Striving for excellence – embedding institutional enhancement for positive impact on the learner journey

Geoff Layer and Alex Hopkins

The University of Opportunity

Striving for excellence – embedding institutional enhancement for positive impact on the learner journey

- The HEI in question
- Developing a shared understanding of institutional enhancement
- The data – analysis
- The data – consequences
- External review – friend or foe
- Continuation, sustainability, inclusion and excellence

The University of Wolverhampton

Our vision

- To be The Opportunity University – renowned for our creativity and innovation – developing students and staff who are entrepreneurial, eminently employable and well connected within a research and professionally informed environment

Our mission

To be an employer-focused university connected with our local, national and global communities delivering opportunity and academic excellence

Campus presence in all corners of the region

- Wolverhampton (N, S and Engineering)
- Walsall
- Telford
- Stafford
- Burton

Goals

- Pursue academic excellence and scholarship

- Enhance the employability of our students

- Be collaborative, innovative and enterprising

- Be internationally orientated

Staff in 4 faculties and 6 directorates

Staff group	No.	%
Admin, Professional	1,182	49.73
Academic	820	34.50
Manual	375	15.77
Total	**2,377**	

Working patterns	No.	%
Full-time	1,690	71.10
Part-time	687	28.90
Total	**2,377**	

Gender	No.	%
Female	1,393	58.60
Male	984	41.40
Total	**2,377**	

Ethnicity	No.	%
White – British	1,870	78.67
Asian or Asian British – Indian	199	8.37
Other white background	60	2.52
Black or Black British – Caribbean	73	3.07
Black or Black British – African	28	1.18
White Irish	28	1.18
Asian other	18	0.76
Chinese	17	0.72
Mixed – White & Black Caribbean	14	0.59
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	12	0.50
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	11	0.46
Ethnic other	10	0.42
Black other	9	0.38
Other mixed background	8	0.34
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0.21
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0.13
Not known	5	0.21
Prefer not to answer	7	0.29
Total	**2,377**	

Students

- Now at 23,000
- 95% employability
- 82% NSS (Q22)
- 56% GHO
- L4-L6 progression approximately 80%
- Retention increasing (attrition <10%)

Level of study	Full-time	Part-time	Combined
Undergraduate	12,484	4,232	16,716
Postgraduate taught	1,685	2,180	3,865
Postgraduate research	152	177	329
Total	**14,321**	**6,589**	**20,910**

Students Taught Overseas (TNE)	Full-time	Part-time	Combined
Undergraduate	562	693	1,255
Postgraduate	252	193	445
Total	**814**	**886**	**1,700**

Ethnicity	Total.	%
White	12,134	58.0
Asian Indian	1,850	8.9
Black African	1,528	7.3
Asian Pakistani	1,485	7.1
Black Caribbean	881	4.2
Other Asian background	543	2.6
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	395	1.9
Asian Bangladeshi	320	1.5
Asian Chinese	274	1.3
Other Black background	216	1.0
Mixed – White and Asian	155	0.7
Other mixed background	125	0.6
Mixed – White and Black African	54	0.3
Not known	632	3.1
Other	318	1.5
Grand Total	**20,910**	

Gender	No.	%
Female	12,437	59.5
Male	8,471	40.5
Information refused	2	0.0
Total	**20,910**	

The landscapes

Strategic Plan 2012-2017

SECURING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

AN INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING & STUDENT FINANCE.

18 October 2010

www.independent.gov.uk/browne-report

2010-2011 all change

• External

Fees and funding

Teacher education

Health (nursing) education

STEM

Recession biting

QAA Code and new methodology

RAE to REF

Coalition government

• Internal

New VC – new strategy

Academic units – some movement

Subject groups – some review

Increased focus on collaboration UK and international

Increased focus on student experience driving the need to understand this better

Enhancement – in focus

- Enhancement – has become an increasingly nuanced concept in the world of HE. The simple common parlance definitions include:

- *to improve the quality, amount, or strength of something*
- *a surgical procedure to increase the size of …*
- *an increase or improvement in quality, value, or extent*

The QAA requirement for a positive judgement of enhancement activity is that actions taken to enhance are both deliberative and systematic.

Our past history of enhancement activity certainly met the first requirement in that it was deliberative. What posed a greater challenge was to make it systematic. The moves made to try and improve things across the organisation were deemed by us to be insufficient.

