structure to support the LearnHigher activity.	Central team
17. Managing a centrally coordinated approach to operationalise and develop the programme.	Central team
18. Branding, marketing and launching the LearnHigher CETL	Central team

Appendix 4. Enquiries in the territory of learning development

Academic practices for investigation	Enquiry methods (It's useful to show them here so that colleagues who want help with a method know who else is trying it.) ¹²	Common questions, in addition to enquiry-specific ones ¹³	Provisional explanations (You should design your specific enquiries to clarify which explanations are the most valid)	Looking ahead: tentative ideas for further enquiry or action
1.	Method a Method b Method c	What is happening (description of current student practice in the marker area)?	Broadly, these might include: i. Student learning histories ii. Students' wider cultural capital – assumptions and beliefs about learning, higher education that do come from schooling.	Each provisional explanation has different implications for remedial action. At some point, LH might wish to spend time carefully examining alternative learning development strategies.
2.	Method a Method b Method c	Why is it happening? What would we like to be happening, based on our values,	iii. Students' lack of social capital – networks and other sources of advice. iv. Intellectual shortfalls. v. Competing demands on student time – hedonism and paid work, for instance	
3.	Method a Method b Method c	research literature, practice observed elsewhere, etc.? How might we reduce the 'is-should' gap?	vi. Curriculum design – the planned curriculum is defective vii. Curriculum practices – the enacted curriculum is defective	

¹² I suggest each enquiry identifies its two or three major enquiry methods.

¹³ Any or all of these questions might be asked in any enquiry.

Appendix 5: LearnHigher objectives evaluated by area reports at the end of the first year (July 2006)

Objective	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
<i>Building mechanisms for sharing excellent materials and resources</i>																				
3. Sharing existing good materials, identifying or developing new learner development materials and resources for learners and staff.	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	
<i>Building capacity in the LearnHigher network</i>																				
6. Building practitioner capacity across the LearnHigher network ¹⁴ in terms of broadening expertise and staff skills.	?	√	X	?		√	√	√	√	?	X	?			X	?	√	√	√	
<i>Creating institutional impact</i>																				
7. Establishing a reward mechanism in each HEI	?	√	X	X		?		X	?	?	X	X			√	?	X	?	X	
8. Raising the profile of LearnHigher work across the HEI partners for greater institutional impact.	√	√	√	√		√		√	√	√	√	√		√	√	?	√	√	√	
9. Having opportunity to create further institutional embedding strategies (Year 2 onwards).										√								?		
<i>Evaluation</i>																				
10. Creating baseline data and develop effective monitoring strategies for	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√			√	√	√	√	√	

¹⁴ Emphasis added

Objective	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
use of the resources.																				
<i>Research</i>																				
12. Building a research community and portfolio of evidence-based research that helps develop our understanding of effective strategies for supporting learners into new areas of higher education study.	?	?	√	√		√		√	√	√	√	√		√	?	√	√	√	√	
13. Becoming an internationally recognised centre of excellence for learner development (Year 3 onwards)														?				?		
<i>Dissemination</i>																				
14 & 15. Raise awareness of LearnHigher through branding and marketing, as well as use of materials ¹⁵	?	√	X	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	?	√	√	

Numbers refer to the twenty areas. √ indicates good evidence of meeting central evaluation criteria (appendix 2, above). ? indicates some evidence. X indicates lack of success. A blank cell only signifies that I did not have evidence to make judgements – the evidence may exist.

¹⁵ For this year, this has been interpreted as 'raise awareness in your HEI or beyond'.

Appendix 6: LearnHigher central management objectives evaluated at the end of the first year (July 2006)

Objective	
<i>Building mechanisms for sharing excellent materials and resources</i>	
1. Working with the HE Academy to create a LearnHigher portal (Connect) service that can be embedded in all HEI sites	Higher Education Academy policy yet to be crystallised and operationalised.
2. Building a technical framework and support to enable the distributed sharing of materials and resources to be effectively and reliably handled.	a. Fronter in use.
3. Sharing existing good materials, identifying or developing new learner development materials and resources for learners and staff.	This is predominantly a local activity (see appendix 5). Central team supports it.
4. Developing a more robust quality assurance process for materials and resources.	Quality assurance strategy for materials and resources under development.
<i>Building capacity in the LearnHigher Network</i>	
5. Strengthening the current network of practitioners.	a. attendance at meetings and events very high b. data on May and June Fronter usage awaited as further evidence.
6. Building practitioner capacity across the LearnHigher network in terms of broadening expertise and staff skills.	a. Mail list and website show discussion and learning amongst partners. b. LearnHigher director and manager visit, contact and network with LACs, spreading ideas and expertise c. High levels of engagement at LearnHigher business and research & evaluation meetings: follow up activities completed by most LACs fully and on time.
<i>Evaluation</i>	
11. Enhancing current evaluation work.	a. Central organisation of evaluation workshops and activities has led to this report and associated activities. b. Enquiries will be made in 2006/07 of LACs to see whether their thinking about evaluation has changed as a result of LearnHigher.
<i>Research</i>	
12. Building a research community and portfolio of evidence-based research that helps develop our understanding of effective strategies for supporting learners into new areas of higher education study.	Progress in each of the three target areas: a. An outline research plan for years 1-5 exists in the form of a phased set of research questions and schedule of meetings to October 2007. b. Local area co-ordinators now have enquiries in progress or in planning. c. However, little sign of the emergence of research clusters'
<i>Programme management</i>	
16. Building an administrative structure to support the LearnHigher activity.	Done
17. Managing a centrally coordinated approach to operationalise and develop the programme.	Done, subject to earlier remarks about the fissiparous tendencies inherent in a multi-partner project.
18. Branding, marketing and launching the LearnHigher CETL	4 April launch reckoned to be a success. Independent judgement not possible without: a. Delegate evaluation forms b. Summary of press and on-line coverage.

APPENDIX TWO



Notes from 'Shaping our Future'

Workshop
26 June 2006
University of Lincoln

The Shaping our Future workshop was designed to help the LearnHigher team reflect on their experience of the first year and what they had learned. From this, we were thinking about what we want to achieve with LearnHigher over the next four years and beyond. The overall workshop aim was to create a shared understanding and vision for the future of LearnHigher.

Workshop Aims:

1. To share how it was 'for you'
2. To reflect on the first year of LearnHigher
3. To explore what we want to achieve and where we think we are trying to get to
4. To surface the issues we will need to address along the route
5. To build a shared understanding about learning development and what LearnHigher is

The following are notes taken from the day from discussions and post-its.

How it was for me (describing my picture)

Personal Development

- Rebirth & Re-Invention
- Part of supportive network
- More friends
- Development opportunity for myself
- Part of an enthusiastic community of practice that has supported, energised and enthused me : a joyous lifeline
- Confidence, strength, drive and support. Being part of something else with credibility.
- Friendships formed within the group – collaborated work. Influenced both within my institution and nationally

Professional Development

- Raise the level of my work to a more focused and academic level by working with the network and taking opportunities to research new concepts
- Continued work with students and the chance to continue helping others develop as well as myself. I got a Job!! Lots of free lunches!!
- Felt insecure about my role as Learning Area Co-ordinator, expected to be "expert" in the chosen skill area. But enjoyed all aspects of dealing with the capital funds, especially sorting out the finances
- Opportunity to focus on an area I'm interested in, with people who are interested in learners
- I am able to combine my actual work with the work of LearnHigher, therefore opening a new chapter in my work role, which has brought challenges that I needed

-
- Being part of LearnHigher has given me an insight into the benefits of a more varied and wider ranging approach to educational research. I have learnt that it is far more effective to draw on the expertise of others than to try and re-invent the wheel
 - Legitimated work/interest in specialist learning area (previously felt a bit self-indulgent in context of my current main role)
 - It provided an infrastructure to live up to the notion of excellence

Institutional Recognition

- Confidence and status internally
- Raise profile of my area (Student Development) within the institution to gain Kudos and recognition for contribution
- Gave extra strength to help argue for a central/online study development service to complement course – specific Learning Development

External Focus

- Able to get a sense of what is going in other institutions and build new links

Frustrations

- Being honest, its been a frustrating year – there are tantalising glimpses of the promised land, were striving to move forward, but its not been possible to progress much, hence the frustration – still optimistic though

Expectations

What/ how did you expect LearnHigher to be?

