

Title: **Developing a ‘Vision for Learning’: embedding enquiry-based learning in the learning culture at the University of Birmingham to promote sustainable, institution-wide learning and teaching enhancement**

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Draft a sketch ‘routemap’ for the achievement of a specific, sustainable educational development initiative at their own institution through:
 - Having a clearer vision of the goal to be reached
 - Being able to identify a range of educational development activity necessary to embed the teaching quality enhancement
 - Being able to predict some of the potential barriers to the planned initiative and consider strategies to remove or reduce these
 - Being able to formulate interventions that can help move educational development towards a ‘focussed approach’ to support organisational, as well as individual, development.

Session Outline

Drawing upon our experiences at the University of Birmingham, we invite participants to explore the potential of multi-strand educational development strategies as a means of promoting sustainable, institution-wide learning and teaching enhancement.

We examine how enquiry-based learning (EBL), a broad umbrella term used to describe an environment in which ‘learning is driven by a process of enquiry owned by the student’ (1) (including problem-based learning), has been embedded as a central tenet of our ‘learning culture’. Within EBL learners are encouraged to take responsibility for seeking evidence and analysing their knowledge with the purpose of making implicit reasoning and tacit knowledge explicit (2). We present an overview of the co-ordinated, deliberate steps that we are taking to ensure that our vision for learning is appropriately embedded within institutional structures, to enable all students to benefit from the highest quality learning opportunities. We draw on the notion of a ‘focused approach’ to staff development (3) and propose a multi-strand model of educational development that is both comprehensive and structured in order to maximise the potential for successful change.

Participants will be invited to compare aspects of the University of Birmingham experience with the contextual factors in their own institutions, and to reflect upon the potential for developing structured and systematic strategies and plans to deliver similar institution-wide teaching quality enhancement initiatives.

The session will briefly outline our routemap on a ‘journey’ towards embedded, sustainable activity:

1. Where did we start?

Mapping the terrain
Institutional context

2. Where did we want to be (and why)?

Defining and sharing a vision of our 'learning culture'

3. How would we get there?

The 'to do' list
Drivers and barriers

4. Where are we now?

Taking stock – Autumn 2008

5. Next steps

Embedding practice
Developing communities of practice *across* institutions
Sharing expertise and resources

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Each stage of the routemap will be presented as an 'Activity Station' with key issues illustrated through reference to the ongoing experience at the University of Birmingham. Each Activity Station will offer a selection of resources relevant to that stage. Participants will be invited to visit the stations, complete the selection of tasks that are presented there, and make links to their own professional context. The session will end with a plenary activity. Approximate timings are: 20 minutes introduction; 50 minutes Activity Stations; 20 minutes plenary.

References

1. Centre for Excellence in Enquiry Based Learning: University of Manchester.
<http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/ceeb/eb/> (accessed March 2008)
2. Price B (2003) *Studying nursing using problem-based and enquiry based learning*. Palgrave: Hampshire
3. Brown, H and Somerlad, E (1992) 'Staff Development in Higher Education – Towards the Learning Organisation?' *Higher Education Quarterly* 46: 174-190
4. McCaffery, P, (2004) *The Higher Education Manager's Handbook* Routledge Falmer