Enhancement and the changing landscape

Previous approach

- School Executive assumes responsibility for course development, monitoring and management through usual devolved approach
- Reports on performance of academic portfolio to University Executive Team (and Board of Governors) provided at the global level based on UCAS data, HESA returns, NSS, REF (RAE), HEFCE funding arrangements, DLHE
- Largely focused on institutional level data reports with lower level reports available to the academic units for local performance management. School Deans engaged in subject level dialogue where issues identified

- New Strategic Plan
- KPIs
- Improvement
- An emerging model for enhancement

    + use of BI

Different landscape, different approach

Developing a new approach

- Presentation of course-based stats to Faculty leadership teams bi-annually
- Faculty performance review bi-annually with VC AG and DAGs
- Faculty prepares review summary following internal critical analysis
- Focus on course and subject level data
- Aim: Dialogue around issues, action planning to address issues, at the level *experienced by students*
- Focus on the course identity
- Focus on cross institution comparison
- *Increasing focus on external comparisons*

Denison et al 2012

Data analysis of the student life-cycle

We scrutinised:

- Applications to enrolments (faculty and course)

- Retention and progression by: Faculty, subject group and course and by Faculty, level and subject group plus faculty summary and University summary

- GHO by faculty and course

- Student evaluations – NSS and ISS by faculty and course, increasingly at module level

- DLHE report
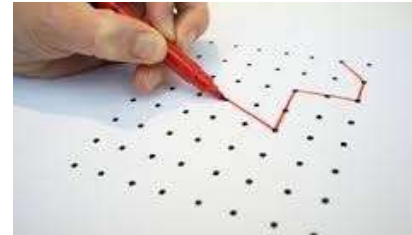
- Development of action plans
- Peer review completion data
- HEA/professional recognition

In the spirit of support, development and sharing the data are available faculty to faculty.

Consequences: Shared look at the data – faculty develops strategic plans for the following period, the strategic plans are reviewed by VC AG and the heads and directors of corporate services who then develop their own plans to support faculty plans

Initial findings

Some interesting finds

- Faculty summary for comparison
- 3 previous years for comparison
- Progression (cohort) data for 3 years (Course and School)
- GHO by School, subject and course for 3 years
- NSS all questions for 3 years by School and course (using University and sector averages for comparison)
- HEA membership be School and faculty using sector for comparison
- DLHE comparison within and with sector over 3 years

- The outliers are easy to spot – all good metrics or all poor – the variance between is a finding in itself and was sometimes starkly different within a subject group or suite of courses delivered by the same staff group
- The courses and subjects where no clear patterns existed were perplexing

Data analysis reveals

e.g. 1 High entry tariff, good conversion of applicants to enrolled, poor progression from L4 to L5, good progression L5 to L6, GHO, high employability. High satisfaction and employability.

e.g. 2 Lower entry tariff, average retention at L4, average progression from L5 to to L6, poorer GHO and employability, average satisfaction.

Arguably clear what is going on?

- The dialogue helped everyone to interpret these trends and reflect on what might be done to improve things for students on the outlier (lower metrics) courses but also on what targeted action and support might be developed where courses had a mixed picture.

- The enhancement approach we have adopted was borne partly out of this activity as we developed a better understanding of course performance.

What are the inconsistencies?

- The new approach aided identification of inconsistency, variance and trends related to the student life-cycle and experience
- It was also providing insight into module and course specific issues and more broadly, faculty and university issues
- Detailed analysis of the student body also revealed a strong trend to 'commuter students' 80% being from within a 25 mile radius
- Over time it could be argued that inconsistencies were increasing…

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What is the trend?

- The previous position: Institutional Audit 2008 (QAA) …it would be desirable if the University could:

'*develop a more strategic approach to the enhancement of learning opportunities across the University, to include the development of a systematic means of dissemination of good practice across the University'*

But before that… identified as a feature of good practice…

interlinking of structures and processes that generally promote consistency of practice and facilitate enhancement; (QAA 2004)

From 2004 to 2008 – no discernible changes, yet our position was different – what had '*organisational learning'* (Watson and Maddison, 2005) contributed?

So what?

Change

The organisational structure

The focus on systematic and deliberative change for improvement

The organisational
 culture

Student support
mechanisms

Develop

Re-conceptualise the University – WP to inclusive

Improvement plans based on student academic experience (all metrics associated with the life-cycle) in a joined up approach

Scope all development activity to spot and sweat alignment for a potentially better impact and outcome e.g. the learner analytics project to be aligned to the personal tutor development review and the digital campus programme – identification of possible and/or critical dependencies

So what?
(Embrace)external scrutiny – friend or foe?

