

# LEARNING DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OVERVIEW FORM

Project title	Student induction and core skills survey			Project ID No	CLAD – HIST040
Strategy area/theme	Historical studies				
Start date	June 2006	Completion date	September 2007		
Project type	Learner enhancement project				
Level		Programme of study			
Aims	<p>The main aims of this research are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seek out good practice in inducting students into the higher education learning environment</li> <li>• review good practice in embedding skills into the curriculum</li> <li>• review currently available learning resources in study skills that academics can adapt for their own subject areas</li> </ul> <p>This research will provide the ground work for the larger Learner Independence Project that will be run by the Schools of Historical Studies and Humanities. The main outcome of the research will be to produce a report of the key findings and to make recommendations in the development and implementation of the Learner Independence Project Action Plan.</p>				
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. to review best practice in student induction both within the University and beyond. To include any best practice with pre-induction</li> <li>2. to carry out a literature search of best practice in embedding key skills into the curriculum</li> <li>3. to research best practice in the development and embedding of key skills across the University of Birmingham</li> <li>4. to research best practice in the development and embedding of key skills on similar courses run by other universities/LTSNs and CETLs,</li> <li>5. to review relevant learning resources for the development of key skills and make recommendations for their use on the Learner Independence project</li> <li>6. make recommendations for the development and implementation of the Learner Independence Action Plan to produce a final report</li> </ol>				
Overview	<p>The implementation of an ongoing process of undergraduate induction is necessary if that student is to make a successful transition to university and to experience an enhanced learning experience whilst there. That process is likely to take <b>at least one year</b>.</p> <p>The acquisition of core skills – writing, reading, collating and processing information, thinking critically, verbal communication, working to deadlines etc. – is a key part of the induction process and must be <b>‘flagged up’</b> as such. <b>Embedding</b> the teaching of these skills in the curriculum serves to emphasise their role in the university learning experience, whilst developing them in the context of <b>PDP</b> emphasises their importance for the student’s employability after university. The use of an <b>ePortfolio</b> platform (preferably sitting within WebCT) is recommended for this but it should take place in the context of active (possibly pro-active) <b>personal tutor</b> and <b>class tutor</b> involvement. There is no substitute for a good tutor-student relationship in successful induction.</p> <p>These steps would go some way towards providing the enhanced quality of <b>feedback</b> that students increasingly expect. Different forms of <b>assessment</b> may also be necessary to meet this perceived need for feedback. Short written assignments and</p>				

	<p>multiple-choice ‘quizzes’ have been introduced in some HEIs. These appear to be successful in capturing the imagination of a putative ‘middle rank’ of students which might otherwise be at risk of becoming unmotivated or failing in confidence. The likelihood of their motivating and drawing in the lowest-scoring percentile of students is much less certain. There is some evidence that assignments with ‘<b>instant marking</b>’, possibly in-class ‘quizzes’ or regular activities requiring a shorter attention span, go some way towards meeting these students’ learning needs.</p> <p>The report also recommends that Schools undertake to discover the ‘<b>learning backgrounds</b>’ of their students in order to ascertain any discrepancy between student and staff expectations of the way that knowledge is acquired, processed and disseminated. Ideally, this should take place with every intake of students and should be part of the induction process. The establishment of a <b>structured dialogue</b> with students at the beginning of their university careers is likely to yield dividends for their overall learning experience and to promote a more responsible and realistic attitude towards learner independence on the part of the student. Ideally, too, it would highlight areas of learning experience and core skill acquisition which could readily be enhanced by the university without having to return to first principles.</p> <p>The report sounds several caveats, the most important of which is perhaps the need to avoid simply adding to the mountainous <b>quantities of information</b> that students are exposed to, without simultaneously providing them with the skills to sift and to process that information.</p> <p>There are <b>three appendices</b> to the report: Appendix 1 comprises a representative sample of external online resources for exploring induction processes and the embedding of core skills in the curriculum; Appendix 2 comprises a database of analogous online University of Birmingham resources; Appendix 3 comprises the principal results of focus groups carried out with first year students in September 2006.</p>
Further Information	<p>For further information on this project please contact CLAD at University of Birmingham</p> <p><a href="mailto:cladprojects@contacts.bham.ac.uk">cladprojects@contacts.bham.ac.uk</a> quoting CLAD projects HIST040</p>