



## ESCalate Themed Funding: Work Based Learning Grant Project Interim Report

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**Project Title** Work-based Learning Pedagogies and Academic Development

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**Partners**

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**Project Start date** 3 January 2011

**Project End date** 29 December 2011

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## **WORK BASED LEARNING PEDAGOGIES AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT INTERIM REPORT**

“WBL Pedagogies and Academic Development” is a 12 months project commenced in January 2011 and will end by the end of December 2011. The project is funded by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) Education Subject Centre advancing learning and teaching in education (ESCalate) and is run by Middlesex University Institute for Work Based Learning.

This project is designed to examine the pedagogical practices of tutors working on work based learning (WBL) programmes in HE. In that respect the project aims:

- to examine the pedagogical practices of tutors working on work based learning (WBL) programmes in HE.
- to contribute to an emerging literature on WBL pedagogies
- to address a potential barrier to the successful delivery of WBL programmes in HE, which is the availability of adequately prepared staff to act as WBL advisers.

The research question guiding this study is formulated as ‘what are the pedagogies of WBL and what is the rationale underpinning these pedagogical techniques?’ Through the practices of experienced WBL experts the project team aims to list the knowledges and abilities a WBL tutor should have.

In order to answer the research question in an analytical way, an interpretive approach is adapted to guide the collection and analysis of data in the project. During the months of March and April fourteen semi-structured interviews with WBL academics were conducted (see the interview questions attached). The interviewees are selected in relation to their expertise in the field from a range of universities that are known to have expertise in the field; Middlesex University, University of Northumbria, Teesside University, University of Chester, and Westminster University. Two more interviews are going to be conducted with WBL experts in University of Derby in June.

The interviews completed to date have been transcribed and initial readings of the data have been conducted. Coding of the data is being undertaken.

Some broad themes are emerging which are likely to form the key pedagogical practices that relate to work based learning. As WBL takes many forms, as many of these forms as possible (mostly drawn from the literature) are being compiled.

An initial literature review has been undertaken and bibliographies will be sent to the steering group.

It is anticipated that there will be several kinds of learning technologies that are typical of WBL practices and that there are broad philosophical approaches to the role that differ from the more traditional teacher- student relationship.

By the end of the year the expected outcome of the project will be a report with recommendations that can be used in the preparation of academic development courses for Work Based Learning tutors. The report and recommendations are also expected to inform the development of a postgraduate WBL Adviser module at Middlesex University. The project relates to learning and teaching in Education as it is concerned with the ongoing development of academic staff including those already working in the field of WBL and those with an interest in pedagogical practices associated with WBL.

A part of data collection was set as collecting relevant documents provided by partner universities in order to explore pedagogical strategies employed, however, regarding the data sharing policy of some partner universities this method could not be applied efficiently. We were not able to obtain many documents of relevance to the project from universities other than Middlesex.

In order to provide practical guidelines to aid the WBL tutors, the report will outline the types of WBL in HE. By doing so the guidelines would be adaptable according to the features as well as learning and teaching outcomes of the programme of study.

Two Steering Group meetings were held (17<sup>th</sup> January and 11<sup>th</sup> May) since the beginning of the project and the final Steering Group meeting is scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> September.

A workshop is organised at the Middlesex Learning and Teaching conference on 13<sup>th</sup> May. The project was introduced with preliminary findings at the initial stage and colleagues from Education and IWBL are invited to feedback on the project on a continuous basis.

A digital platform (wiki page) is going to be set up in June in order to provide an interactive platform to enable collegial contributions and disseminate project related documents,

A poster presentation will be submitted to the HEA Annual conference

A workshop is planned to take place during the UALL WBL conference, 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

## APPENDIX

### Interview Questions

1. How did you get into WBL?
  - a) Professional/disciplinary/occupational background
  - b) Areas of study
2. Any further study or qualification in T&L?
3. How do you see yourself: are you a subject specialist or a WBL specialist?
4. What do you think the key characteristics of WBL?
5. What is it about WBL that appeals to you?
6. Who are the key stakeholders in WBL programmes in your institution?
  - a) *(If no mention of work place)* Do you have any contact with work based mentors/employers?
7. How would you describe the pedagogical relationship between you and the candidate/learner/student/worker?
  - a) What do you think is your key role in your relationship (i.e. facilitator/ advisor/ tutor/supervisor) with the candidate/learner/student/worker?
  - b) What do you think is your key role in your relationship with work based mentor (if any involved)?
8. Are there any tensions between the stakeholders? *(a diagram to be prompted in relation to the stakeholders during the interview)*
9. What is it you do as WBL academic?
  - a) What is a typical work day?
  - b) How do you run your module/programme/course?
10. Who is involved in curriculum design and how do you do it?
  - a) Who do you see in control of curriculum?
11. What is assessed and how is it assessed?
12. Are there any changes you would like to make to your module/programme/course if you could?

13. What are the constraints?

14. (*If answered yes to Q2.*)a) How relevant do you see the T&L qualifications you had to your current role?

b) What knowledge and abilities do you think WBL academics should have?

c) What would you like to include in a module designed for WBL tutors?