

## PROFESSIONAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME *FDTL3 23/99*

**The Professional Scholarship Programme (PSP)** is being developed with the purpose of enhancing the key skills, career management abilities and scholarship required for successful lifelong learning by autonomous professionals. The background to this FDTL3 project is directly linked to the QAA Subject Overview Report for Agriculture, Forestry and Agricultural Sciences. The report recommends that there is scope for further integration of the teaching of transferable skills into most curricula, and for making such skills development explicit to students throughout their training. Writtle College and Harper Adams University College are both specialist institutions with a long history of preparing people for careers in the land based industries, and possess complementary experiences in the development of such transferable skills. Joint development of the PSP, which will become an integral part of all undergraduate programmes at these Institutions, will build on achievements applauded by QAA subject reviewers.

The design is based on a strand of modules which run throughout under-graduate programmes from years one to four. These modules include Effective Communication, Introductory, Intermediate and Advanced Research Methods, and Career Development. An Individual Project module, which can take the form of either a Dissertation or an Investigational Project, and a placement period, incorporating work-based learning and assessment are also major segments in the programme. A profiling system will be developed to encourage students to take personal ownership of the development of these skills. Completion of the programme will provide tangible evidence that students have attained six key skills (communication, numeracy, IT, team work, problem solving and learner autonomy) through the award of the Certificate of Professional Skills.

Tangible outputs will be in the form of paper-based (although available on disk) and on-line teaching packs, which will be developed in discrete units allowing tutors to select particular elements or use the module material in its entirety. Materials will include module descriptors with learning outcomes, lesson plans, presentation slides, assessment briefs, student exercises and supportive illustrations, within the context of the land-based industries.

The programme of work is well underway, with teaching packs from the first module, Effective Communication, currently in use by fourteen tutors in four institutions. Development of the modules and profiling system is phased over a period of three years, with each module trialled and evaluated before revision and further development as an on-line resource. It is intended that key teaching staff will be engaged in the development and review of the PSP, and that similar programmes and good practice in other disciplines and sectors will be investigated. We also hope to engage other HEIs in the participation of this project, therefore encourage any readers who would like more details to contact us.

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## THE REAL-WORLD PROJECT *FDTL3 39/99*

**REAL-WORLD** is an initiative that has the principal aim of enhancing the employability of students by integrating work-related learning activities into the curriculum. **Work-related learning can include activities such as placements, industrial visits, live projects, case materials, mentoring schemes. REAL-WORLD has a national focus and is concentrating on the subject areas of Agriculture, Forestry, Agricultural Sciences and the Organismal Biosciences.**

REAL-WORLD is based at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne with project staff from the Faculty of Agriculture and Biological Sciences and the Academic Development Unit at Newcastle, and the School of Sciences at the University of Sunderland.

### GOOD PRACTICE

A key feature of REAL-WORLD is the development of a good practice guide that will draw from the experiences and expertise of the academic and business community involved in the appropriate subject areas. Using the guide as a base, REAL-

## THE TALESSI PROJECT: AND LEARNING AT THE SCIENCE-SOCIETY INTERFACE

### *Promoting active learning for interdisciplinarity, values awareness and critical thinking*

**Based at the University of Greenwich, and supported by HEFCE's 'Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning', the TALESSI project aims to promote active learning for interdisciplinarity, values awareness and critical thinking in higher education.**

- ▶ **ACTIVE LEARNING:** learning and teaching which promotes students' active engagement and 'deep' learning
- ▶ **INTERDISCIPLINARITY:** the capacity to integrate knowledge derived from disciplines which may hold very diverse views as to what 'counts' as valid knowledge
- ▶ **VALUES AWARENESS:** the ability to identify and analyse explicitly-stated, and 'hidden', values in academic debate
- ▶ **CRITICAL THINKING:** the means to reveal and question the problematic and often contestable character of 'knowledge claims' which contribute to academic debate and student learning

WORLD will encourage and support the practical uptake of work-related learning into the curriculum. For employers and support organisations, REAL-WORLD will act as a link to ensure that skill requirements and concerns are reflected in the integration of work-related learning.

The initial workshop was hosted in December 2000. Participants from a range of institutions contributed to a 'conceptual framework' which will form the basis for identifying examples of good practice in work-related learning. Details of the areas covered at the workshop, including a copy of the conceptual framework, are included in the report on good practice which is available at the address below. An initial report is also available which is concerned with establishing criteria for good practice in work-related learning.

#### FOR ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS

- ▶ Access a good practice guide based on case studies. Participate in the development of the guide to ensure that innovations in work-related learning can be communicated to a variety of institutions;
- ▶ Take advantage of the support, guidance and funding REAL-WORLD offers regarding the development of work-related learning;

- ▶ Share your experience and views with other practitioners via REAL-WORLD.

#### FOR EMPLOYERS

- ▶ Access and contribute to the good practice guide and ensure that it reflects your needs for a skilled workforce;
- ▶ Participate in the framework for establishing good practice in work-related learning;
- ▶ Form relationships with departments who are committed to meeting the skill requirements for graduates;
- ▶ Work with REAL-WORLD to develop work-related learning initiatives

#### RECEIVE OUR INITIAL REPORT ON GOOD PRACTICE

We have prepared an initial report that is concerned with establishing criteria for good practice in work-related learning. This is available free of charge. *To request your copy or to find out more about REAL WORLD please email us at the address below.*

**Robert Walker, REAL-WORLD, Careers Service,  
University of Newcastle** email [r.g.walker@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:r.g.walker@ncl.ac.uk)

## TEACHING THE ENVIRONMENT- INTERFACE

### interdisciplinarity, values

FDTLI 38/96

The project developed from our experiences of teaching controversial environmental issues such as global climate change. Our approach seeks to promote critical thinking about competing 'knowledge claims', emanating from academia and beyond, in such a way as to reveal their underlying values and other assumptions, and the not infrequent uncertainty, provisionality and contestability of those claims.

We have developed a portfolio of on-line Teaching and Learning Resources (TLRs) in support of this aim. TLRs are self-contained teaching packages, which include learning outcomes, learning activities, stimulus materials etc.

TALESSI's environmental focus is, to some extent, less important than our 'generic' educational aim – namely the cultivation of interdisciplinarity, values awareness and critical thinking. Indeed several TLRs focus principally on a specific academic skill, more so than on a topic per se.

Arguably, our approach is applicable to a wide range of subjects. Over the past four years, these principles and resources have been tested with staff and students in a range of disciplines, from Biology to Business and Physics to Philosophy. Some participants'

comments are shown below.

We also undertake workshops, departmental visits, and a programme of TLR piloting and user evaluation. We can pay up to £100 for each TLR that is evaluated, with our prior agreement.

#### PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS ON THE TALESSI PROJECT

*"I am very much in favour of the critical approach the TALESSI project has been developing. I am pleased to see the students developing this skill."*

*"For all tutors who ask me 'what should I give the students a tutorial on?', I will refer them immediately to the TALESSI web site."*

*"The TALESSI project has made my teaching more focused and less boring."*

*"I like the way the TLRs address the philosophy of science and the way we think about environmental science."*

*"The fear of alienating 'hard' science staff could be a problem with some TLRs."*

*"All TLRs have to be integrated into course programmes; they don't stand alone."*

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