The University’s Learning Enhancement Fund (LEF)

What is the Learning Enhancement Fund (LEF)?

The LEF was established to fund projects which are in line with the University’s strategic enhancement themes. The University has two strategic enhancement themes for 2014/15:

(1) student engagement
(2) employability and enterprise.

There are nine funded projects for 2014/15 as listed below. The project teams will give presentations on their projects in March 2015 and disseminate their projects at the University’s Learning and Teaching Conference in June 2015.

LEF Projects for 2014/15

1. Internationalisation of Textiles & Surface Design – INDIGO PARIS 2015

Art, Design and Language

Project Team: Donna Claypool (Project Leader), Rachel Dawson, Tom Sutton.

The Project
This project aims to exhibit students’ work at the Premiere Vision INDIGO trade fair in Paris in February 2015. A display stand will be hired to exhibit artwork from students in years two and three of our Textiles and Surface Design Programme; the artwork will be for sale and promotion. This is a business trade fair, not a student event, and is considered the biggest of its type in the world.

2. Employer/alumni networking conference event

Creative Technologies


The project
Staff and students are organising a one-day conference event aimed at current (and potentially future) SFX, VFX and Games students. There will be guest speakers from industry (recruited from both graduates of our courses and other employers) who will talk about their roles within the industry and how they started, and developed, their careers. Skype sessions for overseas graduates and off-site industry professionals will also be included.
3. A taste of the real world

*Education and Psychology, Careers Service*

Project Team: Gail Airey, Julie Bateman, Professor Jerome Carson, Vanessa Casaru, Jo Luckhurst, Pauline Matthews (Project Leader), Julie Prescott, Dr. Abi Thornton, Dr. Sharon Xuereb.

**The project**
This project is aimed at engaging students in activities that are designed to directly identify and develop their employability skills and allow them to consider the factors required to set up and run a successful business and be independent practitioners. Activities include:

- visits to employers' premises for talks;
- psychometric testing;
- the use of CAPP jobmi system to enable students to identify their strengths as part of skills analysis;
- a workshop aimed at improving students' business acumen.

4. Increasing student interaction in a classroom setting through the use of an audience response system

*Engineering, Sport and Science*

Project Team: Dr. Andy Baldwin, Dr. Judith Hanson, Dr. Frankie Kerridge, Dr. Ann Kolodziejski, Dr. Ianis Matsoukas, Jonathan Thomas (Project Leader), Dr. Jen Waring.

**The project**
Audience response systems are now commonly used in education to improve student participation. The system is composed of a hand-held remote, or “clicker”, and a base receiving unit that plugs into the presenter’s computer and collates students' responses in real-time. The anonymity provided by such a system encourages students to offer an answer during class, without being worried about any perceived stigmatisation associated with providing an incorrect answer. This project aims to:

- increase the participation of students who lack the confidence to answer questions in class in front of their peers by using an audience response system;
- assess whether increased participation has a resulting increase in summative assessment scores.

Students who will benefit are those who would not normally involve themselves in class question and answer sessions.
5. Mentoring and “inreach” project

*Health and Social Care, Bolton Students’ Union*

Project Team: Paula Connaughton (Project Leader), Ed Moloney, third-year students on the Youth & Community degree, programme representatives.

**The project**

This project involves setting up a placement within the University to provide a suitable learning environment for students on our Youth & Community Work degree. The project is student-led with mentors working in an ‘inreach’ capacity within the University setting. Mentors are level 6 students on the Youth & Community degree. Level 6 students on the Youth & Community Work degree will be able to demonstrate competencies in project management and ethical practice that will put them in a prime position for setting up an innovative venture within the University and Student Halls.

6. Student ambassador training and employability scheme

*Marketing and Communications, Library and Student Services, Careers Service*

Project Team: Julie Bateman (Joint Project Leader), Jane Donnellan, Aimee Smith (Joint Project Leader).

**The project**

This project will improve the skills and employability of our student ambassadors. It will give the ambassadors the tools they need to deliver their role within the University effectively. The project involves giving student ambassadors training (and possibly extra qualifications) in leadership and customer service which will make them more employable and ensure the role they have within the University is being carried out to its full potential. Student ambassadors will also benefit from being given key employability skills via mock interviews and CV advice directly from the University’s Careers and Employability service. The scheme will also ensure that the student ambassador role is being carried out to the highest standard which will help to promote the University via any contact the ambassadors have with current and prospective students and any other key stakeholders they may have contact with.
7. Creative artefacts

Health and Social Care, Institute of Educational Cybernetics, Engineering, Sports and Science, Bolton Students’ Union, Information Systems and Technology, Standards and Enhancement Office

Project Team: Julie Bateman, Elaine Gillibrand, Karl Gregory, Dr. Mark Johnson (Project Leader), Arthur Kaddu, Dr. Marie Norman, Patrick O’Reilly, student participants.

The project
The student-led project, Creative Artefacts, continues the Changing the Learning Landscape (CLL) project that began last year. It involves engaging students, staff and Bolton Students’ Union in developing key employability messages and delivering them creatively. Last year University staff, Bolton Students’ Union and six students participated in establishing this very successful and innovative project. Participating students had work-experience placements on the project and reported that their confidence, and knowledge of employability topics, increased as a direct result of participating. This continuation project will engage more staff and students and assist in raising the employability agenda as well as helping students to develop and improve their employability skills.

8. Skills for Success

Standards and Enhancement Office, Student Services, Education and Psychology

Project Team: Debra Elliot, Kay Loxhan, Dr. Phil Matear, Dr. Marie Norman (Project Leader), Sarah Telfer, student participants.

The project
The project aim is to set up and operate a central unit in the library to give students additional support and tuition which will assist them in being successful on their main programmes of study. The unit is called Skills for Success; it builds on the work of the Student Liaison Officers who support students via their Bite Size Study Skills initiative. Skills for Success will offer structured programmes and drop-in sessions for students in: study skills, academic writing, numeracy, ICT, presentations, confidence building, employability skills, and generic skills such as time management, planning and organisational skills.

9. Understanding our students: researching barriers to engagement and attitudes to university education

Bolton Students’ Union

Ed Moloney (Project Leader)

The project
The aim of this research project is to better understand students at the University of Bolton. It is fundamental to future engagement work at the University as it will help us to understand students’ attitudes to education and to university, as well as their barriers to education. It will enable higher quality engagement activities based on informed research, rather than staff perceptions or stereotypes based on demographic data.