

Portfolio 26

Project Acronym: Co-educate

Version: 3

Contact: Stephen Powell

Date: 18th May, 2009



JISC Project Plan

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1. Background

Traditional models of curriculum design are predicated upon the notion of the educational professional as expert. The curriculum of Continuing Professional Development is therefore usually ‘handed down’ to employers and employees as fixed and non-negotiable. The University of Bolton’s (UoB) strategic aim is to be a Professional, Employer and Community Facing University where the needs of employers and learners drive both curriculum content and mode of delivery.

The University intends that its academic practitioners will deliver professional higher education in partnership and in negotiation with employers and learners. This model is at the heart of a revolutionary approach to Continuing Professional Development (already underway) that will empower purchasers of higher-level skills to participate in the design and accreditation of their own learning and determine the time and place in which it is delivered. The JISC call enables us to focus our staff on a re-engineering of the professional curriculum.

In this model, the starting point for curriculum development and design is the needs of the learner (and their organisation) negotiated and delivered in partnership with full recognition of in-work and experiential learning. This curriculum re-engineering is vital to our institutional strategic mission, informs our strategic dialogue with HEFCE about employer co-funding expansion.

We already have a major stake in employer led and work-based programmes through our work with sector skills councils, professional bodies, the NHS, the Employer Based Training Accreditation (EBTA) framework and the Greater Manchester Lifelong Learning Network with over 50% of our students studying part-time. This platform is the basis for our strategic transformation into an

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employer facing university with the agile curriculum design and delivery systems to underpin our mission. The JISC call is therefore a timely catalyst for our institutional curriculum remodelling.

2. Aims and Objectives

Aim

Within the life-cycle of the Coeducate project develop a technologically supported approach to programme development that is efficient, agile and responsive to purchaser and learner needs while protecting the rigour and quality of the existing validation mechanisms.

Objectives:

1. understanding the curriculum development problem at UoB;
2. identify tools and processes for course development & curriculum design across the UoB & with stakeholders;
3. implementation of new tools and processes across the UoB;
4. raise awareness & build capacity of staff to critically examine and develop work-based curricula across the UoB;
5. support staff to embed inquiry-based approaches & negotiated learning in work-based programmes offered by the UoB.

3. Overall Approach

Our approach is to undertake a complete review of the curriculum development process across the university. This will span initial identification of curricular need through to validation and will enable us to implement targeted interventions to enable a streamlined, dynamic and responsive curriculum development. The review will necessarily involve modelling academic, departmental and whole university processes, and will provide baseline data to allow comparison with other institutions and the COVARM reference model. Following the review we will work with staff and schools to develop processes and adapt technologies. These processes will include support for developing new ideas for courses, examining their fit with existing provision, and course planning. Tools will be implemented to support these, based on existing JISC work (Phoebe in particular), but reworked to support the CPD, inquiry-based, work-focussed approaches we are proposing to adopt. All new courses will comply to the XCRI specification. The project will not directly address activities supporting the delivery of programmes.

A multimethodology systems approach will be applied to the problem identification and interventions. This approach seeks to identify divergent views and to accommodate individuals in a collaborative endeavour to problem solve and arrive at consensual solutions.

Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) – the approach developed by Peter Checkland is essentially a form of participatory action research. As such, its strengths lie in the joint identification of a shared issue and the changes required by individuals to bring about an improvement in an organisation. This overall approach will be used throughout the project as iterative cycles of actions to make improvements on those that went before. Inherent in action research approach is the evaluation of and reflection on actions taken by problem solving participants.

Viable Systems Model (VSM) – the approach developed by Stafford Beer offers a powerful analytical tool for our project in helping us to understand the UoB as a system as a whole. In particular this includes the feedback mechanisms that seek to coordinate the strategic objectives of the organisation through operational management layer and into the design of courses. This background work will be used to help problem solving participants understand the problem so that subsequent actions as a part of SSM will be better informed and planned.

Strategic Options Development Analysis (SODA) – the approach developed by Eden and Ackerman is based on cognitive mapping to develop models and uses software like Decision Explorer to enable analysis. Similarly to the VSM, this will be used to help problem solving participants work towards options for tackling curriculum design problems.