- I expected it to be more intense than it is. It has periods of intensity but its quite a relaxed programme
- Thought LearnHigher would be about cataloguing resources – relived its not
- I was nervous when I first started
- Not how we thought it would be – less about outcome than (some of us) thought
- Expected it to be lonely, has turned out to be quite lonely
- No/not many expectations already up and running
- Initial concern being put forward as an “expert” (but actually, I have been able to keep up

What LearnHigher has meant for me/ my practice and my institution

- Increased confidence – taking part in decision making
- Rewarding that people within the organisation know what we are doing
- Sets of hurdles e.g. accounts, architect
- Enjoyed working with the group of people – participation and engagement
- Given more legitimacy to work externally with partners. Entrée to share ideas with those in other CETL’s → given me more clout/enhanced status
- Made me look at how we evaluate things → seeing evaluation as research
- More reach into new networks
- Interesting seeing how the network has developed. Joyful
- It’s been a lifeline because learning development was in such a chaos in my institution. It has brought joy into my life
- Has given me insight into research for next year
- Gaining insight and influence
- Good opportunity to focus on one area – become a real expert
- Positive feelings: even the little steps forward. Feel good
- Bringing about institution – level re-thinks, strategies

-
- It has given me space to shadow students
 - Has become more relaxed and informal over time – unlike at the beginning
 - Picking up someone else's passion is difficult
 - Institutional impact will come with new facility
 - Hard to block out dedicated time for LearnHigher
 - More and more and more work (you get the picture)
 - Confidence to go out and make new contacts and collaborations
 - Better than expected
 - Space and money to make real change
 - Far more useful than imagined
 - Money meant increased kudos within institution
 - Opportunity to really shape the learning area and university strategy
 - Practice possibility to change teaching and impact on university. Meet network and collaborate
 - Spin off activity
 - Submitting papers – USA!
 - Internet detective
 - Possible international graduate degree
 - Writing reviews
 - E-literacy project
 - Exactly as expected – had up to date view of project from start as came in late. Feel it is moving slower than expected but on a short contract. Has allowed us to formalise our experiences on paper
 - Realising that you need to focus (started off looking too broadly)
 - How was it? – Different. Thought money would buy me out of more mainstream work but not quite like that Influence → forming a Learning Support Unit. Capital has been really useful! LearnHigher has provided a great leverage for future
 - How was it? – Different. More hands on and shared. Thought it would be more paperwork based. Had real stake in development as a group. Practice – money has made a real difference in doing group work.
 - Time is a problem
 - A notion of excellence and striving up to it
 - Has given practitioner focus – anchoring and contextualising
 - Work with the other CETLs at my institution will eventually help in raising the profile
 - Self-confidence
 - Bringing the focus back to the student experience

Where are we going? (Your thoughts on what LearnHigher should be in four years time)

Questions we asked were:

How will we describe ourselves?

What will people know us/ use us for?

How will we be viewed in the sector?

How will we work together?

What will you be doing?

What will be our core business?

What will our excellence be in?

Responses on the 'Post-it' Wall':

How will we Describe Ourselves?/ What will be Known For?/ How will be Viewed in the Sector?

Expertise/ Professionalism in Learning Development/ Informing Teaching & Learning Practice

- Known for innovation and developing new approaches to student learning
- Where to find out about other teachers working in similar areas
- Where to go for useful and credible advice in student learning
- A group regularly invited to contribute to HE Practice and to shape learning development and inform new learning and teaching practice
- A group of recognized professionals that others approach for advice and to contribute their expertise to
- People will use us for: - information, how to implement learning effectively, analysis of learning skills. Development excellence in knowledge and practice in our specific learning areas and coming together to form a comprehensive learning unit
- Community of Practice with recognized professional identity → consulted for expertise → shape future of Higher Education practice and Learning Development
- Community of practice that establishes role and responsibilities of learning development and raises profile and (credibility) of learning developers – recognized professional identity
- National and international network of expertise, established community of practice with consultative role for continued professional development. Located in pedagogic research
- For staff it's a source of expertise for incorporating learning development into the curriculum
- A centre for working knowledge of the research of Learning Development
- A place where you can find out about what effective Learning Development practice is

Quality Resources

- Where to find and discuss/explore resources
- Substantial Resource Bank, Plus some further development in each area (they may differ!)
- A sustainable service that grows each year and continues to provide the best and most up to date materials
- First point of call for resources for STAFF and STUDENTS
- A source of peer reviewed and evaluated Learning Development resources
- Nationally and internationally recognized repository of peer reviewed and evaluated Learning Development resources for staff and students
- A place where one can get access to useful resources
- Where students go for stuff (influence to Google?)
- A web base of Teaching and Learning resources: wide ranging topical and high quality that will be recognized across the sector

One Stop Shop Idea – Resources and Research

- First stop for information about any aspect of learning development (the old One Stop Shop idea – but not just resources for students)
- Expertise in learning development (theoretically and practically). Resources to; 1. help them with curriculum design, 2. to recommend to students for Learning Development.
- Advice on where to get reliable information on particular topics
- A network of practitioners and associated resources that others feel they want and need to tap into for information guidance on implementing learning effectively and analysis of learning skills

-
- 'One Stop Shop' Teaching and Learning resources widely recognized across sector – staff and students. Sustainable service: self-generating community and resources. LearnHigher showcases and disseminates. Teaching and Learning research across the sector
 - For staff there ought to be a way to access all knowledge and practical example/models
 - For staff it's a way to engage with the arguments starting/basic info → to more advanced
 - The 'one stop shop' where students actually go to get resources, advice, tips and support they need

A successful CETL & effective partnership

- Sustainable partnership
- Nationally and Internationally recognized
- We will be viewed in the sector as people who actually made CETL work
- Viewed in the sector as a very successful and committed model which will inform all future CETL collaborations.
- LearnHigher will be a shining example of how to 'project manage' a collaborative Higher Education project. Which will inform future CETL collaborations
- Our ability to network effectively linking up all the learning areas
- A successful collaborative model of learning skills excellence

How Will We Work Together?

What Will You Be Doing?

- LearnHigher journal that highlights and disseminates Teaching and Learning research across the sector
- We will work together making max use of opportunities made available by using new technologies
- A recognized, supportive network of people willing to share their experience, enthusiasm and expertise with the international Higher Education sector.
- ADVOCATE for Learning Development as enabling a positive university experience AGAINST – bipartite Higher Education and remediating curriculum, of all.
- Nationally recognized and revered, (maybe even internationally). (in 4 years)
- A valuable addition to the sector. (in 4 years)
- People will use us as solutions to problems (as market leaders)
- A strong network of committed individuals who work collaborating on Learning Development venture and projects.
- A network of practitioners and associated resources that others feel they want and need to tap into to find solutions questions to learning development questions, Knowledge and Practice.
- An established and respected with a key consultative role for learning development in Higher Education across the sector.
- We will work together:- by continuing to share excellent practice.
- A recognized, supportive network of people willing to share their experience, enthusiasm and expertise with the international Higher Education sector.
- I'll be running the LearnHigher Centre for students and teachers and presenting and publishing research with other LearnHigher partners.
- Continuing to do: - raise profile of visual elements in all disciplines, identify/develop good resources for student and staff, support projects in VP learning area. Developing New Improved resources and projects.

What will our Core Business be? What will our Excellence be in?

