

IDIBL framework Academic Proposal

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|--|----|
| IDIBL framework Academic Proposal..... | 2 |
| 1. Rationale, aims, intended learning outcomes | 3 |
| 1.1 Rationale..... | 3 |
| 1.2 Aims | 4 |
| 1.3 Objectives of the framework and intended learning outcomes | 4 |
| 2. Entry | 6 |
| 3. Curriculum structure and content | 7 |
| 4. Learning and Teaching..... | 9 |
| 5. Assessment..... | 10 |
| 5.1 Patchwork Media | 10 |
| 5.2 Assessment for Learning | 11 |
| 5.3 Summative Assessment | 11 |
| 5.4 Exhibition | 11 |
| 5.5 Staff Development and Innovation..... | 11 |
| 6. Student guidance and support | 11 |
| 6.1 Course staff | 12 |
| 6.1.1 Learning facilitator..... | 12 |
| 6.1.2 Module coordinator | 12 |
| 6.1.3 Hot seat guest..... | 12 |
| 6.2 Peer support | 13 |
| 6.2.1 Moral support | 13 |
| 6.2.1 Learning sets..... | 13 |
| 6.3 Workplace support..... | 13 |
| 6.3.1 Workplace advocate..... | 13 |
| 6.3.2 Workplace knowledge..... | 13 |
| 6.3.3 Workplace Action | 13 |
| 6.3.4 Professional context..... | 13 |
| 7. Management and organisation..... | 14 |
| 8. Resources | 14 |
| 9. Maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality..... | 15 |
| 9.1 Learning Facilitator expertise..... | 15 |
| 9.2 Experts..... | 15 |
| 9.3 Quality and Enhancement | 15 |
| 10. Appendices..... | 16 |
| 10.1 References | 16 |

1. Rationale, aims, intended learning outcomes

1.1 Rationale

The inter-disciplinary inquiry-based learning framework (IDIBL) provides a pedagogic, organisational and assessment structure which can be used as a basis for course approval through modification of appropriate sections in this document by departments who identify an opportunity for an inquiry-based, work-focussed programme.

Such sections are highlighted by the phrase 'TO BE IDENTIFIED WHEN SEEKING SPECIFIC COURSE APPROVAL VIA MODIFICATION OF THE IDIBL FRAMEWORK'.

This should provide an agile procedure for introducing new courses, which intend using the innovative approaches developed for IDIBL. It remains for each course validation to identify a rationale for professional engagement, viability and delivery.

The framework is designed to offer a combination of pedagogical approaches, which together provide a different route for academic study and appeal to people who are committed to their. The course will widen participation by satisfying learners' whose need is for flexibility with time, place and pedagogy. More specifically this could be because:

1. They need to continue in full-time paid employment whilst they study;
2. They wish to make their study directly relevant to their work;
3. Family commitments prevent their on-campus attendance;
4. Geographical location or poor transport links makes campus attendance difficult;
5. They seek to develop further their communicative creativity and technological understanding as a complete professional;
6. Traditional examinations and academic essay writing are either intimidating or uninviting;
7. They seek the company, support and intellectual challenge of fellow students rather than studying alone;
8. They seek the advantage offered by technology to enjoy the possibility of work on joint ventures and studying collaboratively.

The modules contained within the framework focus on process, and generic concepts and outcomes rather than subject content. Through a process of negotiation between the individual learner and the course staff, a personalised inquiry will be developed to include learning activities and assessment products that meet the module requirements and informed by the learners' professional practice. All learners in a cohort will be carrying out their inquiries and develop assessment products to the same set of milestones. Thus they are expected to provide support and challenge to each other and travel a common path in spite of the personalisation of their study. The design encourages different perspectives from diverse professional and academic disciplines to be exchanged.

Learners will align and defend their attainment against module learning outcomes and with reference to competencies or national standards relevant to their work context. Learners are expected to look critically at their work setting as a source of knowledge and experience from their own experience, colleagues' experience and reference documents. This approach puts responsibility on the learner to maximise their effectiveness and efficiency through reflection on their work practice scaffolded by module requirements that are intentionally directed to enhance the quality and outcomes of work.