4 areas of judgement

1 Setting and maintaining academic standards (Pt A of the Code)

2 Assuring and enhancing academic quality (Pt B of the Code)

3 Information about higher education provision (part C)

4 Enhancement

- 4 types of judgement
- Is commended
- Meets UK expectations
- Requires improvement to meet UK expectations
- Does not meet UK expectations

Now what? Identify obstructions, build a new (virtual) infrastructure

- How can the poorest performing courses be improved? How can the best performing courses influence others? How can the courses with mixed performance remain good where good and improve where not so good?

- Simply, what framework do we need to ensure we are enhancing teaching, learning and assessing?

- The strategic plan (LTA) is there, but isn't being 'felt' by staff and students (and the QAA!)

Now what might derail us?

- Academic tribal responses – pharmacy, engineering and drama
- Resistance to change in general
- Strong union response to some of the proposed changes (centre v periphery)
- Unable to attract people to the new roles proposed
- Failure to achieve accreditor status with the HEA
- Lack of buy-in from staff
- Lack of opportunity to collaborate – the RAM
- Structural silos and divisions
- Split and different campuses and estate
- General organisational culture

Our response – bringing together, creating and *embedding*

- Leadership development (E)
- Optimise the consequences of the restructure (X-faculty third space roles*) (E)
- Continue to invest in attainment champions/DiSA (E)
- Develop new roles (X-University ADs and GTAs x 40)(E)
- Support professional accreditation (goal = 100% by 2017) (E)
- Pedagogic with subject specific research (CoL&T) (E)

* Whitchurch (2015)

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Results

In 3 years:

- Student recruitment has increased
- Student retention has increased and exceeds benchmark of 10.3%
- Student progression from L4 to L5 has increased (not as much as we would like)
- Student progression from L5 to L6 has increased
- GHO have increased by 10.2% over 3y
- Student employability has improved and is now 95% (DLHE 2015) a10% increase over 3y
- Student satisfaction is 82%, not as high as we would like (NSS 2015)
- 42% of eligible staff have HEA fellowship and we have KUDOS a 6% increase in 1y and 15% higher than sector
- We have 37 full time GTAs, a Course Leader research project and 2 new CoPs

University of Wolverhampton

QAA
UK Quality Assured

Latest review Download report

Higher Education Review: University of Wolverhampton, February 2015

Judgements about standards and quality

- The setting and maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards at the provider meet UK expectations
- The quality of student learning opportunities at the provider meets UK expectations.
- The quality of the information produced by the provider about its provision meets UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities at the provider is commended.

Report published   April 2015

Important note

In response to the findings highlighted in this review report, the provider has published an action plan (opens in a new window).

Impact – on track

- The tale of pharmacy, engineering and drama
- Realisation from many that change has come from the external landscape as much as the internal
- No shortage of applicants (over 175 for the GTAs)
- KUDOS
- Nothing like a QAA cyclical review to help bonding and developing buy in
- RAM review to support collaboration
- Strong moves to facilitate silo melt – X University focus
- Organisational development using Denison's model

- *Academic tribal responses*
- *Resistance to change in general*
- *Strong union response to some of the proposed changes (centre v periphery)*
- *Unable to attract people to the new roles proposed*
- *Failure to achieve accreditor status with the HEA*
- *Lack of buy in from staff*
- *Lack of opportunity to collaborate – the RAM*
- *Structural silos and divisions and split and different campuses and estate*
- *General organisational culture*

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Summary and next steps

- Undertaking institutional self analysis to help develop the strategic approach (3y of data collection and analysis)

- Focus on the student life-cycle metrics and the experiences of stakeholders (e.g. students, course leaders and GTAs)

- Develop an approach that is embedded *where the student experience is felt* – at module and course level, within faculties

- Evaluation of the approach built in to annual and periodic planning

- Continue to focus on the enhancement infrastructure

- Strong programme of well aligned development projects such as review of the academic regulatory framework, quality processes, leadership development, digital campus, personal tutoring and personalised timetables

- Precursor to refocus on the approaches to curriculum and teaching development (TEF?)

Sky over the West Midlands

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Questions?

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