



Bridges experience **Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning**

## **Bridges CETL**

### **Final Report to HEFCE**

#### **Part one – statistical information**

**a. Name of CETL**

BRIDGES

**b. Name of Institution(s)**

University of Bedfordshire (University of Luton when the CETL started)

**c. Contact name (someone likely to be in post until July 2010)**

Dr Mark Atlay

**d. Name of person submitting the self-evaluation**

Dr Mark Atlay

**e. Start date of CETL**

August 1<sup>st</sup> 2005

**f. Anticipated end date of CETL (if known, i.e. will it end with the money, when, will it continue in some recognisable form?)**

July 31<sup>st</sup> 2010

**g. Lead Director(s) and dates associated with CETL**

Mark Atlay (from August 2005 to July 2010)

Arti Kumar (from January 2007 to July 2010)

**h. Total amount of award: capital and running**

Capital            £800k plus an additional £115k

Running           £500k pa for five years = £2.5 m

Total = £3.4 million

**i. Briefly describe what the capital was used for (e.g. refurbishment of three small group teaching rooms and small lecture theatre; building of office and informal social/learning space for students)**

Creation of the CETL Learning Space (a social space, creative space and formal space together with staff offices) from existing (dilapidated) teaching room, an area of the learning resource centre and some staff offices at the front of the University campus. The capital money was also used to create an appropriate environment elsewhere for displaced staff and activities.

**j. What will these facilities be used for in academic year 2010-11?  
(indicative/anticipated)**

Their current use will remain as the hub for staff development in the University. In the medium to long term the University has plans to rebuild on the current site.

**k. Average number over lifetime of the CETL of persons employed at any one time, in FTEs and by type: academic, admin, other (please indicate type of job)**

(This has changed and evolved at various stages of the CETL's lifetime.)

Academic	5.0
Administrative/Support	1.5
Student (on work experience)	1.0
Learning technologist	0.6
Research	1.8

**l. What are staff employed by the CETL towards the end of its HEFCE funded life going to do when this funding ends?**

New structures are currently under consideration by the University and it is possible that some staff may find new positions within these but funding levels (and posts) are greatly reduced. Academic staff were largely seconded (part-time) and have returned (or will be returning) to substantive roles. One core member is retiring. Research posts will not be continued. Administrative support may find other posts within University or outside.

**m. Number of 'spin out' projects funded: List projects by title and amount awarded, and name institution if other than host.**

Its unclear precisely what is meant by 'spin-out' projects but the CETL has funded approximately 35 projects internally (see Bridges web site for details) and a range of additional project-related activities (approximately 30) through, for example, the work of CETL fellows, Employability fellows and the Action Research Consortium.

The CETL has also supported two projects undertaken in partnership with other universities:

- STARS (with Sheffield Hallam and the Open University)
- ELLI (with Manchester and Northumbria Universities)

**n. Number of peer reviewed outputs published that relate to CETL work**

Twelve (currently – see Annex A)

**i. If you wish, list up to 5 other outputs that have not been peer reviewed**

NB: These represent a sample of the additional outputs to reflect a cross-section of Bridges' work.

Corkill H. and Kendall S. (2008), Monograph, *International Perspectives on the First Year Experience in Higher Education*, National Resource Centre for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition, University of South Carolina

Gaitan, A., Jankowska, M. & Manton, R. (2008). *Moving forward from piloting e-portfolios: applying the lessons learnt to wider adoption*, CRA 'PDP & ePortfolio Newsletter', Issue 15. <http://www.recordingachievement.org/pdpuk/newsletter/Issue15.pdf>

Jankowska M. (2009) ICERI 2009 proceedings, *Concept mapping technique as a vehicle for gaining insight into students' understanding of personal development*, ISBN: 978-84-613-2953-3

Lawrence, L. and Ujma, D. (2007) 'Effectiveness of feeding-forward: investigating the impact of early assessment feedback opportunities in a Personal Development Planning module', <https://mw.brookes.ac.uk/display/eswaf/Case+Study+2+-+Effectiveness+of+feeding+forward+in+a+Personal+Development+Planning+module>

Saklatvala, R. and Gordon, J. (2009) *The B:Fest: Pedagogy and Public Spaces*, Networks, ADM-HEA, edition 8, September 2009 and on line at <http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/publications/networks-magazine>

**o. Number of events held to develop or disseminate work beyond the CETL in the last three years internally; externally. Please also draw attention by means of a short paragraph each to 3-5 events that have been especially important or noteworthy, e.g. title, date, size, type of attendees, purpose, why it was important.**

**Ninety** conference and workshop presentations externally.

**Twenty-eight** conference and workshop presentations internally by core staff plus a range of departmental away days and other activities.

Bridges CETL has made a major contribution to the **Annual CRA Conference** for each of the last four years. Typically this has around 100 attendees drawn from a variety of HEIs. Bridges has made presentations, facilitated workshops and had a poster presence.

University of Bedfordshire **Annual Teaching and Learning Symposium** including the 2010 conference 'Bridging the Gap' which focussed on showcasing Bridges' work. Annually CETL members have made presentations and facilitated workshops. This has also been a major avenue for the internal dissemination of CETL project outcomes. Around 100 staff from the University and partner institutions attend each year.

**SEEC Professional Development Event** for the PDP special interest group. October 2008. 25 staff attended from a variety of universities in the south-east.

CRA Conference, sponsored by the Bridges CETL, (forthcoming: 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> April 2010) **Researching and Evaluating Personal Development Planning and e-Portfolios**. Major international conference.

## Part two – Evaluative reflection

### Preamble

This evaluative reflection indicates Bridges' experience of operation for the last four and a half years with supporting evidence. It draws on the experience of the core team and our evaluative work with staff and students from across the institution and elsewhere. Further details of the activities cited and their evaluations can be found on the Bridges web site at [www.beds.ac.uk/bridgescetl](http://www.beds.ac.uk/bridgescetl) this evidence base is highlighted in [Blue](#).

### Question 1 Please reflect on how effective your CETL has been in contributing to the objectives set out for the CETL initiative when it started.

#### i. To reward practice that demonstrates excellent learning outcomes for students.

There were many strands to Bridges' reward strategy: secondments, project funding, lunchtime sessions, away-days for course teams, additional increments for CETL Fellows, residential for the core team, two writing retreats linked to internal publications, funding and support for contributions to, and attendance at, internal and external conferences and workshops.

The multi-faceted approach adopted enabled a wide cross-section of the University's staff to be involved in the CETL and its activities and be rewarded for their endeavours. Staff valued the opportunity for time to talk deeply about their practice and teaching and learning issues. Some of the challenges of identifying and rewarding excellence are discussed later in this report (See Question 8). Two major reward strategies are worthy of further discussion here: CETL Fellows and Project funding.

In individual interviews with CETL Fellows there was considerable agreement about the advantages of the role. It had been 'rich and enjoyable', 'informative and personally developmental' and 'enriching' [[Bridges interim evaluation](#)]. There was enormous benefit in being part of a small 'community' working with like-minded others from different disciplines. CETL Fellows identified and assimilated good practice, could 'shape the role' through 'creative thinking', and had not seen the role as limiting or constraining. Despite this positive response from the Fellows, the position was discontinued at the time of the change from the development to implementation phases to enable the resources to be more widely utilised<sup>1</sup>.