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Indicative pilot course developments

Institute for Educational Cybernetics – Masters in Learning with Technology, started September 2008
 Department for the Built Environment and Engineering – Pathways in Regeneration and Sustainable Communities validated in November 2008

Department for Arts, Media and Education – Foundation Degree in Management of Administration for Education and Training

Critical success factors include:

- cross-institutional buy-in to developing new curriculum design processes and practices
- efficacy of the technological solutions introduced to support the development process
- level of purchaser engagement with the curriculum development process

4. Project Outputs

Deliverables	Knowledge and experience gained
1. Detailed project plan	
2. Report on baseline data, incorporating models of existing processes with a bearing on curriculum development	Capacity building across the UoB in the use of multimethodology systems approach to the problem of curriculum design.
3. Detailed requirements document identifying areas of process change and supporting actions: validation procedures and frameworks; credit based award schemes; staff development actions; technological systems	Collective view from all stakeholders on which strategic actions are needed to improve curriculum design processes in the university.
4. Explicated course development process	Detailed understanding of complete course development process in the university, from conception to validation. This will include as appropriate: case studies, vignettes, multimedia & web-based resources from different user group perspectives.
5. Transparent online form based course development system, incorporating pedagogical and technological choices.	Capacity building with stakeholders including employers in the development of work-focussed HE programmes.
6. A number of discoverable and interoperable learning technology tools (widgets), hosted on local server (Widget server).	Identification of a number of small applications that would enhance learning activities and course design in the universities.
7. Professional Development Framework	Report on the development of credit based awards framework.
8. Curriculum development 'handbook' pulling together project findings	Online resource for teachers, course developers, operational & senior managers.
9. Evaluative reports on development of new courses: Masters in Learning with Technology; Foundation Degree in Management of Administration for Education and Training; FD in Regeneration and Sustainable Communities	Information of the effectiveness of strategies to address the challenges of successful embedding of innovations in curriculum design and delivery especially the preparedness of educational institutions, workplaces and individuals to embrace them in juxtaposed to UK government policy and rhetoric.
10. A report describing the impact of inquiry-based learning in the workplace, and how it meets the needs of changing learner and employer needs.	Deeper understanding and experience of the role of enquiry for employees working in a range of workplaces and contexts, and its value for employers.
11. Jisc interim reports.	Ongoing description of project actions and outcomes.
12. Jisc final report.	A case study on a successfully completed

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	university-wide curriculum re-design process, incorporating recommendations for others seeking to implement similar innovations.
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5. Project Outcomes

The Coeducate project was informed from the start by the UoB strategic development plan, and as such its actions form an integral part of that around employer engagement, work-based learning, and the development of new and innovative curricula.

The SSM approach will ensure that any actions for improvement are identified and developed by the problem solving participants, as such there will not be an attempt to impose project solutions. The buy-in from departments, central supporting units and the championing of the project by the Vice Chancellors office will also ensure that changes are in-line with the development plan of the university and as such have as good a chance of being embedded in policies and practice as is realistically possible. Project outcomes listed below are indicative of the likely interventions, but will be refined through activities in work-package 2 (2: Understanding the initial issue or challenge and identifying the changes desired by the end of the project).

Indicative project outcomes:

1. rich picture of the curriculum development process at UoB & outlining possible strategic interventions;
2. amended and improved technical systems to support curriculum development;
3. simplified and streamlined curriculum development processes;
4. increased capacity for development of curriculum relevant to purchaser needs including delivery, teaching and assessment approaches;
5. increased employer understanding of and engagement with Higher Education in the development of work-based programmes of learning;
6. new courses that enable new groups of students to access Higher Education;
7. use of inquiry-based and negotiated learning approaches across the UoB work-based learning portfolio.