The framework is designed to enable progression by learners from a Foundation Certificate of CPD at level 3 through to level 7 Masters course. Common throughout the framework is an inquiry-led, work-based approach to learning that meets students' progression and continuity needs throughout.

There is a growing realisation that practitioner knowledge can inform academic knowledge. This proposal

recognises and supports a realignment of knowledge acquisition and sharing and a re-alignment of roles for staff in higher education and the practitioner in society.

As a backdrop, the 2006 Leitch report examines the UK's long-term skills needs and identifies increasing employer investment in higher level qualifications to meet the target of more than 40% of adults skilled to graduate level up from 29% in 2005. The approach outlined in this document is one route that should be attractive to employers and employees alike in that it offers a cost effective approach for students as they can gain their qualification at a full-time rate of study. It is attractive to employers as the focus of student study is directly related to improving their work performance.

A rationale for the proposed modification to the Framework, including identification of the target student profile, progression opportunities TO BE IDENTIFIED WHEN SEEKING SPECIFIC COURSE APPROVAL VIA MODIFICATION OF THE IDIBL FRAMEWORK'.

1.2 Aims

Action inquiry activities are used as a vehicle for learners to gain subject knowledge, typically from a range of disciplines, develop process skills, and become articulate, critically reflective problem solvers within their field of study.

Learners will apply research rigour in identifying and approaching action inquiry projects that present an opportunity or an issue in their work-practice. They will develop strategies for improvement that will be implemented, disseminated and evaluated.

The course will attract people who are prepared to take responsibility for their own learning, will benefit from an action-inquiry approach and personally fulfilling & meaningful study. Learners will support each other in an online community and as part of a deliberate attempt to foster collaborative working, will subject their work-practice to self-examination, as well as the examination of peers.

The model of learning that underpins this programme is one of an autonomous, self-directed, critical, and reflective individual who seeks to learn with others. This model emphasises the analysis of the values, and moral and ethical dilemmas surrounding work-place practice.

1.3 Objectives of the framework and intended learning outcomes

TO BE IDENTIFIED WHEN SEEKING SPECIFIC COURSE APPROVAL VIA MODIFICATION OF THE IDIBL FRAMEWORK'.

| Objective | Learning outcomes at Levels 4 and 5 - the graduate with Foundation Degree / Diploma / Certificate will be able to: | Learning outcomes at Level 6 - the graduate with Bachelors Degree will be able to: | Learning outcomes at Level 7 - the postgraduate with Masters Degree will be able to: |
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| <p>1. Action for improvement to create curious, evaluative and effective 'improvers' in society</p> | <p>With guidance, identify opportunities to improve their own practice, take small-scale actions and evaluate the outcomes.</p> | <p>With support, develop and implement a plan of action for improving their own practice and critically evaluate the outcomes.</p> | <p>Independently identify opportunities to take actions for improvement at an organisational level, systematically implement innovative solutions and critically evaluate the outcomes.</p> |