Staff who received project funding valued the opportunity that this provided to develop an aspect of their teaching practice more fully. There was a need to be flexible in the amount of funding available for this and to recognise that whilst in some cases small amounts of funding can be a reward for the development or dissemination of effective practice, in other cases there was a need for larger scale funding to justify engagement and provide reward. Providing large scale funding, together with associated monitoring procedures and expected evaluative and publishable outcomes mirroring research processes, helps to enhance the reputation of effective teachers in an environment where research expertise is being promoted.

[[Evidence – Internal review of stakeholders; external evaluation](#)]

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of the Bedford campus to enable the CETL to maintain links to this major University site.

**ii. To enable practitioners to lead and embed change by implementing approaches that address the diversity of learners' needs, the requirements of different learning contexts, the possibilities for innovation and the expectations of employers and others concerned with the quality of student learning.**

This was the focus of Bridges' work; the core team, involving academics from a range of disciplines and professional support staff, developed a curriculum framework for the new University of Bedfordshire. This Curriculum Review for 2008, known as CRe8, provides a focus for pedagogy across a diverse university and includes an integral process for personalised learner development. It recognises that to be efficient we need to have a focus around which our teaching and learning activities coalesce, whilst to be effective we need to allow for local customisation and implementation.

This approach has led to significant developments including, for example, a re-engineering of the first-year curriculum in Business to focus on an integrated project-based approach which has led to significantly improved student attainment and retention (this has been cited as a model of good practice in Government literature<sup>2</sup>). Project funding with advice and support from Bridges staff supported this initiative. All other curriculum areas have taken opportunities provided by the CETL (e.g. departmental away-days and audits) to review and revise their delivery, although the impact of the changes introduced has been variable.

[Evidence – Internal review of stakeholders; external evaluation; CETL Project reports and evaluations (notably the Business Pods, re-engineering of the Psychology curriculum)]

**iii. To enable institutions to support and develop practice that encourages deeper understanding across the sector of ways of addressing students' learning effectively.**

This has been a prime focus of Bridges through the development of the CRe8 curriculum. This is built around an integrated approach to curriculum delivery involving academic and professional support staff working together. Such an approach is not without its challenges (as discussed later in this report) and is not necessarily transferable to other institutional cultures. However, our activities demonstrate that a personalised learning approach, as espoused by Bridges, can be beneficial to institutions and students in clearly establishing expectations and in re-balancing and refocusing student-centred learning.

[Evidence – CRe8; Internal review of stakeholders (especially students); external evaluation; CETL Project reports and evaluations]

**iv. To recognize and give greater prominence to clusters of excellence that are capable of influencing practice and raising the profile of teaching excellence within and beyond their institutions.**

Bridges' work strongly supports the notion of clusters of excellence having the ability to influence more widely than isolated individuals. It has supported the development of special interest groups within the institution and worked with external organisations (notably the Centre for Recording Achievement), other universities and other groups (such as the Student Support Network) to raise the profile of excellence. Each requires sustained leadership and resource to begin with and the challenge to the CETL has been to identify those areas worthy of sustained support and those which the community itself needs to manage and maintain.

[Evidence – reports on e-portfolio implementation; action research, STARS, NARN and ELLI]

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<sup>2</sup> DIUS Higher Education at Work. High skills High value see [www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/corporate/migratedD/ec\\_group/HLSS4\\_08](http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/corporate/migratedD/ec_group/HLSS4_08)

**v. To demonstrate collaboration and sharing of good practice and so enhance the standard of teaching and effective learning throughout the sector.**

Bridges chose to focus on developing an institutional framework which sets out what makes for teaching that supports effective learning, and to support a culture which fosters engagement with this framework. Key in this is the 'mind set' of the staff involved who need to believe that what they do (for example in the face of an apparently unmotivated and unengaged diverse group of students) can make a difference. If you want to reach the students then you first need to engage those teaching them. Bridges has worked to disseminate its findings widely across the sector through written outputs, conferences and workshops.

[Evidence – CETL Project reports but notably the Business curriculum, use of the creative space, Project VENA, B:Fest etc.; ARC and EPG groups; Employability Fellows. CETL dissemination activities]

**vi. To raise student awareness of effectiveness in teaching and learning in order to inform student choice and maximize student performance.**

Bridges' focus has been on student engagement through the curriculum. CRe8 has a dimension which focuses on the personalisation of learning designed to help students think about their role as co-producers in the educational process and their involvement in maximising their learning and potential. This dimension also emphasises partnership working (a University of Bedfordshire core value). The challenges of this approach are dealt with more fully in response to Question 8 but Bridges' evaluative work indicates that more needs to be done to help engage students as true partners in the educational process.

[Evidence - Internal review of stakeholders; reports on Performance and Mastery approaches, UCR8 Club, FLUX, Writing retreat 1 papers]

## Question 2

**Please set out the aims and objectives specific to your CETL at the start; and for each one reflect how well these have been achieved.**

### **Principles**

The following principles were set out in the proposals for Bridges' activities.

- student-centred;
- developmental<sup>3</sup>; and
- sustainable.

These proved exceeding helpful in identifying priorities and areas for investment and in guiding Bridges' work.

*The CETL's criteria for funding projects and activities - student-centred, innovative and sustainable was very clear although the notion of sustainability in practice has proved difficult because everything always come back to funding.  
(Bridges tutor)*

[Evidence – Internal review of stakeholders; external evaluation; Project outcomes; CETL website]

Bridges' original proposals set out a range of objectives under a number of headings. The remainder of this section summarises developments against each objective.

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<sup>3</sup> Subsequently amended to innovative.

## **Curriculum Enhancement and Extending Employability**

### **Bridging back**

Bridges explored a variety of strategies to bridge back to students' past experiences but the diversity of the student population proved problematic in finding an appropriate and wide-reaching approach that was effective. Instead Bridges concentrated its efforts on building an effective learning experience *from the point of arrival*. This was achieved through the CRe8 curriculum designed to emphasise staff understanding students' needs and students undertaking reflective activities on their motivations, abilities and preferences to better equip them to engage in effective learning.

[\[Evidence – CRe8 and associated documentation\]](#)

### **PDP**

Elements of PDP can be found in a number of aspects of CRe8 but it mainly developed into a strand called *personalised learning*. This emphasises the University working in partnership with its students to develop them as independent learners. This translation of PDP has met with support from staff since it aligns with what is seen as a core expectation of HE. Furthermore, there is support for the notion that both staff and students have a responsibility in helping to create an effective learning experience (counteracting some of the extreme elements of consumerism). Students, as evidenced by the responses in the National Student Survey<sup>4</sup> and by Bridges' internal evaluations, are very positive about the opportunities for personal development provided.

