

Student Placement Project Interim Report

Project Leader: Catherine Speight, CETLD Research Fellow

I. Overview of Project

The Student Placement Programme is being conducted under the terms agreed with CETLD in the letter of award.

The terms and conditions included the following:

- ensuring that there are links between this project and the 'Behind the Scenes' research project
- clarification will be provided on the administrator costs and time
- consideration given to paying participating students, with revision of the budget if necessary
- clarification will be provided on the duration of projects and whether they would be full-time or part-time
- practice-based and theory-based students will be involved in placements, twinned wherever possible

The Student Placement Programme has been working closely with the Behind the Scenes Research project. A joint research and evaluation strategy has been developed to maximise the impact of findings.

The Project Support Officer has been in post since November 2007 with costs shared with the Behind the Scenes project.

It was decided that participating students would be offered a contribution towards their travel and subsistence.

Project Supervisors were responsible for outlining the duration of their project and deciding whether it would be full or part-time.

The Student Placement Programme welcomed applications from all design students. It was impossible to twin students from theory- and practice-based design subjects.

2. Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives for this project remain the same as in the original project proposal.

3. Targets

The original start date for the Student Placement Programme was put back due to delays in recruiting a new member of staff. The project commenced in November 2007, two months behind the original schedule. Some interviews were conducted with staff members across the partnership prior to this new start date. This helped to generate momentum for the project, ready for the arrival of the new Project Support Officer. Subsequently, the project has been extended to November 2008.

4. Project Outputs

There are two sections to this project:

- i) The development, design and delivery of student placements across the CETLD partnership
- ii) Research and evaluation strategy

i) The development, design and delivery of student placements

I am very happy to report that substantial progress has been made with the development and delivery of student placements. 10 placements were advertised to students from the University of Brighton and Royal College of Art in March. We received a modest response to each placement but through the help of the Project Advisory Board were able to appoint one good candidate to each placement. Project Supervisors reviewed each application and in most instances, interviewed the selected candidates. Unfortunately one placement offered at the RCA was withdrawn due to lack of interest. The RCA will re-advertise this position internally and provide additional funding for it.

A further placement, offered by the V&A has also proved difficult to fill, which is due in part to the conditions attached (part-time, one day a week for 7 months). The placement is for two students, we have one student assigned and will continue to advertise until the position is filled and/or the placement begins.

ii) Research and evaluation strategy

A joint research and evaluation strategy has been developed for the Student Placement Programme and the Behind the Scenes Research project. Work as part of the Behind the Scenes programme has been carried out and we are now due to collect data from the Student Placement Programme. It is our intention to carry out interviews with students and project supervisors at the end of each placement. This forms part of the evaluation of the programme and aims to capture what it is students have learnt from their experience of the placement. A web log is due to be launched shortly and will encourage students to comment and reflect on postings left by other students and members of CETLD research staff. As part of this process, we are liaising with the University of Brighton's careers service to ensure that the web log is seen as part of the student's Personal Development Plan (PDP). There needs to be a very quick turnaround on this as many students have started their placement.

After students have completed their placements, we intend to interview them 6 months later. The purpose of this is to gain a meaningful understanding of how the placement has impacted on their degree course and/or future work opportunities. Longitudinal research is very difficult to undertake and we feel the research collated as part of the Student Placement Programme would benefit from this approach. Unfortunately this means that the final report will be delayed by six months.

5. Project Outcomes

We are mid-way through the Student Placement Programme and have nearly completed the first stage, with 8 candidates either in post or due to begin their placements in the next month. This has taken a great deal of time and effort to manage and we are very pleased

with the results. The Project Support Officer has also created a workable toolkit, supporting the delivery of the programme and subsequent future placements.

I delivered a Design Scholarship Seminar at the University of Brighton in May 2008. This outlined the creation of the programme, the individual placements, and accompanying toolkit. It provided a critical reflection on the issues surrounding museum and higher education partnerships.

6. Stakeholders

This project has engaged with a number of stakeholders. Key stakeholders include staff and students from the University of Brighton and the RCA, RIBA and the V&A. I have also liaised with staff from CETL-AURS, University of Reading in the development of the programme and have reported interim findings of the initiative through personal communication.

A Project Advisory Board consisting of staff from CETLD, Mrs Hilary Miller, Industrial Liaison Coordinator, University of Brighton and Dr Charley Peters, Higher Education Officer, V&A, represents this project.

7. Risk Analysis

There have been some difficulties encountered during the development of the student placements. The first problem was a delay to the start date of the project due to the recruitment of the replacement Project Support Officer. This resulted in the timetable being extended until November 2008.

The second problem was the issue of student recruitment. We anticipated a high level of interest in the programme but received only 20 applications overall. We managed, with the help of the Project Advisory Board, to assign one student to each placement and to extend the deadline for some individual placements.

We are now moving into the second stage of the programme, which explores project supervisors' and students' experiences of the placement. We plan to capture this through the use of the web log and through the evaluation of the programme including subsequent interviews planned six months after the completed placement. We are concerned that students will not use the web log and that it will be difficult to contact students six months after the placement has ended.

I am working with the University of Brighton Career's Centre to identify solutions to both the use of the web log and student recruitment. The University's Centre for Learning and Teaching is providing additional support.

8. Intellectual Property Rights

This project has not required any third-party rights to be cleared.

9. Project Management

Since the successful recruitment of the Project Support Officer in November 2007, there have been no changes in staff or their roles.

10. Budget

There have been two alterations to the original budget plan. Firstly, as originally outlined in the proposal, we did not consider offering students a financial contribution towards their placement. However, it was felt by the Review Panel that a contribution should be made. After reviewing a number of options, it was agreed that travel and subsistence should be covered for students on placements (especially students travelling from Brighton to London). This additional funding was not outlined in the original budget plan and has been sourced from the 'iGuide' project's under spend (a total of £9000).

Secondly, it has been very difficult to set aside time for the recruitment of a film company to create the 'Behind the Scenes' film. Originally, this was conceived as a way of capturing students' experiences of their placements. It was decided however, that it would be more appropriate for the film to capture students' experiences and those of CETLD staff based at the V&A. The original funding allocation of £8000 will remain with CETLD, University of Brighton until a film company has been recruited.

Project funding continues to support the work of the Project Support Officer until November 2008.

The main expenditure continues to support travel and subsistence of student placements, an induction event due to take place in June/July 2008 and possible dissemination event with CETL-AURS (details TBC).

12. Dissemination Plan

The Design Scholarship Seminar has provided an initial outlet for our work in progress to date and some of the contextual issues surrounding the delivery of work placements.

It is still my intention to develop a joint event with CETL-AURS based on our experiences of developing student placements in museums and archives. The second phase of the placement programme will be less intensive. We hope to use this time to identify future opportunities for dissemination.

13. And finally . .

We are working with Margaret Huber, Senior Lecturer in Illustration at the University of Brighton to convert the Student Placement Programme into an extension studies module. This will help to establish a workable model for continued collaboration between the CETLD partners.