Mapping of Coeducate project intended outcomes to Jisc programme outcomes

JISC Programme	Coeducate project
1. The anticipated outcomes from this programme of work are:	
Improved understanding at practitioner and senior management level of effective curriculum design, and of how design processes can be supported by technology to help the institution achieve its strategic objectives;	1, 2, 4
Evidence of learners achieving their goals through participation in flexible, appropriate, well-designed and learner-led curricula across a range of discipline areas;	6, 7
Enhanced curriculum design processes in place which support flexible delivery to meet diverse and changing learner requirements;	6, 7, 3
Enhanced institutional processes in place which support educational innovation and contribute to the delivery of national policy on lifelong learning, skills and widening participation;	3
Domain knowledge, reusable models of processes and practice, and user requirements to support the continuing development of a technical infrastructure for the whole curriculum lifecycle;	1, 2, 3
The stimulation of positive and informed change in curriculum	4, 5

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design processes in the sector through enhanced capacity, knowledge and skills in the use of technology to support curriculum design;	
Enhanced understanding of how the use of technology in the curriculum design process can lead to tangible benefits in terms of efficiencies, enhancement of the student and staff experience, and other key changes in what institutions can offer learners ¹ , to inform the decision-making of JISC and institutions.	2

6. Stakeholder Analysis

Internal Stakeholders	Interest / stake	Strategy for involvement	Importance
1. Peter Marsh: Deputy Vice Chancellor	Project sponsor	Chair of steering group	high
2. Staff on UoB Teaching and Learning Sabbaticals	Liaison with departments over project implementation	Members of project Design Group	high
3. Departmental heads	Responsible for overview of curriculum	Individual meetings and input into University Executive Committee through project director	high
4. Paul Birkett (Dean Quality Assurance and Enhancement)	Changes to validation processes	Regular individual meetings	high
5. Principal Lecturers (Quality and Programme design)	Middle management layer responsible for curricula innovations	Project manager regular input into PL management meetings	high
6. Carole Sykes (Head of Student Data Management)	New patterns of study challenge processes and practices for collecting fees and drawing down Hefce contribution		high
7. Course designers and developers: Marie Norman, Margaret Nelson	Developing new courses and programmes.	IDIBL project activities and events including supporting colleagues through validation process & online course focussing in Inquiry-based learning	high
8. Patrick O'Reilly: Head of Information Systems and Technology	Technological developments will require his active support	Regular individual meetings	high
9. Mike Lomas (Head of Collaborative Partnerships and Employer Engagement)	New approaches to employer engagement	Regular individual meetings	high
10. Sue Burkinshaw (Educational Development Unit Co-	Runs sabbatical programme and is a key link to maintaining engagement	Regular individual meetings & contribution to CPD activities	medium

¹ The CAMEL tangible benefits of e-learning project explored some of the benefits which institutions have experienced through appropriate use of e-learning. A briefing on this work is available at:

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/publications/bptangiblebenefitsv1.aspx>.

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ordinator)	with staff on sabbaticals		
11. Nigel Hill (Director of Marketing and Communications)	Responsible for promotion and marketing of new courses	Regular individual meetings	medium
12. UoB teaching staff	Deliverers of programmes and pathways	CPD activities	medium
External stakeholders			
1. JISC	Funding body	Attending Curriculum Design & other JISC sponsored events	medium
2. Other curriculum design projects	Sharing findings, engaging in discussion, shared understanding. Interest in tools, approaches and resources developed.	Attending Curriculum Design & other JISC sponsored events	low
3. Other HE and FE institutions	Potential customers for the guidance and tools the project develops	Conference presentations	low

7. Risk Analysis

The risk register will be included as a standing item on project steering group meetings where risks will be monitored and advice given to project team on how they might be managed.

Risk	Probability (1-5)	Severity (1-5)	Score (P x S)	Action to Prevent/Manage Risk
Creep of project scope away from project aims and objectives	2	4	8	Use steering group to keep project on track and aligned with its initial aim – amending objectives only after careful consideration and consultation with project stakeholders.
Lack of commitment and active engagement of problem solving participants over four year duration of the project	2	4	8	Project manager and project director to actively pursue relationship building across the university and to review level of engagement regularly with project design group
Not being able to secure the time commitment from colleagues to undertake work-packages 3-5	2	4	8	Work closely with the project design group who represent the various departments and functions of the University. Identify detailed work-packages required for 2009-10 and negotiate individual's contributions concurrently with the university planning cycle
Inability to embed project outputs in organisational policies, practices and procedures	2	5	10	Keep Deputy Vice Chancellor apprised of progress so that high-level support can quickly be brought to bear on issues. Ensure central units and academic departments retain ownership of developments.
Implementation of	2	4	8	Work closely with CETIS service to