Many of the Bridges projects had a PDP focus. Even after five years work, there are different conceptualisations of PDP and how it can be used to support student learning across the University. The extent to which this is problematic depends on the type and level of benefits that students can demonstrate. PDP is about modelling effective learning but PDP can go beyond this. For example, simply equating PDP with 'good learning' typically does not enable students to discover their strengths, address their development needs, and self-mediate their future life-careers. At one level a shared understanding of integrated and holistic student development provides coherence and a focus whilst differentiation allows for meeting individual needs. Bridges' work suggests that there needs to be broad agreement on the aims together with clear methods for identification of outcomes. Precise mechanisms can then be left for local decision making with close monitoring of their effectiveness in terms of the outcomes.

Whilst there has been improved student performance and improved retention rates across the University during the time of the CETL, attributing these changes directly to the work of the CETL is more difficult. More locally, the Business Pods have improved first year retention rates by 10% and attainment by one classification (three grade points).

[\[Evidence – Project reports; Writing retreat outcomes \(1 and 2\)\]](#)

### **Employability**

Many of the Bridges funded projects explored developing links beyond the curriculum. In the latter stages Bridges developed a more interventionist approach and supported the initial appointment of 12 Employability Fellows in different areas to audit the curriculum and establish an action plan. Where direct contact with employers and industry is difficult, other ways (e.g. Assessment Centre approaches) have been used to raise awareness, develop workplace skills and bring professional identity into the classroom. Our initial evidence of this approach is that it is having a positive impact on student employability as measured through the Destinations of Leavers (DLHE) annual survey.

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<sup>4</sup> In response to the Personal Development section of the NSS (2009), over 80% of students agreed with the positive statements ranking the University 19<sup>th</sup> (out of 127) for 'The course has helped me present myself with confidence', 25<sup>th</sup> for 'My communication skills have improved' and 31<sup>st</sup> for 'As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems'. This was higher than any other section for the University.

[Evidence – CRe8, DLHE outcomes, Writing retreat outcomes (1 and 2); CETL Project reports notably Mediastain, B:Fest, ABC in Computing, Flux and evaluations; STARS resource; Assessment Centres; Action Research Consortium; First impressions DVD]

### **Extending Co-curricular activities**

Extending the range of credit bearing activities from the co-curriculum became impossible due to changes in structures which made it difficult to accommodate small credit bearing modules. This is now being accomplished through a University of Bedfordshire skills award which Bridges has supported.

### **Assessment Centres**

Bridges supported a project to explore the use of Assessment Centres (AC) and the challenges posed. This indicated the benefit but also the difficulties in operationalising an AC approach for large student numbers. Staff have however used ACs in various ways: to raise awareness of graduate recruitment methods, make employability attributes visible and comprehensible as behavioural competencies, and turn the main activities into developmental experiences for students. Through an Action Research project, Psychology tutors have begun to explore how such an approach can be implemented in the final year of the undergraduate degree. Links to the UoB skills award are also being explored as part of Bridges' legacy work.

[Evidence – Assessment centre report; AC Chapter in Writing retreat book; External refereed book chapter; Psychology project report]

### **'Certificate of Employability'**

This is one of the final strands that Bridges is supporting as a means to draw together many strands of its work. Activity in this area was delayed by the advent of the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) as the University wished to clearly establish the relationship between its skills award and the HEAR before progressing. UoB is currently participating in the second phase national pilots of the HEAR, and agreement on establishing a skills award has been reached.

[Evidence – Outline UoB HEAR and skills award provisional documentation; Writing retreat 2 paper]

### **Postgraduate curriculum**

The CRe8 agenda applies to all students, although during its development its prime focus was the needs of undergraduates. Bridges is currently evaluating the extent to which CRe8 should be adapted for taught postgraduate work. Work supporting postgraduate research students has commenced and will be continued once the CETL finishes.

[Evidence – CRe8; Writing retreat 2 paper]

### **Learner development**

#### **Supporting the ability of students to 'reflect'.**

Reflection has been built in as one of the core elements of the CRe8 framework and, as part of its legacy strategy, the Bridges team is developing additional materials and resources to help support this activity.

[Evidence – CRe8 and associated supporting resources including MySuccess and STARS]

#### **Students' motivation, confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy.**

Part of the CRe8 framework is a focus on the process of more holistic, integrated and self-managed learner development through application of the SOAR model<sup>5</sup>. SOAR focuses on

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<sup>5</sup> SOAR represents a student-centred process for self-development and is an acronym for Self-awareness, Opportunity awareness, Aspirations and Results.

students developing these attributes incrementally in relation to external frames of reference that come from tutor and employer requirements.

Bridges has also been supporting work internally and externally with the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI). ELLI, amongst other issues, seeks to explore students' motivation self-esteem and self-confidence. Initially as part of a wide group of universities exploring ELLI and more recently with Northumbria and Manchester Universities, we have been exploring the effectiveness of ELLI and supporting its implementation through the development of a range of resources and activities.

[Evidence – SOAR dimension of CRE8 and associated resources; ELLI activities and reports; CETL Projects; Writing retreat outcomes (1 and 2)]

### **Development of additional resources**

Bridges has supported the redevelopment of *CMS online* into *MySuccess* to support students' career development learning, both integrated within the curriculum and as a stand-alone resource. This is now being integrated into the work of the Employability Fellows at a local level.

[Evidence – MySuccess; First Impressions DVD; Writing retreat outcomes (1 and 2)]

### **Equality and disability**

The CRe8 framework was designed to be inclusive and, as part of the legacy strategy, we are evaluating our approach. Our research has explored how students from different backgrounds perceive PDP and how it can be used to support their learning.

[Evidence – Cre8; Research into influence of cultural background on PDP; Summit A programme with HE Academy]

### **Assessment and Recording**

#### ***Ipsative assessment***

Limited progress was made on this particular dimension of Bridges' work because of the delayed implementation of an e-portfolio system (see below).

#### ***Students actively using feedback***

*'In learning the critical part of it is getting feedback, it helps you to improve, to get better. (Student taking part in Bridges' evaluation)*

This is an important dimension of the Assessment strand within CRe8 and hence has been central to Bridges' activities. Bridges has been drawing on the expertise of the ASKe CETL<sup>6</sup> on this topic and has developed an institutional framework for assessment. It is supporting its implementation through the use of Assessment and Learning Advisers (senior academics) to audit assessment strategies including the use of feedback.

[Evidence – CRe8 Assessment strand; ALAs]

#### ***e-portfolio implementation and support***

*'There are several tools, one of them is PebblePad, which help me to learn and keep in contact with my tutors. It facilitates learning.'* (Student taking part in Bridges' evaluation)

Bridges explored a range of e-portfolio tools and piloted one associated with the providers of the University's VLE. However, at the end of this pilot, staff and student feedback indicated that the technology presented a number of barriers to adoption. More recently Bridges has

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<sup>6</sup> The Assessment Standards Knowledge exchange at Oxford Brookes University see <http://www.business.brookes.ac.uk/learningandteaching/aske/?err404=aske.html>

actively supported the implementation of PebblePad with much greater success (within 18 months the number of accounts has reached over 3000).

[Evidence – e-Portfolio initial piloting report on Blackboard tool; PebblePad implementation report]

### **Staff Support**

This is covered elsewhere in this report.