- Advocacy for Learning Development as enabling a positive university experience
- Spaces of high quality, space and activity in 16 universities
- Expertise in learning development. (Theoretical and Practical)
- The most successful collaborative CETL (all partners still on board)
- Source of advice about future knowledge, will have expertise and advice about how to use it
- Core Business? Excellence in Learner Development research and materials provision
- Our core business will be:- researching excellence in learning

Issues that surface

- Staff or Students (who are the resources for?)
- Experts of what and when
- One channel for students and one for staff
- Role of these Learning Development experts and relationships with academics
- What role of working with staff
- Learning Development experts to work with subject experts
- Learning Development staff uniquely placed together evidence on how to be effective within the context
- Role → to help students to de-code what academics want of students
- Staff needs for Learning Development
- Staff focus crucial to sustainability
- Models used to work with staff effectively
- Cannot achieve on own
- Need to facilitate the understanding of these two communities
- Over simplified problems Learning Developers have to solve!!
- Challenging the deficit model
- What type of resources are they – i.e. conceptual framework – curriculum
- New models of resources?
- Cross disciplinary collaboration

Summary of the main issues

- Resources
- Expertise
- Advocacy (for Learning Development)
- Sustainability (once the funding is gone)
- Models of collaboration
- Brokerage
- Question orthodoxies

APPENDIX THREE

The overarching aims of the CETL initiative, originally published in HEFCE 2004/05, are:

1. To reward practice that demonstrates excellent learning outcomes for students.
2. 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.
3. To enable institutions to support and develop practice that encourages deeper understanding across the sector of ways of addressing students' learning effectively.
4. To recognize 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.
5. To demonstrate collaboration and sharing of good practice and so enhance the standard of teaching and effective learning throughout the sector.
6. To raise student awareness of effectiveness in teaching and learning in order to inform student choice and maximize student performance.

APPENDIX FOUR



June Report 2007

LearnHigher Programme Framework – Objectives 2006-7

Introduction

LearnHigher central team sets its yearly overall objectives in accordance with its five year business plan and each LearnHigher partner develops an individual year plan to meet those objectives at local level to meet their own university needs, and the overall LearnHigher objectives. Each individual LearnHigher partner year plan this year incorporates their evaluation plan, which last year was produced separately. This ensures the overall alignment of LearnHigher business plan development and evaluation strategy fulfilment. Other than shifting our planning schedule for evaluation by one month, our current work meets the requirements of the HEFCE evaluation report that has to be produced by each CETL by July 2007. In addition this year, three collaborative LearnHigher development projects have been agreed and funded by the LearnHigher Steering Group.

Building mechanisms for sharing excellent materials and resources			
	LH Aims (Listed as Objectives in Bid)	Year Two Objectives	Progress
1.	Working to create a LearnHigher portal service that can be embedded in all HEI sites	With Open Objects HEA indexing service, explore the feasibility of creating Learning Area ‘tabs’ and implement where appropriate.	The working version of the search box (from Open Objects) is now fully embedded on the LearnHigher site and searches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LearnHigher web-site • The HEA Subject Centre sites Specific nominated HE sector sites
		Trial the Open Objects service in at least one third of LH Learning Areas university sites.	Three LearnHigher partners are working with Open Objects to embed this search function into their own institutional pages.
2.	Building a technical framework and support to enable the distributed sharing of materials and resources to be effectively and reliably handled.	Support Learning Area needs to store LH resources on LH Central server	A number of solutions are being explored to meet the needs of different types of resources and possible access to them. Merlot is interested in having LearnHigher as a partner which would make our resources available internationally. We have established a central server at Hope to locate resources where they cannot be stored locally.

		Explore the possibilities for web/portal services and build a demonstrator 'portal' gateway showing the use of a number of web-services that support resource discovery and retrieval	We are exploring the use of portal technology (Novel Extend) to develop the type of functionality aspired to by LearnHigher. A project at Hope has been initiated involving the Psychology Department and Write Now CETL.
3.	Sharing existing good materials, identifying or developing new learner development materials and resources for learners and staff.	Set up five top links (annotated) to each Learning Area on LH website.	These have been completed and form part of the strategy for enabling access to resources by the sector, as all links will be indexed by the search engine and provide rapid access to the resources available.
		Link LH website with internally developed web-pages from each learning area that develops these in year two	LearnHigher website Learning Area pages have been developed by Kent, Reading, Hope, Brunel, Leeds, Brighton, and Worcester.
		Quality assure and upload for external access the resources created by each Learning Area as year one objective	A process for peer review the resources developed has been agreed and criteria circulated as a guide to this process. All LearnHigher partners have identified reviewers and completed this process of reviewing. Resources are located locally and indexed on the main LearnHigher website.
		Develop or identify new resources to meet needs of Learning Areas stakeholders, identified from year one baseline work or current work demands.	LearnHigher has begun to identify the gaps in resources and two collaborative projects were funded this year to address some of these gaps. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How group work works • Visual assessments
		Repurpose baseline information, and literature reviews, any links or specific resources located that would be useful to signpost to others, and make these available for the LH web-site Learning Area pages.	A synthesis of baseline data is being undertaken to provide background evidence for use by the sector and the wider network. Each Learning Area has undertaken a literature review and those completed are located on the LearnHigher website.
4.	Developing a more robust quality assurance process for materials and resources.	Review and refine the LearnHigher approach for quality reviewing each other's materials and consider effective ways of engaging others in piloting their use.	The quality reviewing process has been agreed and first review process is being evaluated and issues raised for consideration and development. There is a tension between highly polished resources and their take up in comparison to less complete resources which others feel more able to pick up and customise. LearnHigher is also concerned about ensuring the context and use of the resources is understood and that this is as important as the quality of the resource itself.

Building capacity in the LearnHigher Network			
	LH Objectives	Year Two Objectives	Progress
5.	Strengthening the current network of practitioners.	Hold at least three face to face meetings and encourage/support the use of Fronter for virtual communications	LearnHigher has changed its meeting patterns from 6 one day events to 3 two day events to utilise the evenings and strengthen the network through social meetings. The use of Fronter as our virtual communication tool remains restricted to the sharing of resources, largely because it is not very intuitive, it can be difficult to find where things are and the search engine is not very good.
		Support collaborative LH projects through the use of development funding pot	Three collaborative projects have been funded and the first two made substantial progress in their completion. The third project will begin summer 2007: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Making Group- Work Work' (Oral Communication, Interpersonal Skills & Listening and Group work learning areas) Kate Smith: Brunel, Leeds and Bradford Universities. A video based resource to support students in developing criticality and teamwork skills. 2. Visual Assessment' (Visual Practices and Assessment learning areas) Brighton and Kent Universities. Investigation of methods for assessing 'visual' assignments. 3. 'Learning Development – Past, Present, Future' Plymouth University. An analysis of issues in learning development from the LDHEN JISCMail list.
6.	Building practitioner capacity across the LearnHigher network in terms of broadening expertise and staff skills.	Build practitioner research capacity through the meetings run by LearnHigher Evaluation research and Evaluation Advisor, Peter Knight	In conjunction with the central LearnHigher Team, Professor Peter Knight has developed a programme for the year to support the evaluation work of the CETL and build research capacity within the network. Two meetings have been run by Peter and a third one supported by the LearnHigher visiting Professor, Ian Scott

		Build practitioner research capacity through engaging partners in collaborative research projects	Collaborative research groups were established and some have taken their work forward. Michelle Verity is acting as a research Coordinator working in conjunction with Dr Judy Turner and Dr Kim Shahabudin at the University of Reading. The outputs of some of this work were reported on at the LearnHigher /Write Now Research Symposium on 26 June 2007.
		To enhance the 'learning development' knowledge and skills of LACs through collaborative projects in three Learning Areas	Three projects as reported above have been funded out of the LearnHigher development fund and this will serve to build new capacity amongst the participating team.