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| <p>2. Scholarly research to assure the quality of improvement is based on best evidence, analysis and insight</p> | <p>With guidance, construct a research plan and collect data to help answer a simple research question.</p> | <p>Develop and implement effective research plans, which isolate and focus on the significant features of a problem.</p> | <p>Undertake a significant piece of research that fully and critically explores key issues demonstrating rigor in the research process.</p> |
| <p>3. Communication for effective dissemination of improved practice</p> | <p>Communicate orally, in writing, and in appropriate media, in work and course contexts making informed and balanced arguments.</p> | <p>Effectively communicate orally, in writing, and in appropriate media, in academic and professional contexts making well-informed, coherent arguments.</p> | <p>Synthesize sources and communicate orally, in writing, and in appropriate media, in academic and professional contexts making well informed, coherent and persuasive arguments.</p> |
| <p>4. Application of subject and professional knowledge for depth of understanding of practice</p> | <p>Demonstrate a sound understanding of the principle issues in their field and take part in an argument around topics of debate or controversy drawing on personal experience.</p> | <p>Evaluate complex issues in their field and take part in reasoned argument around topics of debate or controversy drawing on knowledge from experience, work and course contexts.</p> | <p>Critically analyse and evaluate complex issues and lead reasoned argument around topics of debate or controversy drawing on knowledge at the forefront of their field including a historical perspective.</p> |
| <p>5. Learning and working with others to sustain lifelong learning and community of practice</p> | <p>Evidence personal practice of lifelong learning, using technology, and working in organisational contexts.</p> | <p>Articulate philosophies of lifelong learning, the applications of technology, and the way organisations work.</p> | <p>Take a leadership role to articulate philosophies of lifelong learning, the applications of technology, and the way organisations work.</p> |
| <p>7. Organisation and policy to act on wider contexts of organisation and society</p> | <p>Exercise personal responsibility in tacking actions based on work context and local policies.</p> | <p>Use organisational theories to inform analysis of complex work circumstances and exercise personal responsibility in taking action in the light of local and national policies.</p> | <p>Use organisational theories to inform analysis and evaluation of their work context at a strategic level, critiquing local and national policies and develop recommendations for change.</p> |
| <p>8. Ethics to maintain integrity and respect for individuals and society</p> | <p>Understand the ethical expectations in their work context and act accordingly.</p> | <p>Understand the implications of ethical dilemmas including social implications of activities and interpret these to inform their action inquiry.</p> | <p>Analyse and manage the implications of ethical dilemmas including social implications of activities and work pro-actively with others to formulate solutions.</p> |

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| 9. Technology to enhance creativity, confidence and competence with technology as a modern practitioner | Develop an understanding of the potential use of relevant technologies for communication, co-ordination and analysis. | Confidently and competently use relevant technologies for communication, co-ordination and analysis of work-place activities. | Evaluate technology for its contribution to communication, co-ordination and an organisation's enterprise activities. |
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2. Entry

The framework is intended for student researchers who wish to study their current work-role and consequently they will be in a full or part time, paid or unpaid work setting which may include voluntary, caring or domestic responsibility. Potential learners will be interviewed via telephone to assess their preparedness to undertake inquiry-based studies at an appropriate level and the suitability of their work role for this approach, further detail is **TO BE IDENTIFIED WHEN SEEKING SPECIFIC COURSE APPROVAL VIA MODIFICATION OF THE IDIBL FRAMEWORK and included in ADA1**. This process is a two-way discussion and is a key component of the retention strategy as it offers the best opportunity to explain the innovative nature of the course being offered and ensure its implications for the candidate are understood.

Entry criteria to be applied to potential student researchers:

1. The work context of the potential student researcher is appropriate to the theme of the course employing the framework, and will benefit from the inter-professional discourse ensuing from the course online community;
2. Student researchers are admitted to a programme on the basis of a judgement that they are able to benefit from the study involved;
3. Student researchers are admitted to a programme on the basis of a judgement that they are capable of succeeding in obtaining the intended award;
4. There is a willingness to support other students and seek the support of other students in the online community;
5. Active steps are taken to ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants;
6. ICT literacy is sufficiently advanced so that student researchers may successfully manage the course expectations;
7. Formal qualifications as well as current and previous work experience.

An admission requirement for learners enrolling on programme using the framework is a direct link to the internet with the facility to download, store, and upload files. Learners studying on programmes will need to have proficiency in ICT. This will be initially tested by the requirement on students to complete an online registration form and receive, and respond to, an email sent to an email address specified as a requirement on the registration form. In addition, on admission, prospective student researchers will be questioned to establish their level of ICT literacy to ensure that they can successfully manage the course expectations.

Taster activities will be offered through an induction website so that potential students can familiarise themselves with the approach to learning and meet other potential learners and staff.

Applicants may be advised to use access modules in order to ensure that the approach is appropriate for them at either entry to undergraduate or postgraduate awards. Such CPD modules should touch on all facets of the course pedagogy and organisation whilst providing the student with a real project to complete.

University policies that will inform all decisions made are covered by Admissions and Equity and Diversity. The university disability advisor will be consulted where appropriate.