### **Research and Evaluation**

***Institutional-level research will examine the nature of PDP processes and their effectiveness in supporting students' learning.***

The focus of our research has been two-fold:

- Cultural interpretations of PDP (to reflect our diverse student population)
- Mastery and Performance approaches and their impact on attainment

Research activity has been affected by a number of factors. One of the key aspects has been developing an infrastructure to support a pedagogical research focus.

[Evidence – Research outputs; Pedagogic Research group, Outcomes of Writing retreats (two internal books)]

### **Question 3**

**Please add any objectives that emerged as the CETL developed, and reflect on these as for question 2.**

Two major 'objectives' developed during the course of Bridges' lifetime had a significant impact and resulted in a reprioritisation of aspects of Bridges' work.

### **Merger**

In 2006 the University of Luton merged with the Bedford campus of De Montfort University to form the new University of Bedfordshire. This had a dual impact. Firstly, the increased size of the new University meant that Bridges' activities were spread more thinly since it was agreed that Bridges' work would embrace the undergraduate curriculum across the whole of the new University. Secondly, Bridges had been undertaking a major review of the effectiveness of PDP and its employability curriculum together with a wider scrutiny of developments elsewhere in the sector and associated pedagogical approaches. It reformulated its work plan and reprioritised this activity to produce a curriculum framework (CRe8) for the new University within the space of one year. This framework was debated and discussed widely before final approval and subsequently became a cornerstone of the updated Education, Technology Enhanced Learning and Employability Strategies. The need to move from a development phase to one of implementation of the new curriculum was part of the rationale for the restructuring of Bridges at the mid-term of its existence. In turn this led to a change in priorities from fostering innovation to supporting the implementation of the agreed curriculum.

[Evidence – CRe8; Interim review report; engagement in projects across the new University; Education, Technology Enhanced Learning and Employability strategies].

### **Space**

Although, with hindsight, it appears a natural relationship, the original objectives did not specifically explore the relationship between learning space and the delivery of a skills-rich curriculum. The impact of the new learning spaces in the CETL was marked with staff beginning to consider how they wanted to teach and the implications of this for the learning

spaces they required. Bridges applied for and received extra CETL capital funding which was used to create two spin-out spaces; one in Business and one in Computing. The Business spaces (known locally as the Castor and Pollox suites) in turn led to the Business Pods and the re-design of the first year curriculum using the University's own capital funding. In Computing similar changes are underway. The dawning of the importance of learning space (real and virtual) led to Bridges sponsoring the University's engagement with an HEA *Change Academy* programme to explore how the estate might develop further. This has had an impact on the design of a major £25 million new building at the heart of the Luton campus, a proposed new professional development building and the wider Estate strategy.

Both these developments remain true to Bridges' original aims and will have a significant long-term impact on the University supporting innovative, sustainable student-centred learning. The need to be responsive to opportunities as and when they arise, to use external developments to foster the attainment of Bridges' objectives and not to remain constrained by the original objectives means that Bridges' impact has been wider and deeper than originally envisaged.

[Evidence – refereed papers and reports, CETL space utilisation and evaluation, Business Pods, ABC space in computing, Change Academy activity, design of new £25 million University building; Estates strategy]

#### Question 4

**Irrespective of your answers to questions 2 and 3 above, please reflect on, and draw out the achievements and benefits of the CETL.**

Unquestionably the University would not have been able to make the significant and co-ordinated progress it has with teaching and learning without the resource that Bridges has enabled. We can identify achievements and benefits at a number of levels.

#### Students

*'Meeting my tutor once a week is important for me. Here it is completely different, in France the teachers are more visible, and we see our tutors every day. But we are like children, here I can grow up as a person, I work by myself.'* (Student, Bridges evaluation)

A concern for students' development has been at the heart of Bridges' work. The challenge comes in the diversity of the University's student population on any chosen indicator (prior educational attainment, gender, ethnicity, nationality etc.). Rather than focus on the needs of any particular group, Bridges developed an inclusive approach to the curriculum which emphasises the personalised nature of learning. Resources like [MySuccess](#) and [STARS](#) will make it easier for staff to facilitate students through a process of personalised development while they also develop appropriate attitudes and skills for realistic lifelong learning.

Changes in institutional structures means it has been difficult for Bridges to closely monitor the impact of the introduction of CRe8 on student attainment, but our evaluative work with staff and students has been widely supportive.

Bridges can, however, show evidence of wide and sustainable impact through:

- The experience – *Realistic learning*, a strand in [CRe8](#), sets out the University's expectations of the broad learning experience but through other activities (e.g. [B:Fest](#), [Flux](#), [Business Pods](#)) Bridges has supported activities that invigorate the curriculum and support student development and employability.
- The outcomes – a clear delineation of the attributes expected of a University of Bedfordshire graduate ([set out in the University's Education Strategy and now being refined in a Graduate Impact Strategy](#)).

- The environment – the physical and virtual spaces students inhabit have been significantly enhanced ([Bridges' learning space](#), [Business Pods](#), [Academics to Business Computing \(ABC\) suite](#), [major new Student Centre building supporting integrative and creative learning](#), [TEL Strategy](#)).
- The process – Bridges' work has emphasised learning as a process. The [SOAR model](#) provides the basis for this and it has been supported by the use of e-portfolios to capture learning and support reflection.
- The outputs – Bridges has led on the development of the University's [HEAR](#) and is supporting the University of Bedfordshire [skills award](#) to evidence attainment and achievement.

In all of the above areas there is work left to be completed but Bridges' activities have established a clear direction of travel for the University that impacts on the lived experience of all students and will continue to do so for a period of time.

[\[Other evidence – Internal review of stakeholders \(students\)\]](#)

### **Individual Academic staff**

We estimate that 260 staff (approximately 60% of the University's academic staff) have directly engaged with Bridges through staff development events, projects, network events, writing retreats and workshops. All academic staff new to the University receive, as part of their induction, an introduction to the ideas in CRe8 and their application.

Bridges would not claim to have a high recognition rating with all staff across the whole institution, however, the CRe8 principles, which the CETL developed and which incorporate its ideas and thinking, have been woven into the institutional fabric. They affect what is considered when units and courses are approved, annual monitoring, and staff development activities. They provide the basis for students' classroom experience as identified in the 'realistic learning' strand of CRe8. they impact on staff thinking when they plan and engage in any teaching activity and the CRe8 ideas have become part of the institutional ethos 'well that's the way we do things round here' with pockets of excellence where the approach is joined-up, large areas where elements of CRe8 are standard practice, and with only isolated indifference. With the resources available and in around two and a half years since CRe8 was launched, we believe that is a noteworthy achievement.

[\[Evidence – CRe8 and supporting documentation, Internal review of stakeholders \(staff\), amendments to QA processes\]](#)

### **Academic Teams**

Our initial work found that it was difficult for CETL Fellows to influence widely in their departments. Yet our strategy was to accomplish institutional not individual change. This led to a reformulation and reprioritisation of Bridges' work together with some restructuring of the staffing base in year 3. During the latter implementation phase, developments were focussed at course/departmental level, running workshops on CRe8 and its implications in most departments across the University (15 in total impacting on most departments and over 200 staff although changes to University structures as a result of the merger made it difficult to gain access to all departments).