Creating Institutional impact			
	LH Objectives	Year Two Objectives	Progress
7.	Establishing a reward mechanism in each HEI	Review current methods for reward for 'learner support' activities in each LH institution.	Each partner identified its own reward mechanism with LearnHigher funds in the initial bid and these have been kept under review to ensure that the small sum that goes to each university is used in some measure for 'reward'. Individual universities have taken different approaches to this to meet local needs. Some have used the fund to enhance other HEI members work in project funding.
8.	Raising the profile of LearnHigher work within the HEIs for greater institutional impact.	Evaluate the use and impact of the LearnHigher places now created in all Universities except Brunel, Reading and Bradford.	LearnHigher partners have as part of their year's evaluation plan recorded the use and impact of the space they have created with capital funding. A visual record is being kept to add to this evaluative work. A presentation about the use of LearnHigher spaces was given at a Warwick Learning Spaces conference in March 2007.
		Events/workshops etc to align with institutional learner development strategies to promote the branded LearnHigher work	Individual LearnHigher partners are separately engaged in undertaking LearnHigher work in their own universities. .

		Identify and share strategies for making an impact at individual LH universities	As part of the reporting this year we have asked for strategies to be described and these have been compiled into single document. This has been shared with the LearnHigher partners and forms the basis for further work and shared thinking. Work has been done on identifying impact measures, though they are a challenge, as impact is very hard to ascertain when this is normally a consequence of a range of factors.
9.	Having opportunity to create further institutional embedding strategies.	Strategies for embedding will be identified, shared and good practice for implementation documented and shared across LearnHigher partners.	The LearnHigher Manager is building a document through email and one-to-one discussions with LearnHigher partners to elicit the various strategies for embedding LearnHigher work in their institutions. A synthesis of good practice will be undertaken and shared with the wider sector.

Evaluation

	LH Objectives	Year Two Objectives	Progress
10.	Creating baseline data and develop effective monitoring strategies for use of the resources.	Baseline data to be synthesized for building knowledge both across the LH network and with the wider sector, and issues identified for further baseline investigation.	Baseline data was created in each LearnHigher institution in year one and a synthesis of this work is being done for wider publication.
		Measures of success created for LearnHigher	At the January LearnHigher meeting with Peter Knight work was undertaken to determine some measures of success for LearnHigher.
		Literature review completed for all Learning Areas and for 'learning development' itself	All literature reviews were due to be completed by the end April 2007 and those done have been posted on the LearnHigher web-site.
		Baseline data collected for usage of LearnHigher spaces	Each LearnHigher university is collecting baseline data, including visual data for their learning areas. These have been reported on in the LearnHigher Learning Area Reports.
11.	Enhancing current evaluation work.	Local and central evaluation activities undertaken in accordance with agreed processes with Self-Evaluation report completed by July 2007	Last year's evaluation report was discussed and the time-table for this year's evaluation slightly revised to take account of the HEFCE requirements for the CETL Self Evaluation. Evaluation planning and activities have been incorporated into Learning Area plans.

		Development of methods and approaches for evaluating 'effects' of learning development interventions	Initial work has been done to establish the range of 'interventions' that are being undertaken by learning developers. This will be followed up as a research issue for LearnHigher.
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Developing a research base			
	LH Objectives	Year Two Objectives	Progress
12.	Building a research community and portfolio of evidence-based research that helps develop our understanding of effective strategies for supporting learners into new areas of higher education study.	Create a research strategy for the year to enable a central question about the use of resources by students to be answered at local level.	A research strategy has been developed and the aim is that those who can lead on adding to the sum of the collective whole will work with those less research experienced. A five year plan has been developed and this year focus is being given to student study practices.
		Identify current research that underpins learner development areas and make this available to the wider community through the portal service.	Those involved in the research work will add to the work in the literature reviews to specifically explore student study practices. This work will be made available to the wider audiences.
		Establish a consensus and parameters around the meaning of 'Learning Development'	One of the main issues that arise from the year one evaluation document was the need to develop a consensus amongst the network around a shared understanding of learning development. We have been working towards this at meetings and through discussions on-line. We amalgamated thinking and this has been placed on our LearnHigher Web-page.
		Undertake collaborative research projects across the LH network developing an evidence base in 'learning development'.	One of the collaborative development projects seeks to work with the wider LDHEN community to look at 'learning development' as defined by practice. The central team are also engaged in a theoretical consideration of learning development.
13.	Becoming an internationally recognised centre of excellence for learner development.	Provide signposts and syntheses of the research and make this available to the wider community.	The arrival of a Visiting Professor from South Africa has greatly enhanced our opportunities for international dissemination. An opportunity to work with MERLOT as the UK partner is also being pursued and would greatly benefit our international coverage and reputation.

Dissemination			
	LH Objectives	Year Two Objectives	Progress
14.	Raise awareness of LearnHigher CETL through branding and marketing use of early materials.	Work with opportunities identified in each partner's plan to raise awareness of LearnHigher work.	Each partner institution is involved in raising the awareness of LearnHigher within their own institution and beyond through network activities and events. These dissemination activities will be reported in individual Learning Area annual reports.
		Run one research symposium disseminating research undertaken in LH network.	The LearnHigher research symposium ran on 26 June to coincide with the opening of the Liverpool Hope Gateway Building. This event was shared with the Write Now CETL and show-cased the research work of these two CETLs.
		Support the running of the LDHEN conference	LearnHigher has sponsored the LDHEN conference by funding its administration costs. It was run at Bournemouth University, 12 April 2007.
15.	Providing an opportunity for all HEIs to access materials and resources.	Develop LearnHigher web-site to incorporate links to partner web-site resources and provide annotated links to quality learning area resources	The LearnHigher web-site has been updated with the annotated five top links in each Learning Area. To highlight these links and the resources created within the network LearnHigher has begun a Learning Area of the month which is promoted both with the individual universities and on the LearnHigher web-site.
		Incorporate search function from Open Objects onto LH web-site and trial search function on some local LH partner sites.	The search box has been embedded in the LearnHigher web-site and evaluation of its use will become part of next year's work. Local partner sites are still working to embed this on their own sites.
16.	Engaging others in LearnHigher sub-networks that are creating excellent materials, undertaking research or involved in embedding in their own institutions.	Involve other HEIs through the development of Area sub-networks	A number of networks have been created, both locally and nationally in some Learning Areas. These were reported on in the Learning Area reports.

Programme management			
	LH Objectives	Year Two Objectives	Progress
17.	Building an administrative structure to support the LearnHigher activity.	Review systems and processes and improve these to help effective functioning of LearnHigher.	LearnHigher has struggled without its Administrator but been served well with a part-time replacement. The Manager and Director have completed their annual visits for all but

			two of the LearnHigher partner sites. The planning process, evaluation reporting and annual reporting systems were reviewed and adapted for ease of functioning for this year.
18.	Managing a centrally coordinated approach to operationalise and develop the programme.	Build effective coordination for research projects and activities from the central team	Michelle Verity is working in conjunction with Judy Turner and Kim Shahabudin of Reading University to co-ordinate and support the LearnHigher research activities and provide support to partners where required. A part time Research Assistant has been appointed recently to help with work across the network.
		Finalise capital spending and complete admin for HEFCE by March 2007	All capital funding has been spent as required by HEFCE by end March 2007. This has been a major task and achievement by all partners who were all obliged to learn new things to accomplish this. It has also been a complicated task for Hope to manage but has been successfully completed, including £370,000 additional capital spending.
		Support the work of the Steering Group, research and evaluation meetings, collaborative projects and all matters financial.	The central team manage all the meetings and events as well as the ongoing finances across LearnHigher.
19.	Branding, and marketing the LearnHigher CETL	Support LH partners in their dissemination and marketing activities	The central team provides support to underpin the dissemination of LearnHigher largely through the organisation of publicity and stands.
		Promote the LearnHigher brand on all materials developed for wider sector use.	Agreement has been achieved in terms of the LearnHigher branding appearing in conjunction with local branding on all our materials.