3. Curriculum structure and content

Further detail is TO BE IDENTIFIED WHEN SEEKING SPECIFIC COURSE APPROVAL VIA MODIFICATION OF THE IDIBL FRAMEWORK *including a schedule for module delivery.*

This IDIBL framework covers NQF level 3 to 7. Module learning outcomes are generic in nature focusing on process and skills and can be applied to a wide variety of specific programmes with learners in different and unique work-contexts.

As well as combining to offer qualifications individual modules may also be delivered within the university CPD framework regulations.

At the exit point of Bachelor Degree and Masters, the major project/dissertation takes the form of an exhibition in the workplace or appropriate venue to selected stakeholders from whom evaluative feedback is collected. This is then used to validate the assessment product submitted for assessment.

4. Learning and Teaching

The action inquiry-based nature of the framework calls for clear definition of the roles of both teaching staff and learners. In doing this, the labels given to these roles are important in conveying the nature of their relationship and the way in which they go about their activities. Learners will be referred to as student researchers and teaching staff as learning facilitators as this more accurately reflects the approach to learning and teaching.

The approach is committed to making learning delightful, seductive and fun! This is known to enhance learning effectiveness, and indeed delight in learning arises naturally where aesthetic sensibility, interest and zest are promoted (Heron, 1992). Furthermore, conviviality, recognition and dissent are encouraged to further delight learners in the context of online community (Millwood, 2008).

The approach exploits all appropriate technologies and implements new technologies as they are developed and where relevant. Experienced learning facilitators will:

1. Employ learning techniques to encourage students to study through the online community using staged tasks;
2. Frame learning discourses within that community and;
3. Translate successful face-to-face strategies for online application where appropriate.

Learning and teaching is based on an approach to inquiry-based learning that is informed by action research methodologies. This requires students to create the foci for their inquiries by identifying an opportunity or issues in their workplace that is of direct relevance to them and over which they have the power to take an action. It is likely that the scope of the action will be progressive, starting with the small-scale and concerned only with their own work practice. At Masters level the expectation is to embark upon an inquiry with wider implications for work colleagues and the institution as a whole.

Student researchers will be members of a lively online learning community, where collaborative learning will be generated through participation using a range of learning processes and protocols including reflective dialogue with peers, and an integrated student-mentoring-student model.

Learning facilitators will take on the roles of tutor, co-learners, experts, coaches and/or mentors. They will provide the active facilitation of the online spaces as well as the individualised support of student researcher. The online learning community will play a significant role in providing affective / social support for all members by fostering social interaction.

Learning will be organised by facilitators to support the learning community and student progression. Experts are invited to bring experience and authority in the form of 'hot seats'. This discourse invites public contextual questions from learners, which the expert responds to publicly. Colleagues in the work context are also sources for experience and authority. Advocates are identified from the students' practice to support their action in context.

Learning process supported by learning facilitator:

1. Identify a focus for an inquiry;
2. Identify learning activities that lead to the development, implementation, and evaluation of an action for improvement;
3. Share selected parts of the inquiry with fellow learners for critical feedback;
4. Construct a final account that identifies learning in relation to module intended learning outcomes.

5. Assessment

5.1 Patchwork Media

Assessment will consist of a 'patchwork media' for each module culminating in exhibition for dissertation at Masters and Bachelors level. The patchwork media is based on Winter's (2003) 'Patchwork Text' approach developed in response to criticisms of the essay as an assessment tool in higher education and sought to make assessment a relevant and integral part of the learning process. This approach aims to reduce 'surface learning' which it is argued is encouraged by some approaches to assessment.

In adopting a surface approach to learning, students see tasks as external impositions... and seek to meet the demands of the task with minimum effort. They adopt strategies which include: a focus on unrelated parts of the task...and rote memorizing information for assessment purposes rather than for understanding. Overall they would appear to be involved in study without reflection on purpose...

(Prosser and Trigwell. 1999)

The surface approach arises from an intention to get the task out of the way with minimum trouble, while appearing to meet requirements. Low cognitive level activities are used, when higher-level activities are required.... As applied to academic learning, examples include rote-learning selected content instead of understanding it, padding an essay, listing points instead of addressing an argument, quoting secondary references as if they were primary ones; the list is endless.