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technology that does meet standards based & interoperability requirements and therefore is not sustainable over a period of time				ensure solutions are informed by current good practice. Be realistic with expected outcomes in terms of integration with other enterprise systems within UoB – focus on efficacy for supporting curriculum development
External suppliers	1	1	1	None
Legal	1	1	1	None
Complexity and resulting difficulties of using a multimethodology systems approach	2	5	10	Work closely with project critical friend and continually evaluate progress to ensure appropriate methodology for challenge at hand

8. Standards

At this early stage of the project, before requirements have been established in a detailed and formal way, it is difficult to be clear on the areas of activity that will require standards-based interventions. Any new courses will make use of the XCRI specification, and the project will be informed by the work of the COVA reference model. The widget development will adhere to the W3C specification. Any more specificity would not be appropriate. However, by having JISC CETIS located in the university, we aim to be exemplary in ensuring that we use standards in the most appropriate and thorough way.

Name of standard or specification	Version	Notes
XCRI-CAP	1.0	Course advertising profile
Widgets 1.0: Packaging and Configuration	1.0	

9. Technical Development

Development will follow the principles of user centred design from the earliest stages, following naturally from a Soft Systems approach to identifying the areas where new or adapted ICT systems are required to support the "to-be" business architecture. A pragmatic approach to iterative development will be evolved using an inclusive process, borrowing particularly from the repertoire of the "Users and Innovation Development Model" (JISC EMERGE). Early, pre-coding, engagement will use techniques such as paper prototyping and CRC cards to develop common thinking between developers and end users or those with a view of the "to-be" architecture. This work will be supported through the use of UML or BPMN design tools.

Technical design will favour service-oriented principles where services can be identified and their development justified within the scope of Coeducate. Service identification will take into account the local ICT and business process landscape and intelligence on common analysis within the Curriculum Design Programme or further afield, e.g. the eFramework or Quali Student. In the first instance, it is likely services will be prototyped with point-to-point dependencies; the implementation of an architecturally-desirable Enterprise Service Bus will depend on the degree that this can be justified by the services that are developed.

In line with the skills of the development team the Microsoft development platform will be used for new developments and adaption of previous in-house code. The Visual Studio platform will provide the core IDE and integrated support for unit testing and source code version control. A decision on software to support bug tracking and communication between the developers and wider project members is yet to be made but is likely to be Trac or a similar system. Web services, whether WS-* or REST, will be devised in a design-first rather than a code-first manner and follow good principles for platform independent design.

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10. Intellectual Property Rights

University of Bolton will be the sole owner of intellectual property. All the project deliverables, reports and other relevant outputs will be published via the project website and made freely available to the academic community. Where appropriate, materials will be offered to relevant repositories (including JORUM and CloudWorks) to support wider dissemination and sustainable access.

11. Project Partners

No project partners.

12. Project Management

Two groups will support the Co-educate project at the UoB. The project management group will steer the project at a strategic level and the curriculum design group will support the project at an operational level reporting to the management group.

Project Management Board

The Project Management Board chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Dr Peter Marsh, with members from academic schools and support departments will oversee the project. This in turn will report to the University's Executive Board. The Project Management Board will meet 3 times per year.

Curriculum Design Group

The Curriculum Design Group membership will change over time, depending on the phase of the project. It will include staff working on the project and other key stakeholders involved in the particular phase or workpackage currently running. The group will:

1. advise the project management group on the implementation strategy for the project;
2. elaborate project activities based on the project plan;
3. monitor progress against the project plan and agreed project activities;
4. meet regularly to carry out the above activities;
5. review its composition regularly to reflect the stage of the project and particular demands and requirements.

Project Team

The project is staffed by university staff members with responsibilities that are closely aligned with the aims of the project. Involvement will depend on the phase of the project, and some people will work for short concentrated periods, while others will contribute on a shorter more regular basis. It is likely that over the life of the project, staff not identified below will make significant contributions, and so the list should be seen as indicative rather than exhaustive.