[\[Evidence – CRe8; Interim report\]](#)

### **Support areas**

Bridges has sought to be inclusive in its approach and worked closely with other support areas of the University. In particular there has been close working with the University's careers service (the Centre for Personal and Career Development, CPCD) since the curriculum model is an integrative one where students receive a broad learning experience mediated through their taught units. Around thirty staff from support areas in the University have engaged in Bridges' work.

[\[Evidence – Stakeholder review\]](#)

### **Partners**

We have not restricted Bridges' work to the University's staff but have sought to reach out to our partners. This has been through open access to workshops, activities at partner institutions and open access to Bridges' project funding. Around 25% of staff in partner Colleges teaching UoB students have engaged with the CETL representing nearly 70% of the total programmes.

*Recent debates on teaching and learning in partner organisations would not have happened before - although we still have some way to go before the full implications are grasped. (Partnership link tutor)*

[\[Evidence – Stakeholder review\]](#)

### **Institutional**

The new University of Bedfordshire has established a clear educational agenda for what it values in teaching and learning and how this will be accomplished. This has been driven by the CETL and will have a long-term impact on teaching and learning within the institution. It is an agenda that helps to inform decision-making at all levels. CRe8, and its educational ideas, are discussed routinely in senior management meetings and team meetings as part of a general institutional approach.

[\[Evidence – CRe8, Education, Technology Enhanced Learning and Employability Strategies\]](#)

### **Employers**

Bridges has undertaken limited work directly with employers, rather its approach has been to foster activities at a course level which promote employability including employer engagement. It funded, for one year, Employability Fellows in 12 departments. Their work is now nearing completion and a report on the effectiveness of this approach and individual activities will be available on the Bridges web site.

[\[Evidence – Internal review of stakeholders \(employers\)\]](#)

### **Sectoral**

The University's curriculum model is, in some ways, unique – reflecting institutional priorities and structures. We have worked with other institutions (Northumbria, Sheffield Hallam, Manchester, the Open University, Oxford Brookes) on a range of activities and also given invited talks at other HEIs (35 HEIs within the UK and 20 internationally).

[\[Evidence – external presentations and workshops; visits to and from other HEIs\]](#)

## **Question 5**

### **Have there been any disappointments in how the CETL has developed/what it has achieved. What are they, why did they happen?**

Some of the 'disappointments' are considered in response to questions 6 and 8, and knowing what we know now we would have approached the task differently. Naturally, when core Bridges staff are committed to a particular course of action it is disappointing when other members of the academic community don't share your enthusiasm and commitment. This can have a potentially damaging impact on morale although this has not been Bridges' experience. As well as meeting indifference if not antagonism, Bridges did receive widespread support within the University.

Making a difference depends on a number of factors including timing, resources and commitment. There were areas where, on reflection, Bridges might have prioritised differently or committed more (or less) resource. Examples include:

- Engagement. Whilst we had engagement from much of the academic community, there were (and remain) some hard-to-reach areas.
- Research. From the start we could have committed greater resource to developing the research dimension with planned and structured projects to explore PDP and its impact, and to foster an action research approach. To do this we would have needed a direct appointment or secondment of an experienced educational researcher as academic lead. At the commencement of Bridges operation there was limited experience in this area across the University on which to call. Circumstances would be different now within an expanded university which includes an education department.
- Students. The student community proved a difficult one to engage with directly. Working with the Student Union was helpful, and always supportive, but the level of commitment varied depending on the sabbatical officers in place. This made it difficult to build sustainability into actions.
- Curriculum. Changes in the curriculum structures absorbed the energies of academic staff and diverted their attention away from the developmental concepts and practices associated with PDP and employability. Many good curriculum approaches were already in place within the Personal and Professional Academic Development (PPAD) and PDP-CMS 15 credit modules that existed at the time of the CETL bid, but many staff who delivered these have struggled to maintain or embed them within the new 30-credit Units.

However, if we had followed these directions then it would have diverted Bridges from the actions it did take and which have made a difference. Overall we have extensive evidence that the CETL has had a significant impact on teaching and learning within the institution. This was supported by a recent QAA audit which commended the work of the Teaching and Learning Directorate (of which Bridges is part) in promoting effective quality management and enhancement ([QAA report](#)).

[\[Evidence – internal and external evaluations, Publications\]](#)

## Question 6

**Please reflect on the difficult and easier aspects of getting the CETL going and of getting your messages across. For example: Has action/change followed; where and why did you meet success or resistance. What worked, how did you discover this, how do you know it worked?**

### **Getting going**

It always takes longer than expected to get a project such as Bridges off the ground and fully operational. This leads to conflicting pressures: getting started and getting it right. What is established at the start of a project becomes the way of working for the lifetime and subsequently changing structures or practices can be difficult and problematic if there needs to be a change in emphasis. This applies both to staffing and to the way of working. Recruiting appropriate staff at the outset, when the nature and focus of the CETL was unclear, proved problematic. On reflection, Bridges might have taken longer to ensure that it had its people, processes and structures correct at the outset.

[\[Evidence – Bridges interim report\]](#)

### **Getting the message across**

Bridges was located within the University's Teaching and Learning Directorate. This has helped it affect institutional systems and policies directly and has meant that Bridges' work could be directly linked with other institutional activities notably Research informed Teaching (RiT). The disadvantage is that this has led to some confusion in the minds of staff about the nature and role of the CETL as distinct from the University; Bridges and the Teaching and Learning Directorate are perceived to be one and the same. The advantage of this approach is that it can bring long-term, widespread, sustainable change. The CETL had direct access, through the Director of Teaching and Learning, to key individuals and structures within the University. The disadvantage, unlike some other CETLs that are more subject or single issue focussed, is that the impact becomes more diluted as it becomes broader.

Some individual staff fully embraced Bridges' approach but getting widespread adoption of the more innovative aspects has proved more problematic. Conflicting interests and priorities get in the way. This is particularly true in an institution where the quality of teaching and learning is perceived to be high already. In a University recognised for excellence, and being awarded a CETL, influencing more widely can be more problematic than in an institution where there is a perceived need to change. Institutional priorities are around developing research and consultancy capabilities, not teaching and learning issues.

*It has been really difficult to achieve shared understanding because there is no accepted structure or culture to achieve this. In academia we encourage 'critical thinking' about everything - to the extent that shared thinking encouraged by a central body such as the CETL, agreement on concepts and practices etc. is almost impossible to achieve. It has been especially hard to achieve this in an area such as PDP which was initially so controversial (and may still be in some quarters). This is also to do with the traditional hierarchy of values in which we place disciplinary research first then academic/pedagogic research, action research, teaching, and learning. (CETL team member)*

Bridges' pedagogic focus disadvantages those subject areas (generally outside education and psychology) where staff are less likely to have a highly developed awareness of pedagogy and educational issues. Bridges has found that it had to work hard in these areas to get more widespread engagement and develop alternative strategies. Furthermore, there was a danger that Bridges' language and terminology might alienate staff without a deep understanding of pedagogy. Bridges has striven not to over-emphasise the theoretical basis of its work and to present its outcomes in a language accessible to all. The writing retreat (now in its second iteration) proved a valuable means of encouraging staff with innovative and exciting teaching practices to think through the pedagogy which underpins these and to write for dissemination in a structured process aided by more experienced educationalists.

