

EKEN Awards Projects: Interim Updates May 2011

Creative and Media Diploma Progression to HE

Project Leader: Rubina Akhtar, UWE

There were some initial difficulties in finding a suitable date for the progression to higher education day, with two dates being arranged but subsequently cancelled at the last minute due to unforeseen circumstances. A final date has now been arranged for the progression day – Wednesday 18th May. The whole day event will consist of a hands on Media workshop which will pick up on themes currently being studied as part of the Creative and Media Diploma. The day will also focus on potential progression routes from the Diploma to further and higher education.

The Teaching and Learning Coach

Project Leader: Jon Gallop, Marlwood School

The Grant has so far been directed to supplying materials to support our 'Animating Science' work with community groups and Schools. The work, hosted on our Teaching and Learning Bus, has involved post-16 students supporting young people in operating Mac computers and software in the construction of short animations. The work this term has also included a visit to New Siblands Special School; a particularly effective session and very well received.

Post-16 students are also preparing the bus for the local arts festival and their plans for decorating it as a float will be assessed as part of their Asdan Arts award.

The community work is about to be presented for consideration for an Investing in Community Engagement award by the Specialist Schools Trust in late May; an update on how that assessment fares will follow.

Is technophobia remediable amongst the 14-19 generation?

Project Leader: Rob Williams, UWE

The Proposal

The investigation proposed to carry out a series of questionnaires around the programme of schools workshops run by the UWE Computer Science department. The intention of this research is to determine if our current outreach activities are having any positive effect at all on the pupils who attend.

At the January 2011 CST Workshop, school pupils and teachers were requested to fill in an on-line questionnaire before starting their first workshop in the morning. Then after a period of two weeks they were requested by email to complete a second, matched questionnaire. To motivate their participation, a prize was offered to be awarded at random to someone who completed both questionnaires.

Results so far

Two questionnaires were drafted and reviewed for trialling.

Some difficulties arose with the first workshop attendance list, two large parties withdrew at the last minute, leaving only 50 visitors for the trial.

We had no problem in gaining complete cooperation on the first questionnaire, delivered here at UWE. However the response rate for the second questionnaire was very disappointing with only 15 returned. This may indicate that school

pupils do not use email as much as expected. Perhaps they have transferred their allegiance to msn and twitter.

The first prize winner has been selected, and visited UWE to receive an iPod Touch.

It is expected from the current returns that the June 2011 CST Workshops will be much busier, and so give an opportunity to collect more data for analysis.

It has been discussed whether it might be more effective to deliver the second questionnaire at the end of the workshop day, immediately before departure. But unfortunately the practicalities of the arrangements make this nearly impossible.

Evaluation of the work

The comparisons between the rating values assigned to the before & after questionnaires from the January workshops is being undertaken at the moment. The results will then provide some suggestion as to modifications to the questionnaire to be delivered to the June workshop.

The final evaluation of this study will depend on whether guidance can be obtained to improve the effectiveness of our recruitment activities, such as the CST Schools Workshops, and eventually improve the quality and numbers of UCAS applications being directed to our Computer Systems degree.

In addition, there has been a successful bid (called BESI) to the RAE (Royal Academy of Engineering) for funds to support further work with After Schools Clubs. It is intended to use the methods developed in the EKEN to track progress in the larger BESI project.

Bridging the Divide

Project Team: Steve Waite, Linda Greening, Rosie Scott

Preliminary collection and analysis of student performance and retention data has been undertaken. The 'longitudinal' data set is being compiled; this will allow factors contributing to the success of individual students to be identified. The focus group and student-facing component of the project have been completed. In total, 89 Level 1 and Level 2 students, from a range of Foundation degree programmes were involved.

Student discussions were carried out over four days and led by a non-academic staff member. After a brief discussion of the aims of the project, students were invited to answer questions that were provided in hardcopy.

In answer to the question '*What was the main reason you chose to do a higher education course?*' 64.1% of students stated that HE would provide better job prospects and increase their knowledge in their chosen field. Interestingly, only 3.8% of students thought it would increase their earning potential. In comparison to their experiences in FE, students identified 20 factors they found particularly challenging in HE. Of these, the most frequently identified challenges were '*Assignment writing and layout*' (16.2%), '*Referencing*' (15%) and '*Different learning styles*' (9%). Examinations were also identified as problematic, particularly knowing what was expected. Many students had not taken any written examinations during their previous studies and they felt this hindered their success. In terms of support, students particularly valued one to one contact, reporting that tutorials (35.9%), GDP (18.6%) and friends (17.2%) were most helpful. Written assignment feedback was the next most highly rated factor (5.8%), but was viewed as being considerably less useful than contact with a tutor or friend. Comments suggest that some students find large class sizes overwhelming. They valued

the greater personal contact with staff they had as FE students. When discussing what would better equip them for HE, the most frequently mentioned was access to 'pre-programme study skills' sessions (54.9%) and making more use of the support provided (28.0%).

In the coming months, the literature review will be completed along with the analysis of student performance and progression data.