FTE	Role	Name	Position	Contact
0.2	Project Director	Professor Oleg Liber	Director of the Institute for Educational Cybernetics	07919573532 o.liber@bolton.ac.uk
0.5	Project Manager	Stephen Powell	Reader in Inquiry-based learning	07854864124 stephenp.powell@gmail.com
0.2	Work Package contributor	Richard Millwood	Reader in Distributed Learning	0779055 8641 R.Millwood@bolton.ac.uk
0.2	Work Package contributor	Scott Wilson	Senior researcher (Learning)	01204903876 S.Wilson@bolton.ac.uk

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			Technology)	
0.2	Work Package contributor	Mark Johnson	Reader in Applied Research in Education Technology and Systems	01204903567 M.W.Johnson@bolton.ac.uk
0.1	Work Package contributor	Sue Burkinshaw	Educational Development Unit Co-ordinator	01204903655 S.F.Burkinshaw@bolton.ac.uk
0.1	Work Package contributor	Mike Lomas	Head of Employer Engagement and Partnerships	01204903460 M.Lomas@bolton.ac.uk
0.1	Work Package contributor	Dr Paul Birkett	Dean of Academic Quality and Standards	01204903051 P.Birkett@bolton.ac.uk
0.1	Work Package contributor	Hilary Birtwistle	Head of Business Strategy and Policy Support	01204903867 H.Birtwistle@bolton.ac.uk

13. Programme Support

The university needs to be well informed on the options available to it with respect to curricular choices, appropriate to its needs as a widening participation university. For this input from Professors and other experts in Higher Education, for example Professor Ronald Barnett, would be desirable. This would almost certainly be useful to other projects, and so could be organised by the support project in addition to acting as consultants to this project.

The project will be applying techniques from Operational Research (OR), in particular from what is known as "Soft OR" which incorporates a range of methodologies. The project team have some expertise in several of these, but advice and support on other approaches could be helpful, especially in the area of problem structuring methods.

The project's technical approach will seek to embrace a service oriented approach.

14. Budget

Attached.

Detailed Project Planning

15. Workpackages

Attached.

16. Evaluation Plan

Owner, Mark Johnson

The evaluative process is a key component of the Coeducate project. Ultimately, we see the value of the project in being able to indicate to external parties *what is likely to happen and in which circumstances* if interventions similar to those on the Coeducate project are undertaken. The value of the project is inherent in the added control that this knowledge will give other institutions.

The philosophical grounding for our approach is Realistic Evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 2002). Its primary role is to identify meaningful distinctions and mechanisms which revolve around the curriculum design process. The evaluation process will involve focus-group activities and other methods (including Soft Systems approaches) of extracting stakeholder views, theories, distinctions and experiences of curriculum design. As each iterative stage progresses, the project will seek to test

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these mechanisms and distinctions, leading to refinement or rejection. By the end of the project, the intention is that the project will have identified a number of principle mechanisms between its stakeholders with explanatory and predictive powers within the broader Higher Education context.

Baseline activities - what is the situation prior to project activities

Timing	Factor to Evaluate	Questions to Address	Method(s)
December 2008-July 2009	Current practice	How does a course progress from the initial idea to delivery including benefits & drawbacks	Focus groups and interviews Analysis of documentation
December 2008-July 2009	Business processes	What are UoB business processes around course design, development and delivery	Modelling
December 2008-July 2009	Enterprise systems	What are the enterprise systems that support course design, development and delivery	Systems diagrams Interviews

As an Implementation project evaluation will focus on both process and outcome. As described by the project methodology (section three) the precise nature of interventions and outcomes will be decided as a part of work-package 2 and it is at this time that more detailed evaluation criteria against outcomes will be established.