(Biggs, 1999)

The approach developed by Winter is particularly suited to inter-disciplinary studies where different perspectives, interpretations and voices can be accommodated as students construct an account of their own learning in relation to the programme of study intended learning outcomes.

Four key elements are implicit in this approach:

1. Learners come with previous knowledge and experiences and abilities which should be recognised and valued through the learning and assessment process;
2. Learning takes place over time through assimilating new and ideas and experiences;
3. Social interactions enable meaning making;
4. Creativity is an essential component of reflection on experience.

Instead of 'demanding' that learners have familiarity with the 'academic voice' the patchwork text encourages the use of different genres of writing to build an ongoing collection of pieces that are accumulated as the module progresses. For submission, the learner constructs a concluding commentary that 'stitches' together the previous pieces, linking ideas and identifying their learning in relation to the module intended learning outcomes. In working in this way, learners are encouraged to develop a range of different writing styles including the creative and imaginative, as well as the analytical and academic, but with realisation that development of these skills will be at different rates.

Biggs (2003) identifies adopting an holistic approach towards developing intended learning, teaching and assessment as "Constructive Alignment" and defines four major steps:

1. Defining the intended learning outcomes (ILOs);
2. Choosing teaching/learning activities likely to lead to the ILOs;
3. Assessing students' actual learning outcomes to see how well they match what was intended;
4. Arriving at a final grade.

It can be seen that the inquiry-based learning coupled with the patchwork text approach places the requirement on the learner to participate in the steps outlined above to ensure that learning activities and assessment products are aligned with intended learning outcomes that are relevant to learners and their work context.

5.2 Assessment for Learning

This approach recognises the importance of evaluative feedback other than the summative given at the end of the module. Patches developed for individual learning activities readily allow for formative feedback from the learning facilitator as well as fellow student researchers, thus the assessment process authentically supports learning.

5.3 Summative Assessment

After each module students shall receive summative feedback against each module intended learning outcome against the relevant assessment criteria. Feedback will be given under the following headings: strong points, and points to consider with targets for improvement.

5.4 Exhibition

The framework proposes that the major part of the final assessment in Bachelors and Masters level is composed of an exhibition. This exhibition can take a range of forms including physical display, presentation, web site, and video. The learner will be expected to identify an audience appropriate to the action they have taken, carry out the exhibition and evaluate its effectiveness. This is proposed in order that objective 3 'Communication for effective dissemination of improved practice' is fulfilled, but also provides opportunity for celebration in a convivial form for learner and colleagues. This practice is common in arts programmes and is highly successful.

5.5 Staff Development and Innovation

Some of these assessment practices will be unusual and new to staff, and furthermore demand a re-balancing of resource allocation from many face-to-face approaches. This will need addressing in staff professional development and training.

6. Student guidance and support

This kind of learner experience is well established through experienced gained on programmes using a similar approach to delivery (see Millwood, Powell and Tindal 2008). The key element is the **online community of inquiry** (Millwood et al., 2008) through which different aspects of guidance and support will be offered to learners. Learners and Facilitators work and learn together in an online community environment where social construction of knowledge is realised through collaboration and critical friendship between learners. Thus much guidance and support will come from peers in a timely fashion, bearing in mind that the community is open 24 hours. Authoritative views on course matters, resolution of disputes and clarification of procedural expectations is usually the learning facilitators job. In appropriate circumstances issues will be resolved by direct communication, but this is deprecated in favour of community sharing.

There will be an area of FAQs, which will address on-going areas of concern and other repetitive queries. A Community of Inquiry Code of Practice covering behaviour and expectations is included in the programme handbook.

6.1 Course staff

When learners first embark upon a programme of learning, the facilitators will provide highly structured learning experiences, moving gradually to become less structured and placing increasing emphasis on self-direction. The particular nature of support required will be informed by the initial profiling and may identify particular needs that will require strategies to help students into the 'learning habit'. The course team will intentionally create an environment where trust and critical friendship could grow and contribute to the development of the online community, anticipating a successful environment for deep learning (Chapman, Ramondt, Smiley 2005). Resources will be produced to support these needs, and to develop study skills required to follow the pathway while students remain in their work context.