JA June 2007

APPENDIX FIVE

Activities undertaken to meet objectives

Learning Area Co-ordinators have undertaken a mass of activities within their own institutions to meet the LearnHigher objectives. Here, they have been grouped into categories of activities under the relevant objective.

LearnHigher Objective 1

Developing and sharing excellent materials and resources

- Identification of existing materials deemed to be excellent in each of the learning areas and uploading to the LearnHigher web site.
- Production and uploading of literature reviews in each of the learning areas (some still in production)
- Development of case studies demonstrating the successful use of resources in some Learning Areas. Available on the LearnHigher web site
- Formation of networks/partnerships to develop ideas, share and evaluate existing resources
- Development of new resources, uploaded to LearnHigher web site
- The use of funding to award internal projects for the evaluation and dissemination of resources for LearnHigher.
- Creation of new learning development pages for institution websites
- Extending and adapting existing resources for new audiences (including international audiences)
- Use of resources within subjects/ taught courses to embed Learning Development

LearnHigher Objective 2

Building own capacity

- Developed understanding of research and evaluation. Developed skills in both areas and methodology
- Presentation of research, poster presentations and keynotes
- Delivery of staff development, Learning Area workshops and conference workshops
- Establishing and running networks
- Development of web design skills and designing e-learning resources
- Development of skills in visual media (eg digital film manipulation/filming/editing)
- Developed understanding of Learning Development
- Developed understanding of project management/ budget management and change management issues
- Use of video conferencing and Access Grid Node
- Undertaking of Masters programmes in Education, ICT & Education, and Educational Research

LearnHigher Objective 3

Creating Institutional Impact

- Review and report on learning support institutional structures and practices within many partner universities. In some cases Learning Development has gained in importance on university Teaching and Learning agendas
- Funding provided for lecturers to develop innovative practice and write up as case study within Learning Area
- Competition for students to design a poster for the new website on academic integrity
- One-day conference in assessment with invited guest speakers (D Gosling, P Race and K Handley) plus demonstrating case studies from Kent
- Contribution to Assessment Group for internal review of assessment issues and plans for funding assessment development

-
- Active role in new Steering Group for Academic Skills and contribution to Academic Skills Consultation paper integrating LearnHigher and academic skills across the university
 - Developed a networking agreement for the use of a knowledge exchange network (KEN), for sharing and evaluating Critical Thinking and Reflection resources around the University and its partner colleges.
 - Organisation of in-house conferences and presentations at institution conferences, including VC's conferences
 - Running of internal workshops and seminars to raise awareness
 - The convening of Learning Area special interest groups
 - Articles in internal publications and websites
 - Contributions to PG Cert programmes
 - LearnHigher established as point of reference for Learning Development/Study Skills
 - Created 'LearnHigher Centre' with capital – used for wide range of learning development workshops for students and staff development workshops

LearnHigher Objective 4

Research

All Learning Area Co-ordinators have undertaken research within their Learning Area. This culminated in a National LearnHigher Research Symposium on June 26th. The event was attended by delegates from throughout the UK and hosted 17 workshops on research and work in progress from the CETL. Abstracts from the symposium can be found in Appendix Seven.

Collaborative research is also underway looking at how resources are used by students and how effective interventions in Learning Development might be made.

Literature reviews are in the process of being written for all Learning Areas. Completed reviews are available on the LearnHigher website. These are intended to summarise the main issues in a Learning Area and to enable the wider community to gain access to current research and theory in an area.

LearnHigher Objective 5

Dissemination

- Conferences attended and presented at nationally and internationally
- Collaborations with other CETLs
- Internal workshops to promote LearnHigher and disseminate LearnHigher resources
- Establishment of regional Learning Development groups
- Articles in internal publications and websites
- Papers submitted to journals (Studies in HE, Teaching in Higher Education and LATHE journal 2007)
- As a result of a recommendation in a paper presented to the L&T Committee, Learning Area Co-ordinators are attending School meetings to promote LearnHigher, the LearnHigher created space and to encourage collaboration
- Collaboration with FDTL 5 project
- Publication of book in August 2007 "The Complete Guide to Referencing and Avoiding Plagiarism" (Open University Press) stemming from LearnHigher work
- Ongoing contributions to online discussion with relevant networks eg LDHEN JISCmail list
- Resources promoted in Australia, Qatar and across the UK through consultancies undertaken for other HEIs/FEIs

LearnHigher Objective 6

Capital

See Appendix Six

APPENDIX SIX

LearnHigher Spaces

Bournemouth University

The new Student Social Learning Space is located physically and metaphorically at the very heart of BU. Physically, its location here in the Library Courtyard emphasises the central importance that we attach at BU to empowering a truly student-centred approach to learning. Metaphorically, LearnHigher emphasises PDP as a key element of our approach to Releasing Potential, enabling students to develop as confident, self-motivated lifelong learners. Furthermore, LearnHigher also represents a collaborative approach to student-centred learning, as is represented by those who are here today. As an example, I would cite the funding that LearnHigher has made available to the Student Union to enhance their induction activities during Freshers' Week.

Excerpt from Vice Chancellor's speech at the LH Room opening ceremony locating the PDP work and physical space within the Institutional context:

"I am delighted to see so many students, members of the Student Union and, indeed, staff here today at the opening of the new LearnHigher Student Social Learning Space, in the Library Courtyard. Your presence clearly demonstrates our commitment to Personal Development Planning, or PDP, as a cornerstone of the BU student learning experience. PDP is at the heart of our transition, documented in the Corporate Plan, to provide *an academically-enriched environment where all can experience the excitement of learning*. Chris (Keenan) has outlined the aspirations of the LearnHigher CETL and how it will support PDP. BU is delighted to be playing a significant part in the venture."

University of Bradford

Dedicated room to accommodate up to 40 people. Fully flexible furniture and high technological specifications. To be completed April 2007, launch event organised for June 2007 at the Annual Conference. Space managed by Student Development and TQEG and to be used for workshops, seminars, training events and other sessions relating to group work activity. Room to be bookable by other areas of university (both academic schools and learner development areas).

University Of Brighton

We couldn't create one substantial LearnHigher space, as we are spread across 5 main campuses between Brighton and Hastings, so most of our capital was spent on specialist equipment for Visual practices projects. However, I did contribute to the kitting out of the reception area in our new Student Centre at Eastbourne where all students come for advice on housing, careers, counselling etc. In particular, we have a set of 'smart desk' computers in reception to give quick access to online resources including our new LearnHigher BUGS Guide (see below) – the desks have a LearnHigher notice and we've now been asked to provide a poster outlining LearnHigher's role at Brighton. Although most of the work was done some months ago, it's only just been officially opened (photos to follow) but staff tell me a lot of Eastbourne students already use this space and equipment in preference to pool rooms as it's conveniently located right next to their halls of residence. Once we start our site-based study advice service (2007-8 I hope) this will give the space a stronger focus.

Brunel University

The space is a classroom at the front of the lecture building, known as the LearnHigher Centre. Publicised to students through the 'Effective Learning Advice Service' publicity, and by module leaders through lectures and WebCT/Vista VLE.

Presented report at L&T committee. Kate and Mundeep are attending all School meetings to talk about how room is and might be used.

For students we run students skills development workshops, drop-ins, one-to-ones and presentation clinics (curriculum based practice and feedback) all week, every week – on maths, numeracy and stats, oral communication and other study skills. Academic Schools and central services (Library, Disability and Dyslexia Service, Volunteer BUSS, Brunel International) have all booked and used the LearnHigher Centre. Used by students of all levels.

For staff we have used it for PG Cert programme and Effective Learning and Teaching staff development workshops. We are running a demo of the Centre as part of the Symposium on L&T

University of Kent

We have a LearnHigher space available for hire/use at the Medway campus. It is used by the student learning support team at Medway and also by the Local Assessment Advisory Group (the LEARNHIGHER group for assessment).

The space holds around 20 people, has laptops within the desktops plus projection facilities. It is used by University of Kent and Greenwich staff as a teaching, meeting and conference room.

