**Escalate funding**

**short report 2005-6**

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**Background and Introduction**

My team and I were awarded Escalate funding of something short of £5,000 in late 2005 to complete a project focusing on postgraduate learning and supervisory practices. To date we have only just begun to ‘spend’ the funding money as I moved posts and needed to transfer it, get established and sort out how moving money back and forth between the Anglia Ruskin team and the developing Uni of Brighton team could be organised. As it is now the end of the financial year and we have actually done a lot of the projected work, it is useful to comment on what has been achieved .

The work for the Escalate project is linked for me to my work on the NTFS project which will of course last a great deal longer (due to job changes the NTFS money and main project activities are starting as from July 2006) so initially although there are some differences of scale and focus, the Escalate work will start up and then dovetail into NTFS work where it will change at that point to some extent to shift focus. (NB given the slight shift in focus, there might need to be further funds sought to continue some aspects of the Escalate work beyond the end date of the project- if possible but the project as contracted will be complete on time .)

Since December I and the team have

**Meetings and planning**

Met several times to discuss the research plans and findings to date.

December, February, May, July

on both Anglia Ruskin sites, and in Brighton where I have been establishing a team , at the SEDA conference and HEA conference (for colleagues outside these two universities ie Profs Hartley and Meyer) .

**Research processes**

Begun the analysis and re -analysis of data from several years to focus on finding when and if students identify their working at a conceptual level in terms of the research question, research design including the choice of methodology and methods, analysis and their own metalearning, communities of practice as learners, and what supports them in this.

Very focused data was gathered through interview , group processes and discussion in the February 2006 workshop with PhD students. This has now been transcribed and analysis will follow.

Students and staff colleagues were given copies of the CD Rom *Interviewer Postgraduate viva* to pilot for our improvement.

**Product development**

Updated the CD Rom ‘*Interviewer: Postgraduate viva’* so that it can now run on an ordinary laptop with a very cheap webcam in sync thus making it more accessible to more students.

**Dissemination**

* Gina Wisker and Gillian Robinson delivered a paper on PhD students and communities of practice at the Quality in Postgraduate Research conference (QPR) Adelaide, April 2006
* Gina Wisker delivered a paper on early thoughts about PHD and MA students and conceptual thresholds with Margaret Kiley and Sarah Aiston at the QPR conference
* Gina Wisker delivered a paper on nurturing communities of practice among research students (PhD RHD and masters) at the HERDSA conference Perth July 2006
* The communities of practice work was first discussed in a conference in July 2005 at EARLI and the paper, updated in the light of these recent pieces of work and further findings , is to be published in a special half issue of *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* in 2007.

Further conference paper construction and writing up is underway.

**Plans**

Further data will be gathered end July –early August 2006 at a workshop in Essex, looking at how students engage with their research and maintain momentum.

It will then be transcribed and analysed, discussed and interpreted .

Some of this will feed into the conference paper for the Threshold Concepts conference in Scotland August/September 2006

We are going to update the content and re shoot the video for the CD Rom during the summer /early Autumn 2006 following comments from students involved in the pilot stage.

**Expenditure**

This is mostly committed rather than actually spent at this stage (to be paid from 1 August)

Funding for two of the research team and a transcriber –

To protect job security, ongoing costs and the full cost of these posts will be covered by the NTFS award beyond the life of this Escalate project.

1 day a week each (a) researcher B mid point (b) admin/editorial assistant (acting as researcher)

the money for (a) is transferred directly into ARU’s UCLT

the money for (b) is a contract from CLT Brighton for an ARU staff member

some more of the funding will pay/is paying for transcription.

Travel costs etc are still to be claimed.

Gina Wisker

Project Director

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University of Brighton