6.1.1 Learning facilitator

A named facilitator will act as a consistent point of contact for learners and one of the key aims of this role is to have a positive impact upon retention rates through proactive contact throughout the time of study. In discussing retention, Simpson (2007) reviews the practice of the Open University and other practitioners quoting Anderson "The best predictor of student retention is motivation - retention services need to clarify and build on motivation and address motivation-reducing issues. Most students drop out because of reduced motivation".

It is the responsibility of the facilitator to:

1. At the start of a unit of learning, contact the learner to check for preparedness to study;
2. Identify if there are any particular needs and support learners in developing strategies to deal with them;
3. Monitor learner activity and take supporting action when there is no evidence of participation in the online community over a two week period;
4. Offer moral support and encouragement;
5. Encourage the learner to consider how they will use their existing support networks including family and friends to give encouragement;
6. Model desired behaviour including participation in discussion and critical reflection;
7. Support the learner in the development of their personal development plan and review annually.

6.1.2 Module coordinator

A module coordinator will proactively lead the delivery of a particular module ensuring that the experience has opportunities for purposeful conversations initiated by course staff (Laurillard, 2002):

- The development of resources;
- Organisation of the learning sets;
- Identifying and scheduling of hot seat experts;
- Ensuring inquiry proposals are individually agreed with learners;
- Leading focussed discussions;
- Leading the assessment for the module.

6.1.3 Hot seat guest

Framing a discourse around a need identified by the learner means that it is highly relevant. A hot seat guest responds to questions in such a way as to relate specific questions to theories, concepts and ideas from their given topic. This should include references to research, professional bodies, networks that can be joined and other sources of information. Other community members share their relevant experience asking questions and feedback with the intention of exploring the generic issue at hand through their grounded professional practice or simple desire to learn. Conversation software shows discussions and the relationship of posts to each other in a page Stephen Powell | Richard Millwood, University of Bolton.

view as well as by topics.

6.2 Peer support

6.2.1 Moral support

By building in models that encourage student-student support (mentoring between cohorts, collaborative work, etc.) the direct support for students can be increased without overwhelming university staff. Technology permits rich dialogue and many-to-many discussion and also to free individuals from travel and timetables. Creating community makes effective use of peers, both for moral support, cooperation and as sources of motivation and perseverance.

6.2.1 Learning sets

The framework model proposes that courses establish learning sets with no more than 5 members. Contract the members to support each other for a defined minimum level of commitment. This should include offering as well as receiving critically constructive feedback. This activity should be supported by someone with expertise in the process who will model the behaviour required as well as explain the process and why it is valuable. Feedback should be targeted to particular aspects of the work, identified by those receiving the feedback and by the level of experience of the members of the learning set. All feedback must have the aim of creating the maximum possible positive impact.

In giving support, student researchers should:

- Identify strong aspects of work
- Suggest alternative approaches based on experience
- Identify inconsistencies
- Challenge unfounded assumptions

6.3 Workplace support

6.3.1 Workplace advocate

This is identified by the learner as someone who can support the learner through their studies in identifying relevant of inquiries and helps them with work place practicalities rather than as a mentor. The arrangement is between learner and advocate with the university offering guidance on how this relationship should be managed but not getting directly involved.

6.3.2 Workplace knowledge

Learners will be expected to identify sources of knowledge from colleagues, training and documentation both in the workplace and in its support mechanisms. These sources will be identified in assessment products.

6.3.3 Workplace Action

Learners will be expected to identify stakeholders and those affected by action inquiry, consider all ethical issues and gain appropriate agreements. Such responsibilities will be evidenced in assessment products.

6.3.4 Professional context

Some courses developed through this framework may have specific professional expectations, although in most cases it is anticipated that inter-professional cross-fertilisation is most effective. Ethical issues in the context of health themes are an example of variation that might be anticipated. In these cases such matters will need TO BE IDENTIFIED WHEN SEEKING SPECIFIC COURSE APPROVAL VIA MODIFICATION OF THE IDIBL FRAMEWORK.

