

SCORE Fellowship Final Report By Jane Gay, Kingston University

Repurposing Academic Practice

Jane's project ran from 21st May 2010 until the 28th May 2011, the aim of the project was to intergrate the use of open content into the design, development and delivery of Post Graduate Certificate. For further details see: <http://www8.open.ac.uk/score/fellows/jane-gay>

Activities

- Research - reviewed available OER resources of Engineering/Academic Practice. Interviewed Engineering staff to find out about resources currently used including awareness of OER
- Field research - included interviews with partner institution in KLM, Norwich - to determine needs of participants
- Re-purposed generic materials currently used in face to face delivery.
- Gained permission to re-use third party materials.
- Employed PHd students to film practice - Lectures, seminar workshops, interviews with lecturer and students. Liaised with camera men to determine how to edit the footage.
- Piloted materials with different groups - PhD students in January, Staff groups in different Faculties. Planning to have the unit evaluated by Engineering staff (in-house) and external partners.

Outputs

OER Unit - collated appropriate resources to support academic practice for staff in partner institutions

Findings

Our original proposal was ambitious. Designing and creating materials for on-line use/engagement was more demanding than we had at first thought. The skills (design and technological) required to create

interactive materials of a high quality proved to be beyond our capabilities however, we have managed to re-purpose resources which have been piloted with different groups successfully and some of the materials we have gained permission to use will simply be re-used in their current formats.

It was recognised early on that potential participants would not necessarily have the time or motivation to engage in an online course for 'credit' or for 'assessment' purposes. It was therefore felt that a set of resources that could be used as is, re-used and re-purposed would be more 'useful'. The resources can be blended i.e. incorporated in the taught element of PgCert type courses/CPD training events or identified as a means of support for participants after attendance at a course and in advance of assessment/observation.

SCORE could promote/market OER more aggressively across the sector. Awareness of OER and the use and re-use of OER amongst the target audience - Engineering - was non-existent.

Serious consideration needs to be given to explore how to best label and signpost others to the resource. At the moment, finding the unit is not straight forward. We may need to re-think the title.

Reflection

Working in collaboration has proved to be productive and motivational. We began with a hypothesis that producing a template/generic unit that would be re-purposed by others in the sector would be possible. Following visits and interviews with potential users of the proposed unit it became increasingly obvious that rather than a unit, a set of resources would be more appropriate and more likely to be used.

To undertake an online module (unit) would be demanding and would necessitate the need for a tutor who would facilitate online communication and offer support and this has a resource implication. The partner institution (KLM) could not provide a tutor and at KU we are not able to fund the use of a tutor's time to carry out this role. Clearly, online learning can have a resource implication that we had not taken into account. The findings of the initial, scoping interview with KLM were revealing. Their expectations of 'on'line learning implied that staff would be expected to find time to engage with the 'course' or 'unit' outside of working hours and it was assumed that they would have the motivation and skill level (ability to navigate/access and engage on line). Discussion of this and other issues led us to agree that a combination of face to face attendance at one module at Kingston and then support through access to online resources was likely to better meet their CPD needs.

Subsequent conversations with colleagues in further education colleges (two of our partners) has revealed that access to the resources and some focused face to face sessions is desirable.

The functionality, look and feel of the 'moodle' environment could be improved as it has proved to be somewhat limited. For instance - we are unable to make the buttons on the front page image interactive which would have allowed seamless navigation to the areas of interest. Participants are required to undertake multiple clicks to get to sections and further clicks to return to others. This can be demotivating and may well deter many from re-visiting.

Dissemination

I have 'shown' the unit to colleagues in the Academic Development Centre here at Kingston and I have been asked to introduce it to representatives from our partner institutions at a formal meeting on July 11th. A couple of our partner colleges have asked me to attend CPD training days to showcase the unit. I have secured a place at the DELILA dissemination event at Senate House on 26th July 2011 and will present my poster and discuss the fellowship experience with others. We will be running a workshop at the ALT C conference in September, 2011 which will offer another opportunity to gather feedback on the unit.

Conclusions

Creating an OER to support the CPD (Continuing Professional Development) of those teaching and/or supporting learning in Higher Education has proved to be challenging. We must now consider raising awareness of how such an OER (and others) can be instrumental in this process. Locating and then making use of this OER will, ideally, require mediation - perhaps in the form of a tutor, whether that be online or face to face. Raising awareness of the availability of such a resource alongside the challenge of sustaining the unit has resourcing implications which will need addressing.

Commercially produced, high quality CPD academic practice resources are now available. Epigeum are marketing a plethora of online courses that HEIs might find very attractive given current budget constraints. The availability of these resources represents quite a challenge for those of us in Academic Development roles in the sector.

Summary

HEIs across the sector strive to establish, develop and maintain collaborative provision with partner institutions. According to the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) approximately 10

percent of UK higher education is provided in further education colleges. Additionally courses are run with both private providers in the UK and partner institutions worldwide . Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE) of provision remain important features of these partnerships. Many universities seek ways of providing their staff, including partner institution staff with flexible access to Continuing Professional Development opportunities to ensure that both QA and QE is assured.

Postgraduate Certificates in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education are currently offered at many HEIs. While such provision meets the needs of many staff who teach or support learning in HE, there are many more who would benefit from engagement with aspects of the course but whose working conditions preclude regular face to face attendance. These groups include part time staff, staff in partner FE colleges who deliver HE programmes and staff who offer franchised programmes in industry.

This unit offers generic, re-purposed content including an index to discipline specific OERs which offer institutions and individuals the opportunity to access and/or adapt resources that introduce participants to learning and teaching practice in HE. These resources have been trialed with a range of staff in one HEI.

This OER therefore offers the prospect of influencing teaching and learning practice within the wider HE community by offering resources to a significant group of teaching staff. As an existing community of practice, this group of staff can take advantage of OER developments first hand whilst taking the ideas and materials back to their respective subject areas and Faculties. By promoting the advantages of “openness” and the sharing of existing resources, this community is provided with an opportunity to use open content in practice. The challenge now is finding mechanisms to promote the existence of this unit in a timely and effective way whilst simultaneously keeping it up to date.