*I think there has still been confusion about what CETL actually means. If you don't have knowledge of teaching and learning and don't know about pedagogy and all that kind of thing to do with university strategy and what not, then it is really hard to understand. It seems so abstract. (Bridges team member)*

Thus, despite funding departmental and individual projects, Bridges acknowledges that it has had little direct influence in some curriculum areas beyond CRe8. We would estimate that the rule of thirds has broadly applied: one third of areas have been extensively affected, one third significantly affected and one third marginally affected.

[\[Evidence – Cre8; Evaluation reports; Education Strategy; UoB policy on programme specifications and associated guidance; QAA audit outcomes\]](#)

### **What else worked?**

Drawing in staff from the departments (CETL Fellows) on secondments rather than making substantive appointments meant that Bridges work was grounded in the real experience of staff. Thus the ideas in CRe8 have found a natural resonance with staff across the institution and we have not encountered strong resistance in any quarter. 'We do much of this anyway' is often the response.

*I think CETL has had some really stalwart staff who have gone out to departments and "sold" the message and been proactive in organising Departmental Away days and facilitating change - and offering support etc. Well done! (Bridges evaluation)*

However, the original plan that CETL Fellows would work one day per week directly with Bridges and one day on departmental-based Bridges activities was difficult to manage in some cases because they became drawn back into normal departmental activities when not based in the CETL.

The action research approach, formalised in the latter two years of Bridges' work, has much to commend it as a means to support staff engaging in curriculum re-development in a supported manner.

#### [\[Evidence – Action Research reports and papers from the second Writing Retreat\]](#)

The writing retreat methodology as a means to support pedagogic development and thinking was extremely effective. It provides an opportunity for collaborative working and the refinement of ideas spurred on by a communal commitment to the production of a joint publication.

*The whole process of writing for an audience outside my own discipline has been enjoyable - and has certainly moved the ideas I have been having forwards. (Writing retreat 1 attendee)*

#### [\[Evidence – Writing retreat reports, Writing retreat 2 paper\]](#)

Flexible project funding allowing for both large projects (carefully managed) and small projects (to spread the message), enabling work to be undertaken in most departments across the university and created a cadre of staff who were familiar with Bridges' objectives.

*I think CETL has been inclusive in offering Uni-wide opportunities (more so than any other CETL I'm aware of) - but 'opportunity' is differentially available to individuals and even to departments because of their own motivations, abilities and preferences. Some have chosen to take advantage of CETL offers more than others, and some have severe time constraints due to heavy workload and competing priorities.*

#### [\[Evidence – Internal and external review\]](#)

## Question 7

**Has your CETL adopted/used/been based around any specific theories, e.g. of change, or of student learning? If so, what, how have these underpinned your work, have they been useful?**

### **Bridges' operation**

Bridges structure and operation was based around a particular view of change and how it might be best implemented. The original bid document stated:

*The approach to change that the University has adopted is one where broad expectations are set centrally and these are then developed and contextualised by local teams ... The CETL's structure and business plan has been designed to support this approach and is built around a 'hub and spokes' model.*

Whilst a general direction can be set centrally, through the work of the CETL, its in local, subject specific, implementation that real change happens. This cannot be imposed and Bridges' structure and operation was designed to allow for localised innovation within an overarching structure.

Bridges broadly kept to this approach and it has proved effective although there was a need to re-address the balance between the hub and spokes in the model. More resource was needed for central co-ordination than expected whilst (see Question 6 response) it proved difficult, despite the funding available, to get all departments and individual staff to engage in projects aligned with Bridges' aims.

One of the key aspects of change is to be able to seize the moment and use it to one's advantage. Just over one year after commencement the University announced plans to merge with part of another institution. This presented an opportunity to set out, from the start, a framework for teaching and learning in the new university. Bridges re-prioritised its work to enable this to happen and, through CRe8, has had (and will continue to have) a significant impact. Undoubtedly this meant that resource was taken away from some of the other Bridges' objectives but it does mean that there has been a wider and more sustainable impact than would otherwise have been the case.

The new University re-developed its curriculum structures moving from a modular approach to one which focused on the course and in the process de-semesterised. Whilst supportive of this initiative, since Bridges recognised that the skills and attributes it was focussing on required considerable development over an extended period, what had been possible before in terms of 15-credit modules which dealt with personal development for example, was no longer possible within the new scheme. Bridges' response, also built around a more in-depth exploration of aspects of the educational literature, was to develop the integrative curriculum framework (CRe8) and to emphasise the responsibilities of courses and course leaders in curriculum design.

After the initial developmental phase of CRe8, Bridges spent the final two years supporting its implementation in a variety of ways. Our evaluative work with staff and students has provided strong support for the ideas in CRe8 and their effectiveness in supporting the learning of a diverse community.

[\[Evidence – Bridges preliminary report, internal and external evaluations\]](#)

### **Bridges' work**

The focus of Bridges' work, and for which it originally received recognition, was PDP and employability together with an integrative approach to these elements within the curriculum. The model of change applied here involved reviewing current practices and identifying some of the challenges. This was followed by the identification of where we wanted to be and the

articulation of a University of Bedfordshire graduate in the year 2012 (when the first cohort of students who would have experienced the new curriculum would be graduating). Finally Bridges identified what needed to happen in order to enable such a graduate to develop. This structured approach proved highly effective and meant that Bridges could concentrate on the possible and not be side-tracked by issues beyond its control.

Embedding an integrated model of student learning within the curriculum has not been without its challenges. It involves academic staff working with specialist support staff and careers advisers, but with the academics taking more responsibility for the diagnosis of need and responding accordingly with activities integrated into the curriculum experience of the students. One of the drivers for this was that, for example, whilst careers advisers were able to run effective career development modules, resource constraints prevented them from doing this for all students across all subject areas. In addition Bridges strongly believed that employability should not be seen as something which only happened in an interaction between the careers service and students; rather, it should be an integrated part of the curriculum with the course team and professional support staff having a shared responsibility.

In the first stage of development Bridges emphasised this integrated curriculum model and, working with other professional areas, sought to pass some of the responsibility onto course teams through the curriculum model. This proved problematic. Although there were successes in some areas, often staff who were given the responsibility by their head of department were not necessarily the most effective teachers. After reviewing the effectiveness of this approach, Bridges sponsored the development of Employability Fellows. Employability Fellows were recognised excellent teachers drawn from academic departments and each had projects on which they are working designed to support local development of employability practice, with training and support provided by Careers and Bridges. The aim is to train and develop expertise within the courses and help embed employability throughout the curriculum. This initiative commenced a year ago and it is too early to say whether it will have the long term impact expected but early indications are positive.

