

SCONUL Task Force on Information Skills, meeting, 13th September 2001

Present: Hilary Johnson (Chair), Deborah Bragan Turner, Sheila Corral, Helen Hathaway, Janet Peters, Stephen Town. In attendance: Alison MacKenzie (Big Blue, MMU)

Apologies: Jo Parker, Martin Jenkins (UCISA)

1 Notes of last meeting and matters arising

- 1.1 Key Skills in AS level – no further action taken as the future of these qualifications is under review. Watching brief to be kept (*HJ*)
- 1.2 Performance Indicators work. SC reported on workshop at Southampton; and ST on his paper for the ‘Northumbria’ conference in Pittsburgh. Sheila’s group of 11 people had engaged in an hour and a half’s session and been very productive, and the outcomes from this provided data incorporated into ST’s presentation. The Pittsburgh conference had been interested in the idea of an instrument, and ST had contacts with institutions (UK and US) reportedly developing one. ST’s presentation will be on ARL web site (*ST to notify url when available*) ST intended to develop ideas for a more significant paper, but now it did appear that there was a consensus emerging of what was important, albeit that the next step, of establishing the measures or an instrument, was still unclear. It was suggested that the TF members could organise and facilitate 3-4 workshops in different venues which could take this work forward (ideas – London South Bank, Reading, Nottingham, and Wales as venues). The intention would be that the workshops would come up with recommendations for performance indicators, hopefully which could link with 7Pillars model.

Action: PG, HH, DBT, JP to confirm institution as venue; ST design a framework. HJ to draft up publicity/calling notices, Dates between now and next Feb (no later than).

2 Short Course ECDL Equivalent

- 2.1 HJ outlined developments so far and reported on meeting with the OU course team last week. ‘SAFARI’ was nearing completion (launch in November). Request that url be made available to TF members (*HJ to check with Jo P*) The U120 unit team had had a workshop on assessment which had clarified points about level of work (this is to be clearly :Level 1), and about the nature and number of assessments, which would now be a larger number of smaller assessment stages. Decisions had been made about how to support learners on the course, and this would incorporate the team providing learner support generally at the OU Library. The situation regarding the external assessor and critical readers had been clarified, and it was agreed that HJ was to act as external assessor, and HH, PG and DBT as critical readers (subject to contractual negotiations!) Latter role will mean c. 3 days (1 in Oct/Nov and 2 in January) work. All are asked to look out for suitable general readings which might be included (articles aimed at general reader, rather than librarianship press).

Important issue is going to be the ‘size’ of the course – 100 hours of student effort is a lot to ask if it is either an ‘extra’ accreditation or not accredited. There is a large gap between what most institutions ask of students in relation to IS skills work and the sort of scale which this course represents. This is all part of making IS a serious part of HR work.

- 2.2 Licensing mechanisms – generated considerable discussion.

Options seem to be

- ◆ ‘Package’ model. OU make materials available as a package – institutions or library services buy and use as an open learning package (Idea of Netskills as an exemplar). OU responsible for content and credited as such. (If institution did not pay for updates could easily become outdated). Could be part of an accredited course or not, but if not, this will

be no different to e.g. Travelling Workshops materials and not achieve step shift in attitude to and take up of IS skills as a serious part of HE.

- ◆ ‘Subscription’ model. Materials acquired under license and customised within institution, possibly to the extent that becomes part of an accredited qualification by institution (license costs would need to be scaled to enable use for one course/unit). Institution would take over QA, and possibly updating responsibilities (OU loses control over content?). Exemplar would be the ECDL in new guise of institutional subscriptions (with controls over accreditation by originating body?)
- ◆ ‘Per capita’ model. Institution could act as broker for students to do the OU course, with institution providing support and possible assessment (?) and thereby reducing fees for the students/institution.

2.3 Proposal to SCONUL Executive Board. Agreed that it was important to get a clear picture of what might be proposed to the EB, and that this required time to think through the issues. Also the OU marketing people will want to consider their position. Aim for a proposal to the first meeting of the EB in the New Year (Janet P to supply date).

3. Subject differences working group.

- 3.1. Had met in Banbury and drawn up work plan. Decided to put a small questionnaire to academic staff in the three chosen areas. It had been thought that the relevant subject centres would be able to help with distributing online questionnaires but preliminary enquiries showed that there was no ready mailing list. It would be possible to mount the questionnaire on the relevant centre web site but this may not be sufficient to reach a large enough audience? The questionnaire had been drafted but needed some explanatory background, and would then be piloted with academic staff in TF members institutions. (*DBT to add introduction and circulate to TF members*). This is felt to be an important strand of the TF work, and a deliberate development path which could then be used widely was felt to be the best way of proceeding. When the questionnaire had been tested the question of distribution could be considered again.
- 3.2. The group had been looking for references to specific subject-based approaches, and found little. A message could be put to the ALIA Infolit mailing list to see if there was any work on-going in Australia (*HJ*). The group felt that it had enough to compose an abstract for the ITIL Conference (*Janet P*).

4. Big Blue Project update

- 4.1. AM updated the meeting on the Project. The main work has been the audit. A disappointing response rate from HE institutions – c. 60%, and only 30% from FE. 54% of responses from HE had stated that IS was in the institutional learning and teaching strategy. 76% claimed to undertake evaluation. 54% said IS was part of an assessed module. The prime subject areas nominated where there was a lot of activity were social sciences, business and law, and health. IS work was primarily delivered by LIS staff, but there were queries as to whether LIS staff were unaware of higher level work being done by academics.
- 4.2. The difficulties which the project was finding in getting the questionnaire to the right people to answer caused the meeting to think about the advisability of trying to establish contacts for IS/IL work in institutions. SCONUL had contacts for staff development and it may be possible to ask for contact for IS (*HJ to talk to Toby B about this; HH to think about identifying ILT members*).
- 4.3. The next stage of the Big Blue project was to be case studies – approx 10-12.

5. ITIL Conference

- 5.1. Discussed ideas for proposals for ITIL:
 - Subject differences work (JaP; HH;DBT)
 - Theoretical base – the model; relationship to information policy (ST)
 - The Accredited course development (JoP/HJ)

- 5.2. Led on to discussion about recent developments via the LA (SC reported on a meeting convened by Guy Daines), and the need for a higher profile for the TF work in general library literature (see later in notes).

6. Action Plan: 'Position Paper'

- 6.1. Draft considered. The introduction needs to establish a strong UK HE perspective, but then link the topic to other stakeholders, by linking the 'confident student' idea to citizenship and lifelong learning, and the corporate/KM angle. Specific improvements were suggested and noted for incorporation, and an amendment to the 7 Pillars diagram agreed (*ST to forward his version to HJ as easier to amend; HJ to circulate amended draft in next 10 days*)
- 6.2. Agreed that a version should be sent to the LAR (*SC seeing editor and to mention*), and that a more visible presence on the SCONUL Web site should be found (*HJ talk to Toby B*).
- 6.3. Links to the Big Blue web site can be used to refer to a broader range of sources (*HJ liase with AM*)
- 6.4. Further discussion of Action Plan was held over to the next meeting (HJ to include in agenda)

7. AOB

- 7.1. Janet P reported on recent UCISA TLIG meeting (report to be circulated separately). The theme for their next event was to be 24/7, with a US speaker. They were also working on a VLE survey, which raised the question – is IS being delivered through VLE's?
- 7.2. PG reported that he had drafted a paper for submission to Online which had not been selected, and that it may be suitable for another purpose – will circulate for comment. (*PG*) (also work on Levels)
- 7.3. Date of next meeting provisionally agreed as December 14th.

HJJ 17/9/01