It has not been well publicised yet as there has been a high staff turnover at Medway.

University of Leeds

LearnHigher capital funding at Leeds has been divided between two main initiatives

- 1) Adapting a teaching facility in the School of Health Care Studies to create a room more conducive to learning listening and interpersonal skills. The room is equipped with a one way mirror and is used by mental health students who are videoed interviewing simulated patients. Mental Health intakes of 25/30 students use the room for three modules over the three years, it is also utilised for Inter-professional learning and more recently the Counselling team utilise it for their programmes
- 2) Re-furbishing space in the Skill Centre.
 - a. New wall mounted smart boards and ceiling mounted projection equipment was purchased to create rooms suitable to work in groups and practice presentations etc. 1,900 students used the Skills Centre group working facilities in semester one 0607
 - b. individual study facilities were provided in G02 to enable students to listen to and use online learning resources and study skills materials. G02 benefited from new furniture and IT equipment and became a 'drop in room' where staff provided individual support to students. Over 100 students attended drop in semester one 0607
 - c. Existing teaching space in the reception rooms and main seminar room was fitted with air-conditioning equipment. This seminar room hosts the Skills Centre workshop programme and has been the venue for 50 + workshops this academic year with 750 students attending in semester one 0607.

Publicity for the Skills Centre physical space is through production of a Skills Centre Services and Facilities brochure, the web site and at induction sessions.

University of Lincoln

The LearnHigher room is highly valued as a training room and is much sought after for running high-profile events (including by the Vice-Chancellor). However, due to its current location it is still primarily a staff facility. In due course it is hoped that the LearnHigher room will be integrated into the

Phase 2 development of the library. Future plans will become clearer once the structures for supporting student learning development have been considered by the Teaching and Learning Development Committee in October.

The University of Liverpool

- Creation of the LearnHigher room in the Harold Cohen library.
- Used by groups of students doing science- based degrees
- They congregate in this room for discussion and activity around problem-based learning and other group work

Liverpool Hope University

Liverpool Hope has invested in a new building space for LearnHigher and shares a large open plan area with Write Now CETL and Liverpool Hope Career Development team. There is a large student area fully equipped with computers, printing and photocopying facilities. A set of comfortable chairs is to encourage students to sit and read to work with the resources available to them in this area. There are five small meeting rooms for working with students privately and two larger meeting rooms on the floor above for larger groups. For both working with staff and students two large seminar rooms with high quality equipment have been created. One is a fully functioning Access Grid Node which is formally recognised as one of the UK's 120 quality assessed sites. Additional capital funding was added to that of Write Now and a Writing Studio created for student use on the Everton site.

London Metropolitan University

LH capital spend has allowed the increase in size of the LDU drop-in Learning Workshop space, ground floor Learning Centre (LC). The spend has also bought to us a dedicated Learn Higher room for teaching, learning & staff development. This fostered our innovative 'Breakfast Club – a hybrid of taught and 1-2-1 provision. Also, CAPD hold some of their MA in Learning & Teaching in HE in there. The raised quality of the LDU space has increased the morale of LD staff & students – and the profile of LearnHigher/LDU within London Met.

Both the workshop space and the room have been fitted out to very high standard due to LH – with significant ICT provision and this too raises the profile of LH/Learning Development within the institution.

University of Manchester

We have two not-very-big meeting rooms. One is set up as a groupwork and training room with a cluster of 4 computers and an interactive whiteboard, the other is a meeting room with Access Grid Node.

Publicity has been mainly through networking – we have a flyer we distribute at events. Recently we have put a note into the IT newsletter for the Humanities Faculty.

The group/training room is the one which is most widely used with students from Combined Studies using it for project work, Language students using it for SkyPE with overseas partners and IT learning & teaching using it for graduate skills training.

The Access Grid Node has taken time to set up and we see the use of that increasing over the next 12 months. However, the room itself is used as meeting room and is seen as a desirable meeting space.

Manchester Metropolitan University

Monday 23 October 2006 saw the launch of the LearnHigher Suite of rooms within the Department of Information and Communications at MMU. The opening, by the Vice Chancellor Professor John Brooks, allowed the department to showcase the world class facilities and demonstrate how they have used student input to inform the change.

The suite boasts a Boardroom, Syndicate room and a Seminar room in addition to a stylish drop-in area (please see below for further detail). The Boardroom is a spacious, comfortable and attractive meeting area with seating for 20 plus. The room includes the latest information and communications technologies, has 20 wireless laptops, a 46" LCD TV/Monitor and full network connectivity. The area has been designed as a flexible meeting space, so there are many potential room configurations.

Space used by HLSS faculty students in the main. All students welcome. Some space open, some bookable. Heaviest used areas are small seminar room and social learning space (computers and relaxed seating). Students feedback V. positive.

Staff from all over MMU and externally have booked the rooms for a wide range of uses from computer training days (using the new laptops provided by the fund), library meetings, research seminars etc..

The University of Plymouth

'The space' includes a dedicated LearnHigher office in the new University of Plymouth (UoP) CETL building. We also have access to and use of a range of other spaces: Within the building there are two large meeting rooms, both have built in presentation technology, one has the latest video conferencing facilities, and the other has 5 computer hot desks. The space is jointly publicised in all internal publicity produced by three of the UoP CETL's and LearnHigher. The space is used by all UoP CETL projects for meetings, discussions, events and workshops. Staff and students will be able to use the spaces for activities such as trialling and evaluating learning materials.

University of Reading

LearnHigher workshop currently under construction as part of new Student Services building.

Will be used by Study Advice/LearnHigher team for learning development workshops and other activities including more informal drop-in sessions for students to use interactive learning development resources with on-call advice.

University of Worcester

The CETL funding has covered the cost of refurbishing three offices for the Centre's staff and also a 'Learning Space' that is used for staff development, research, and meetings which is shared with the Learning and Teaching Centre. The Learning Space is a protected room and is not available to the rest of the university for booking, this is to protect its usability and usefulness to the CETL and the L&T team. The room will shortly be set up with video conferencing facilities and remote viewing for observational activities.

APPENDIX SEVEN

Research Symposium: June 26 2007 (Liverpool Hope) LearnHigher Session Synopses

Picture this: researching visual alternatives to written assignments

Pauline Ridley, Brighton University

The Visual Practices Learning Area is concerned with the development of visual knowledge and skills. Visual competence is an essential aspect of subjects such as art and design, media and cultural studies and the history of art, architecture and design, and a key component of many other academic disciplines, but has not always been explicitly taught or assessed in higher education.

This session will report on a current project, jointly funded by LearnHigher and the HEA Subject Centre for Art Design Media, which seeks to explore the use of visual assessment practices in different disciplines. The art and design sector has recently identified a need to provide a clearer framework for assessment and produce a range of usable resources and examples of good practice. At the same time, staff in other subjects are increasingly being encouraged to develop more visual assessment formats – such as posters, illustrated presentations or web pages - sometimes to provide reasonable alternatives for students with disabilities but also as a way to vary the total assessment regime and help develop transferable skills. However, where such formats are unfamiliar to a discipline area, students may struggle to understand how to approach them, and staff may lack experience in setting appropriate tasks or marking them fairly and rigorously.

The project partners (Brighton, Kent and University College Falmouth) have been gathering video footage and other qualitative data from staff and students undertaking a variety of visual assessment tasks in different subject areas, in order to illuminate current practices and to inform the development of a series of multimedia resources. This activity has raised a range of ethical, technical and methodological issues which will be the focus of this session, alongside video extracts and discussion of how such material can be sensitively edited and used to support staff development and enhance student learning.