7. Management and organisation

Each course definition based on this framework will require a plan for management and organisation which needs TO BE IDENTIFIED WHEN SEEKING SPECIFIC COURSE APPROVAL VIA MODIFICATION OF THE IDIBL FRAMEWORK. The plan should address each of the following responsibilities:

1. Student admissions procedures;
2. Student researcher induction;
3. Programme development;
4. Staffing including CPD;
5. Quality assurance and enhancement including assessment procedures and processes;
6. Student researcher appeals procedure;
7. Learning experience;
8. Development of module resources;
9. Hot seat guests;
10. Technical support for students;
11. Administrative support;
12. Overview of technical infrastructure;
13. Overview of student welfare;
14. Marketing and promotion;
15. Research and evaluation.

Many of these responsibilities will require liaison with University departments where they overlap. The actual team makeup and division of responsibilities is not prescribed, and in some cases course teams may cross-departmental boundaries.

8. Resources

The framework is designed for entirely distance delivery and it is not expected, therefore, that there will be any accommodation or site-bound requirements for student researchers. Other resources TO BE IDENTIFIED WHEN SEEKING SPECIFIC COURSE APPROVAL VIA MODIFICATION OF THE IDIBL FRAMEWORK.

Students researchers will have access to University of Bolton online library services, and access to national university library access schemes offered through the library.

Module learning resources and participation in the online communities will be available 365 days a year enabling students to have a high degree of control over the management of their learning both as individuals and collaboratively. These will be created by the module leaders to support the programme delivery focusing on the explanation of module requirements and the process of action inquiry. The primary approach to learning and teaching is one of conversation and, therefore, is not dependant on high quality published resources.

The programme will be delivered using a core set of learning technology supported by the university with an expectation that student researchers will themselves take advantage of the wide range of Internet technology services available on the Internet.

| Core provision | Other non-exclusive opportunities |
|---|---|
| Assessment drop box | Weblog |
| Website with learning resources | Wiki |
| Hot seat discussion forum | RSS aggregators |
| Module discussion forum | Websites |
| Community forum | Collaborative tools such as Google Docs |
| RSS feeds | Audio/visual communication, e.g. Skype |
| University email for official notifications | Personal Email for learning support |

9. Maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality

Quality assurance procedures TO BE IDENTIFIED WHEN SEEKING SPECIFIC COURSE APPROVAL VIA MODIFICATION OF THE IDIBL FRAMEWORK.

9.1 Learning Facilitator expertise

Each modification of the framework will require a plan for the development of staff and demonstrate through CV that there is sufficient experience within the team to deliver an inquiry-based course online. This needs TO BE IDENTIFIED WHEN SEEKING SPECIFIC COURSE APPROVAL VIA MODIFICATION OF THE IDIBL FRAMEWORK.

Learning facilitators need to be experienced in both the theory and practice of inquiry-based learning supported through online communities. It is recognised that there will likely be the need for staff development for those working within the framework to develop this knowledge and expertise where it does not exist. This will be supported informally through the online community for learning facilitators working across all courses based on the framework. Within this community, experienced mentors will offer help, advice and support for learning facilitators and 'experts' who are working in the communities.

9.2 Experts

As well as learning facilitators, 'experts' will be invited to interact with online learning communities, bringing specific expertise in domains relevant to the students needs. Experts will not be required to possess the skill set of learning facilitators, and experts will be supported by learning facilitators to prepare and carry out their part.

9.3 Quality and Enhancement

As a part of the QA process, an evaluation will be carried out by online student survey at the end of each module. There is also an element of continuous evaluation in the on-line communities through discussion between learning facilitators and student researchers. The evaluation will cover standard University of Bolton questions and additional more specific course related areas determined by the programme team. These forms will formally be monitored and the responses included to form part of the module review shared with the community. At the end of each year these documents, with the annual report from the pathway external examiner, are reviewed to provide an annual course evaluation.

The development of this pathway is an iterative process and is an action research in its own right. Thus in addition to the Quality Assurance procedures outlined above, changes will be made to reflect the needs of the learners based on gathered evidence, analysis and conclusions.

10. Appendices

10.1 References

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