[\[Evidence – Bridges preliminary report; internal and external evaluations; Employability fellows and outcomes.\]](#)

## Question 8

**Reflecting on the last five years what other important messages are there that you want to convey about your CETL - its successes, difficulties, impact etc.**

*Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts (Albert Einstein)*

Many of Bridges' outcomes have been covered elsewhere in this report. We would want to emphasise however that some of the outcomes are more difficult to measure and evaluate, and even more difficult to relate directly to Bridges and its activities. How staff feel about themselves and their teaching is directly tied to their views of their University. Equally students' perceptions of teaching and the quality of their learning are influenced by a wide range of factors that make it difficult to evidence hard outcomes directly related to Bridges' work. This is particularly so when the nature of PDP is now embedded in different learning and assessment methods at different levels of subject curricula rather than delivered in discrete modules as was once the case. The following sections cover some key successes and difficulties encountered.

### **Identifying Excellence**

Bridges actively sought examples of excellence in teaching and learning (through mining institutional quality assurance and enhancement documentation, asking senior managers for nominees, inviting contributions to workshops, and through direct contact with staff and students across the University). A specific audit designed for the purpose has uncovered a wealth of excellent practice but a natural reticence of staff to come forward and be acknowledged for the effectiveness of what they do in supporting students' learning. Unlike the exposure of research to external peer review, teaching remains a relatively private activity. Identifying practice that demonstrates excellent learning outcomes for students was and remains problematic. Where Bridges has sponsored individual and group projects with the aim of developing excellent learning outcomes, then identification and reward has, naturally, been easier. The supportive nature of the writing retreats, as well as being a reward, has encouraged staff to share effective practices.

Whilst acknowledgement by the Bridges CETL for having innovative and effective teaching practices was seen as positive, recognition by peers and within subject groupings has a higher status and, if we were to repeat the activity, we would focus more on departmental staff and students identifying local excellence leading to recognition and reward. In establishing Bridges' legacy we are exploring how such an approach can be sustained.

### **Equality of Access to Bridges funding**

*Some drink deeply from the river of knowledge. Others only gargle. (Woody Allen)*

Taking a whole institutional approach such as that adopted means that Bridges' attempted to allocate resources across all departments, but in open calls for projects those that naturally have an affinity with pedagogic issues (e.g. Education and Psychology) have generally taken better advantage of the opportunities than other areas. Allocation of resources to departments with co-ordinated central support provides a more equitable means of spreading expertise and activity more widely and this was adopted later in the Bridges life-cycle, for example in relation to developing an Employability Strategy and supporting Employability Fellows.

### **Sharing of 'Good Practice'**

The sharing of good practice is problematic both within and beyond the host university. Bridges has identified innovative and effective practice internally and externally and facilitated exchange. However, we have become increasingly wary of the notion of 'good practice' and particularly its transferability. Institutional systems, subject cultures and teaching practices vary. Good practice is good teaching and good teaching is dependent on the abilities, interests and attributes of good teachers. Transferability is not obvious or easy. To avoid conveying the notion that 'I'm good, you're not, and you need to adopt my practice', we have recognised that appreciative inquiry can start with identifying 'what works well in my context', analyse why, and combine it with a cascading action research approach to jointly develop good practice in other contexts. Effective sharing often occurs most effectively through the incorporation of new practices into existing broadly effective strategies [e.g. most Bridges projects] or the radical re-engineering of provision where necessary [e.g. the Business Pods].

### **Engaging students**

Engaging students within the curriculum with the ideas within CRe8 has proved problematic and enabling students to identify what makes for effective learning (whilst still studying) is difficult. Despite our best endeavours, a large contingent of students remain instrumental or strategic in their approach. They are task and assessment focussed and our work (through CRe8 and the re-engineering of the curriculum) has been to address some of the problems with the old modular approach through working with staff so that they don't see delivery in

modular terms but focus on the course as a whole. However, achieving the necessary change remains a long term objective. Through our own work with students and graduates, we do have evidence that students see the value at the end of their unit or course of the CRe8 approach when they reflect back on their learning and how far they have developed.

Despite inducements, students have many conflicting calls on their time and resources, and we have found it difficult to sustain work directly with students outside of the curriculum. Our U-CRe8 club was successful when led by Bridges' staff but difficult to sustain once we tried to pass ownership back to students. In addition, we found challenges operating across multiple sites in providing equality of opportunity and supporting engagement, a factor further complicated by the very diversity of the University's students. Extra-curricular activities necessarily restrict access to some whilst opening powerful learning opportunities to others.

[\[Evidence – Stakeholders reviews; U-CRe8 and Flux reports\]](#)

### Question 9

**Reflecting on the last five years what important messages are there that you want to convey about the experience of being part of a wider 'movement'/experience of other CETLs. (600 words maximum)**

Whilst we have worked closely with some other CETLs and this has proved valuable, these alliances have been ad hoc rather than planned and joint working might have effected greater change and development.

We do not feel that we have been part of a tangible wider 'movement'; rather it has been an 'informal fraternity'. For the sector we believe that this has been something of a wasted opportunity. Whilst individual CETLs have completed some innovative, interesting and effective activities these have had limited impact beyond the confines of those institutions/subjects directly involved. Many of the reasons for this can be seen in Bridges' own work. The need for a strategic overview, larger central co-ordination, well-considered strategies for dissemination that go beyond merely articulation of activities and their outcomes etc. We would ask what model of change was the CETL movement itself built upon and how was this helped and supported? From Bridges' perspective, we would have benefited from greater central co-ordination, advice and support, particularly in sharing experiences and outcomes around the models and problems associated with affecting large-scale change.

### Question 10

**Please reflect on work emerging from your CETL that has been 'transferable', i.e. useable beyond the home audience for which it was originally developed. (You may wish to comment in terms of materials produced, a community created, understandings that CETL work has illuminated and which are useful to others, etc). It would be useful to hear 'messages' and lessons learnt that you would like to continue to be disseminated.**

*The road to success is always under construction. (Arnold Palmer)*

In answering this question we distinguish between pedagogic approaches and methodologies for implementing change and development. Problems associated with the notion of transferability were discussed in section 8.

### **Pedagogic approaches**

The emphasis on a curriculum framework has been enormously influential in taking forward teaching and learning within the University and in focussing on what it is that we value. Some other institutions at home and abroad have adopted similar approaches and we would advocate the approach since it provides a common language for discussion of teaching and learning issues.

Increasingly we have come to view education as a process not a series of events. Many of the skills that we desire our students to demonstrate both for their academic learning and for employability are slow to develop, requiring considered development and support over an extended period of time. The SOAR process has been helpful here in providing a simple and comprehensible means for making connections which support student development in academic and career management terms. This has been augmented by wider institutional changes which shift the educational focus from the module to the course. Bridges' work has demonstrated that there are considerable advantages to student development and support from such an approach.

Effective student learning requires an integrated approach involving staff with the necessary skills and experience, carefully thought through curricula which focus on developing the desired knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes but also an appropriate learning environment (real and virtual). Developing this requires careful planning and resource allocation and requires university systems and procedures to be more 'joined-up' than is sometimes the case.