“Who hides the books?” The truth behind the tales (students’ use of resources)

Jill Armstrong and Michelle Verity, Liverpool Hope University

Through research and evaluation LearnHigher seeks to understand what makes for effective interventions into student learning and in particular in the appropriate use of resources. We are dependent in our teaching on a range of resources and in turn students need to engage with resources to enable their learning. But do we know how students do engage in finding and using resources, or do we operate largely on assumptions? Our current research into ‘what students do’ in their study practice starts to cast some light on these issues and raises possibilities for effective interventions.

Using ‘practice-led enquiry’ to develop resources for time management in Higher Education

Kim Shahabudin & Judy Turner, University of Reading

LearnHigher’s declared aim is ‘to improve student learning through practice led enquiry.’ Researching the learning area of Time Management, we have focused initially on our own experiences as Study Advisers at the University of Reading: advising students on an individual basis, and developing resources such as paper and online study guides, and workshops. We collated feedback from these contacts and used it to develop new resources which were in turn assessed,

establishing a continuing process of evaluation and development which models the Self-Regulated Learning style we hope to encourage in our students.

While this initial research focus on our own student community has produced interesting results it has become clear that, as a research methodology, it is not without limitations. This session will consider some of the strengths and limitations of the process of 'practice-led enquiry' demonstrated by our research on time management practices, and explain how the recognition of these has prompted a reconsideration of our resource development model.

Impact of institution habitus on student transition to higher education

Christine Keenan, Bournemouth University

Student retention and progression is a growing area of interest in the Higher Education Sector. It is an area that is not only under the scrutiny of Government, but also of other agencies such as the Quality Assurance Agency and The Higher Education Funding Council. Furthermore early student withdrawal from HE has a significant impact on local funding and planning, and financial imperatives are an important driver in terms of institutional interest in retention and progression. Whilst there is some evidence to indicate that early withdrawal is not necessarily always a negative experience for all students (Quinn, Thomas et al 2005), for many there are significant personal and social costs associated with early withdrawal or failure at University. It is interesting therefore to consider whether institutional norms and practices that form its habitus, are in any way a factor in student transition and progression. This presentation will provide an overview the issues and how opportunities for change are being identified through an action research approach and will encourage discussion around the notion of habitus and question where the burden of adjustment lies

The challenge of referencing

Colin Neville, University of Bradford

In recent years, the issue of plagiarism has been one of the dominant concerns of higher education practitioners. However, there is a fine line between plagiarism and poor referencing practice, and many students struggle to understand, not just the 'how-to', but the 'when to', and 'why' aspects of referencing.

The main issues of concern that are currently being addressed and researched by the LearnHigher Referencing Area regard:

- * The range of referencing styles that students encounter within UK/HE
- * When to reference, and when it is not necessary - and particularly in relation to the issue of what constitutes 'common knowledge'
- * The issue of the validity and reliability of sources for referencing purposes. This stems from a concern that, in response to worries about plagiarism, students are filling assignments with references, but in an indiscriminate and unselective way

Perceptions of learning advice/support

Mundeep Gill and David Donnarumma, Brunel University

The aim of this session will be to look at how learning advice or support is perceived and why students are sometimes reluctant to access skills advice. We will report on a series of focus groups, which is an ongoing development, to determine what advice students want to receive and how the provision of this advice is organised. It will not only draw on our own experiences as practitioners, but also the literature surrounding the multiple identities of students. In addition, we will explore the reflective nature of the advice given, rather than support, during the advisory process. We hope to stimulate discussion by exploring the implications of providing academic skills advice on a "want" or "need" basis.

Engaging students in the research process - learning zones and information literacy audits

Bob Glass, Manchester Metropolitan University

At the department of Information & Communications at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) we have extensive experience in research which engages students as well as academics and practitioners. The research activities associated with the LearnHigher CETL at MMU centre around Information Literacy. Whilst there have been a number of activities relating to research outputs this paper will focus on two specifics; the creation of Learning Zones and the administration of Information Literacy Audits.

Learning Zones

Capital funding of £90,000 provided the opportunity to entirely remodel an existing teaching and technology space within the department (approximately 120 x 40 ft). This element of the presentation will discuss how staff, students and administrative colleagues became involved in the planning, design, build and review processes of the project and how their participation informed the eventual outcomes. In particular, student questionnaires and semi-structured interviews led to the inception of "Learning Zones" within the facility – a key factor in its eventual success. The premise that inclusion and engagement creates greater user satisfaction and ownership will be explored.

Information Literacy Audits

Online, psychometric testing is one approach that can be used to measure the key elements of Information Literacy competencies in higher education students. This research centred around a test developed by Steven Wise and Lynn Cameron (2004) at James Madison University (JMU), Virginia. The intention of the research project was (is) intended to consider the following:

Is there value in administering online information literacy audits?

- a) What do the results tell us?
- b) What difference does intervention make in the results?
- c) Is there a need in for a UK designed, generic, online Information Literacy Audit?

This project engaged the complete stage one cohort from the Department of Information & Communications, (65 students) plus a number from the Department of Economics (19 students). Students were counselled prior to the test and questionnaires administered afterwards. There were sixty five multiple-choice questions in the test, no time limit and scores were available to students immediately following completion. Detailed test results were provided from JMU at a later stage and these are now being analysed using SPSS. This work forms the first part of a longitudinal study which is intended to follow the test students through their academic career at MMU. This element of the paper will discuss progress so far.

Evaluative findings of students' use of Turnitin as a formative writing tool: A case study from Kent

Judy Cohen, University of Kent

Turnitin plagiarism detection software became available to all staff at the University of Kent at the beginning of the 2006/7 academic year. Guidelines for staff on the use of Turnitin were prepared, plus resources for staff and students about referencing, plagiarism and using Turnitin were published online. In order to evaluate Turnitin and the method of implementation, staff and students were surveyed just prior to and after using Turnitin. In addition, two case studies provided information about the students' direct experience of Turnitin. Results of the surveys and interviews indicate that Turnitin is accepted and even appreciated by students when given adequate training and explanation prior to its use, and that Turnitin can aid students in their writing as well as helping to reduce staff workload.

In this session, there will be time to discuss the case studies and the collected data. Further issues to be considered include methods of implementation, staff training, managing effective introductory sessions for students plus the practical sides of the implementation (eg software plug-ins).

A journey into silence': policy, pedagogy and the student experience

Sandra Sinfield, Tom Burns, Debbie Holley, London Met. University

Increasingly e-learning has a pervasive impact on our lives as academics indeed within Learn Higher we want to develop excellent e-resources to empower students within academic discourse.

However little critical attention is paid to the policy that drives (e)education nor to the impact on the student, the least powerful navigator of the new e-environment.

For our analysis we draw upon Macherey's essay 'The text says what it does not say' (in Walder 1990) where he argues for the legitimacy of interrogating a text for 'what it tacitly implies, what it does not say ... for in order to say anything there are things which must not be said' (Ibid 217, his italics). In fact ... 'What is important in the work is what it does not say ... what the work cannot say ... because there the elaboration of the utterances is acted out in a sort of journey to silence' (Ibid 218).

Our critical analysis of the Government e-learning strategy (2005) reveals that rather than harnessing technology to empower the typically disenfranchised within the educational debate, it is those very stakeholders at the margins who are silenced whilst the interests of those with institutional and economic power are given voice.

Our analysis will show that rather than creating a stakeholder society, Government through its policy documents positions the already disempowered as either silent or deficit and our conclusions suggest that rather than a discourse of transformation, 'regulation not education' (Lillis 2001), is the real goal of the dominant education stakeholders.

Supporting Academic Writing Outside the Curriculum

Ed Foster and Becky Bell, Nottingham Trent University

Increasingly, institutions are investing in support specialists to offer writing support to students to augment subject learning taking place within the curriculum. Nottingham Trent University has developed support specialists in three of the ten academic schools and is currently trialling support in another three. Interestingly, whilst most schools have chosen specialist workers: either academics or support staff, two have chosen to trial student peer support.

The discussion will look at the experiences of both a new member of staff and team of students in offering writing support to students.

Both started working in the field at approximately the same time and work in schools without prior academic support located outside of the 'liberal arts' field that writing specialists are often to be found in.