Timing	Factor to evaluate (project objectives)	Questions to Address	Method(s)	Measure of Success
Yr. 1-4	1. Understanding the curriculum development problem at UoB	Does project methodology enable the identification and prioritisation of interventions	Gathering stakeholder theories of process: • Soft Systems Methodology: Focus groups and interviews • Analysis of current documentation • Strategic Options Development Analysis	University validated description and identification of problem
Yr. 2-3	2. Develop tools and processes for course development & curriculum design	Q1. Are tools and processes robust and reliable technologically Q2. Were the tool and processes development activities owned by problem solving participants	Tools developed from emerging models and theories: • User testing • Evaluation against functional specification • Problem structuring activities	Tools meet functional specifications and can be used with existing university processes
Yr. 2-4	3. Implementation of new tools and processes	Q1. To what extent are staff using new tools and processes for curriculum development Q2. Do staff find the tools useful for new and innovative curriculum development Q3. Do tools and processes enable	Iteration of tools, processes & theories: • Usage statistics • Staff workshop feedback • Key staff Interviews	Staff are using new tools and processes to develop courses

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		collaboration around curriculum development		
Yr. 1-4	4. Raise awareness and build capacity of staff to critically examine and develop work-based curricula	Q1. What are the nature of the 'learning conversations' around new curriculum design	Engaging people in the process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of studies meetings • Senate meetings • Coeducate support activities: meetings, workshops, evaluations 	Engaged staff from all schools and central units in ongoing project conversations and activities
Yr. 1-4	5. Support staff to embed inquiry-based approaches & negotiated learning in work-based programmes	Q1. What is the impact of the development activity on new work-based curriculum design	Engaging people in the process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validation documents • UoB course portfolio • Module catalogue 	Courses / modules validated

17. Quality Plan

Output Timing	Quality criteria	QA method(s)	Evidence of compliance	Quality responsibilities	Quality tools (if applicable)
1. Report on baseline data, incorporating UML model of existing processes.	Publication in peer reviewed journal	Academic peer review	Publication of paper	Project Manager (Stephen Powell)	N/A
2. Detailed project plan.	Jisc guidelines	Evaluation against Jisc project management guidelines	Programme manger signoff	Project Manger (Stephen Powell)	N/A
3. Detailed requirements document identifying areas of process change and supporting actions – validation procedures and frameworks, credit based award schemes, staff development actions, technological systems.	Be in accordance with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education guidelines & UoB Academic Quality and Standards regulations	Approval by UoB Academic Board	Minutes of board meetings	Dean of Academic Quality and Standards (Paul Birkett)	N/A

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Elaboration of the model against COVARM.					
4. Evaluation reports on three project phases: early trial courses (Masters in Learning Research; initial trials of new processes (FD in Regeneration and Sustainable Communities); full new system trials.	Aims of the IDIBL framework as expressed in validation documentation	IDIBL UoB internal project partners	Report to Deputy Vice Chancellor (Peter Marsh)	Project Manger (Stephen Powell)	N/A
5. Report on the development of credit based awards framework.	In accordance with Academic Quality and Standards regulations	Approval by UoB Academic Board	Minutes of board meetings	Dean of Academic Quality and Standards (Paul Birkett)	N/A
6. Documented course design process.	In accordance with Academic Quality and Standards regulations	Approval by UoB Academic Board	Minutes of board meetings	Dean of Academic Quality and Standards (Paul Birkett)	N/A
7. Transparent online form based course development system, incorporating pedagogical and technological choices.	Extent to which the course development tools facilitate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • usability • discoverability • technical robustness • interface with other UoB systems 	Iterative user evaluation including feedback from UoB staff on the value of the tools provided	Online issue tracking and user feedback tools	Head of Information Systems and Technology, Information Systems and Technology (Patrick O'Reilly)	N/A
8. A number of discoverable and interoperable learning technology tools (widgets), hosted on local server (Widget server).	Extent to which the development process facilitates: usability discoverability technical robustness interface with other UoB systems	Iterative user evaluation including feedback from UoB staff on the value of the tools provided	Online issue tracking and users feedback tools	Head of Information Systems and Technology, Information Systems and Technology (Patrick O'Reilly)	N/A
9. A case study on a successfully completed university-wide curriculum re-design process, incorporating recommendations	Publication in peer reviewed journal	Academic peer review	Publication of paper	Project Manager (Stephen Powell)	N/A