### **Methodological approaches to change and development**

*There are moments when everything goes well; don't be frightened, it won't last.*  
(Jules Renard)

Our work with academic staff has some implications for change and its support. Many pedagogical interventions are based on the enthusiasm and experience of individual staff. They succeed or fail because of the commitment of these staff rather than, necessarily, because of the nature of the interventions. What is important therefore is that we focus on the development of staff, empowering and enthusing them to implement change effectively.

Our work with students indicates that, if we really want to make a long term difference to their learning and their capabilities, we need to develop processes and procedures that involve them more in their learning and taking responsibility for its development. We favour the notion of students as co-producers and in later activities have started to explore this notion further as we have sought to embed PDP and employability actions at institutional and local levels. For students from a diverse range of backgrounds this presents significant challenges. Home students (particularly but not explicitly those who are sometimes referred to as 'widening participation students') show relatively low levels of responsibility for their own development whilst international students often come from a prior educational experience that emphasises didactic and tutor-centred approaches rather than the personalised approach that Bridges has fostered.

The following activities have been particularly helpful in addressing issues:

- The Action Research Consortium as a means of supporting localised change.
- The range of materials produced by Bridges-funded projects.
- The community of e-portfolio users as a mechanism for supporting change.

## Question 11

### How will the work and achievements of your CETL continue after HEFCE funding ends?

*In the realm of ideas, everything depends on enthusiasm. In the real world all rests on perseverance. (Goethe)*

These are difficult and uncertain times in Higher Education and it is unrealistic to expect the University to pick up the funding for all of Bridges' activity at a time of impending long term cuts to teaching funds. Fortunately Bridges' legacy has been built, from the beginning, through embedding the outcomes of its work into institutional strategies and policies and local practices thus impacting on the learning experience of students across the University.

- Bridges ideas provide the foundation for the University's Education Strategy which covers the period to 2012 (at least)
- Bridges developed the CRe8 framework which provides the basis for course design and delivery across all undergraduate and postgraduate courses
- Programme and unit specifications include CRe8 principles at all levels
- CRe8 is built into the approval of new courses and the review of existing provision
- CRe8 applies to work in partner institutions
- All projects have been funded on the basis that they are sustainable
- Bridges has developed an infrastructure that support its ideas (MySuccess, STARS, ELLI)
- Bridges has fostered the development of e-portfolios so that they have become embedded in the design and delivery of programmes in many curriculum areas.
- Bridges has developed a range of supporting resources including around work-based learning
- Bridges has impacted on the University's Estate Strategy and directly informed the design of buildings and learning spaces across the University
- Employability Fellows have audited the curriculum and developed and implemented action plans to improve student employability

There is work which is just commencing and which will continue beyond Bridges' lifetime but which can trace its origins back to Bridges' work.

- Linking work based learning with personalised learning
- Developing a graduate impact strategy
- The development of a University of Bedfordshire HEAR and skills award which will impact on student outcomes for the foreseeable future

## Question 12

**Do you think there are any emerging aspects of your CETL activity that will have greater importance in the future?**

*The only way to be sure about the future is to help to create it. (Anon)*

As Bridges' activity comes to an end, we see a strong synergy between many of the strands of Bridges' work and future priorities for educational development. Personalised learning and employability will be key themes for many institutions seeking to address a range of teaching and learning issues with less funding and increased student expectations. Bridges' work can:

- Help institutions consider how to make teaching more effective and efficient
- Support learning taking place in a variety of settings
- Help frame the responsibilities of students, tutors, the course team, departments and the institution
- Help students evidence the outcomes of their learning by a variety of methods and for a variety of audiences
- Help students make the connections between their studies and their chosen future career paths
- Prepare students for work in an uncertain, complex and global environment

## Question 13

**Any other comments**

*We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit. (Aristotle)*

Engagement with a Centre for Excellence has been a positive experience for those staff involved. It has presented a rich learning opportunity for those that have chosen to engage – directly or indirectly. After five years we have established a clear direction of travel for teaching and learning in the University that seeks to link educational theory with practical delivery. Higher Education is entering difficult times, there are financial and other pressures that are likely to have a significant impact on future developments. Entering this uncertain and complex climate with a clear sense of direction will set the University on a sound footing. The challenge is to make the examples of excellence not the exception but the rule; and not an act but a habit. The work of the Bridges CETL has established firm foundations for such an endeavour.

## Annex A

### **Peer-reviewed Papers and Book chapters**

Atlay M. (2006) *Embedding PDP practice in the curriculum in Personal development planning and employability*. Learning and employability series 2 CRA/Higher Education Academy

Atlay M. (2006) *Skills Development: Ten Years of Evolution from Institutional Specification to a more student-centred approach* in Graduate Attributes, Learning and Employability, Hager P. and Holland S. (Eds) Springer

Atlay M. and Jankowska M. (2008). *Use of creative space in enhancing students' engagement*. Innovations in Education and Teaching International 45(3) 271 - 279

Atlay M., Gaitan A. and Kumar A. (2008) LIHE (Learning in Higher Education) 08 Symposium, Greece, Chapter 13, *Stimulating Learning – Creating CRe8* in 'Understanding Learning-Centred Higher Education', Claus Nygaard & Clive Holtham (Eds.), published by Copenhagen Business School Press.

Atlay M., Petrova, P. and Ujma, D. (2009) *To Embed or Not to Embed? The Embedding of PDP in the Curriculum*, Buswell, J. & Becket, N. (Eds.) Enhancing Student Centred Learning in Business and Management, Hospitality, Leisure, Sport, Tourism. Newbury: Threshold Press Ltd

Corkill H. (2006) *Work-based Learning and Personal Development Planning: integration or separation within the UK Foundation Degree Curriculum?* European Work-Based Learning Journal, Issue 4

Kumar A. (2005) 'Developing a Quality Careers Education using ICT' in *Quality Issues in ICT-Based Higher Education* (pub. Routledge)

Kumar A. (2007) *Personal, Academic and Career Development in Higher Education – SOARing to Success* London & New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis. Also available as an e-book, [www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk/html/index.asp](http://www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk/html/index.asp) and has a companion website, [www.routledge.com/professional/978041542360-1/](http://www.routledge.com/professional/978041542360-1/)

Kumar A. (2009) LIHE (Learning in Higher Education) 09 Symposium, Greece, Chapter in Improving Students' Learning Outcomes book: *Using assessment centre approaches to improve student learning*

Parrott G. (2008) *Redesigning the first year business curriculum at The University of Bedfordshire*. The International Journal of Management Education, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp13-21, DOI: 10.379/ijme.82.274.

Petrova P. and Ujma D. (2006) Case study of tourism students at the University of Luton, Employability Case Study, *Students' Awareness of the Importance of Transferable Skills for Employability*, [http://www.hlst.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/employ\\_petrova.pdf](http://www.hlst.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/employ_petrova.pdf) in Nina Beckett and Patsy Kemp (eds) *Students' awareness of the importance of transferable skills. Enhancing graduate employability in business and management, hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism*. Threshold Press

Raiker A. (2009) LIHE (Learning in Higher Education) 09 Symposium, Greece, Chapter in Improving Students' Learning Outcomes book: *A personalised approach to improving student learning outcomes*.