Furthermore, one system uses bookable appointments, the other drop in times - what difference has that made to the experience?

- In what ways was the experience similar or different?
- How did students react to their peers or a member of staff?
- What subject-specific issues were raised in these schools?
- What lessons are there for institutions wishing to employ specialists working outside the curriculum?

What are academics looking for in students' written work? Are there generic qualities and functions in academic writing?

John Hilsdon, University of Plymouth

Work with academic staff at the University of Plymouth using a practice-based and interpretive approach to research, is developing and testing a social-functional model to identify and categorise key aspects of students' written work. The aim is, firstly, to generate material for use in an online learning resource (the WrAssE project) for students, and secondly to enable academics to elaborate and explicate more clearly their responses to students' written work.

The model has emerged from practice and consultation over a period of several years. In its current form it comprises a framework of broad criteria which are organised according to function and quality. Teaching staff contributing to the most recent phase of the project (supported by the LearnHigher CETL) are now attempting to use the framework to guide them in elaborating responses to examples of work submitted by their own students. As this work develops, we will draw upon the texts produced to investigate further the underlying criteria – stated, unstated, conscious and/or unconscious – used to judge student writing, and feed our findings back into the Learning Development and broader academic communities.

The reality of the new 'digital native' student

Sylvie Steward, Liverpool Hope University College

Students of today are the first generation that has grown up in such a ubiquitous environment. They have been surrounded by digital communication tools all their lives. Do students; learn in a different way than they did in the pre-digital age and are we as educators meeting the needs of this new generation? This session will look at the findings from two small research projects that examined students' attitudes and knowledge of modern technologies and explore such terms as digital natives and digital immigrants.

Do we know how students behave in groups (and can we help them)?

Professor Peter Hartley & Vikki Illingworth, University of Bradford /Julia Braham & Carol Elston, University of Leeds/ Kate Smith, Brunel University

Many of the descriptions and prescriptions about student behaviour found in textbooks and study skills guides are based on limited or anecdotal evidence and we will give some examples of these common misconceptions. However we do have survey evidence which shows the typical problems students report about their experiences of groupwork. We are developing a resource which can help students work more effectively in groups. This session will briefly explain how we have devised this resource, demonstrate the essential features and discuss how we can use it to add to our evidence base of how students really do behave in groups.

APPENDIX EIGHT

LearnHigher: research and evaluation meetings 2006/07, revised 22 October 2006

For convenience, our general research questions are at the end of this table.

Continuing activities	Events	Comments
July/August 06. Peter, Jill and Michelle construct LH evaluation document.	15 August LH evaluation document completed.	Evaluation Report copies to all partners for discussion and to Hope CETL advisory board.
Development of 2006-7 Research Strategy	Michelle drafts for 2 October Steering Group meeting	Agreed
Considering questions for collaborative research approaches Identifying evaluation foci, methods and targets, 2006/07	20 October Research workshop, Bradford. 12 December SRHE Roundtable presentation	Research topics: Nominal Group and Delphi techniques. Chris & Andy Evaluation topics: methods for evaluating intervention 'effects'.
November – December. LACs finalise Year 2 success indicators, with particular attention to evaluation of effects. Research enquiries continue	17 January 2007. Steering Group meeting, MMU	<i>Evaluation</i> The national formative CETL evaluation and the HEFCE framework. LH evaluation processes Jan-June 2007. Progress with indicators and data collection <i>Research</i> Reports of work in progress. Collaborations. Planning the July research symposium. Publishing research enquiries. <i>Research topics</i> If there is time, Peter can talk about one or more of the following: generalisability, interviewing, questionnaire design.
	18 January 2007. R&E meeting, MMU	
January – May: collection and discussion of evaluation data. Collection and discussion of research data: identification of publication outlets.	23 May. R&E meeting. Brighton	Presentation and discussion of work in progress and work in plan. Research methods may include: qualitative data analysis, observation, appreciative enquiry. Drafting a paper? <i>Learning Development: territories and tribes?</i>
May/June. LACs complete annual evaluation reports	20 June. Evaluation reports (up to 1000 words plus any supplementary materials you want to add) submitted to Michelle	Timing may have to be brought forward – depends on HEFCE
Higher Education Academy Conference	July 07	
LearnHigher Research Symposium	June 26/07	To showcase year's research

Continuing activities	Events	Comments
Peter, Jill and Michelle construct LH evaluation document.	Completed by 15 July	Timing may have to be brought forward – depends on HEFCE's wishes
Identifying evaluation foci, methods and targets, 2006/07	25 October R&E meeting. Plymouth	Review of evaluation purposes and central questions Will be affected by progress of national formative evaluation
November – December. Partners draft Year 3 success indicators.	10 January 2008. Evaluation workshop. [Where?]	Indicators for year 4 work. Planning of next two research workshops. Presentation and discussion of enquiries and writing in progress. Venturing internationally
January – July 2008. Carrying out local evaluation activities, as agreed. Normal monitoring and reporting.		

Our over-arching questions

Parameters	Times of greatest attention to these questions
What is current practice in learner development, learning development and supporting learning in general?	Local baselining activities, 2005/06.
What are the practices and concepts we prefer as a result of our scholarly and other research work? What are effective intervention strategies?	Throughout.
How do and can we embed preferred practices? (Developmental work with a research edge.)	A concern throughout but suggest giving this high priority in 2008/09 and 2009/10.
What are students' academic practices? Why have they adopted these practices? What (a) sustains and (b) discourages these practices?	Suggest two rounds of enquiry, one 2006/07 and one 2007/08.

APPENDIX NINE

Agreed by LearnHigher 20 September 2005

1. What are our Reasons and Purposes for evaluation?
a. To ensure that we make appropriate use of allocated funds (capital and recurrent spend).
b. To help keep us on track against objectives and schedule, especially regarding dissemination.
c. To identify directions for further research and development.
d. To appraise the effects of LearnHigher activities on teaching, learning and institutions generally.
e. To help us make sense of what partners and LearnHigher as a whole are doing and build knowledge about learning in higher education.
2. What will be the Uses of our evaluation?
a. Cohesive: to help bring partners together, create shared knowledge and understandings, and stimulate collaborative inquiries, publications and other work.
b. Symbolic: showing that we are open, accountable and manage responsibly.
c. Strategic: identifying areas of potential or actual difficulty; refining priorities.
d. Illuminative: helping Learn Higher to make sense of its work and environment and to create new knowledge.
e. Sustainable: helping us to run a centre that is concerned, from the beginning, with the sustainability of its work.
3. What will be the Foci for our evaluations?
a. Monitoring activities against plans and success indicators, as shown in the tender document and as revised from time to time.
b. Investigating effects of activities on participants (teachers, students and others directly involved) through telephone and e-interviews; questionnaires; focus groups.
c. Establishing relations with national and international groups with a stake in these areas.
d. Continually thinking about the implications of evaluation processes for effective actions to support good student learning practices.
e. Reflecting on evaluation processes and tuning them so that they remain fit for present and future needs.
4. What will be our Data and Evidence for our evaluations?
a. Annual reports and other public documents
b. User views <i>via</i> telephone and e-interviews; questionnaires; focus group; Delphi studies.
c. Effects on users <i>via</i> performance data (where valid): telephone and e-interviews; questionnaires; focus group; Delphi studies.
d. Number of briefing papers and other resources + reviews where available.
e. Number of activities ¹⁶ funded and completed.
f. Awareness amongst national and international groups with a stake in these areas. (Telephone and e-interviews).
g. Descriptions, both quantitative and qualitative, of LearnHigher contributions to enhanced educational provision and increased capacity, locally and, where appropriate, nationally.
h. Number of contacts and collaborators within the university.
i. Number of conference presentations and refereed publications.
j. Comparisons over time with baseline accounts.

(In full acknowledgement of Murray Saunders (2000) for his development of this framework)
