

# **FDTL5 project: Disseminating Best Practice in Quality Management and Enhancement in UK Business Education**

## **Final Report 2**

Project title	<b>QuBE: Quality in Business Education</b>
Project website	<a href="http://www.qube.ac.uk">www.qube.ac.uk</a>
Subject area	Business education
Theme	To identify and disseminate good practice in Quality Management and Enhancement in UK business education
Partner institutions	Cass Business School [Prof Clive Holtham & Dr Nigel Courtney] Leeds Metropolitan University [Dr Mike Kelly] Nottingham Trent University [Prof Myra Hodgkinson] Oxford Brookes University [Prof Margaret Price & Alice Szwelunik] University of Winchester [Dr David Rush & Prof Mike Hart] University of Ulster [Prof Kate Greenan & Carol Reid]
Advisory partners	Association of Business Schools [Jonathan Slack, CEO] Association of MBAs [Jeannette Purcell, CEO] British Quality Foundation [Jan Szymankiewicz; Ray Wilkinson]
Dissemination partner	Text Matters [Mark Barratt & Dr Tess Millar]
Project number	107/03
Duration	3 years
Funding	£250,000
Completion date	30 September 2007
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### **1. Aims**

The goal of the project has been for the collaborative consortium partnership to:

- investigate the reported weaknesses in Quality Management in business and management,
- design and create a portfolio of awareness-raising, diagnostic and problem-solving tools and methods
- pilot the deliverables with key stakeholders, refine them and make them easy to access
- disseminate the findings freely via an online resource and public events
- leave behind networks and solutions which won't go away when the project team does.

Each of our consortium partners' research teams has focused on investigating one of the six critical issues highlighted by QAA and eliciting solutions that can:

- Integrate teaching with quality enhancement procedures (Cass)
- Improve the involvement of stakeholder groups in QA processes (LMU)
- Develop processes for identifying, disseminating and embedding good practice in QME (NTU)
- Improve module evaluation and feedback to students (OBU)
- Improve the feedback loops in QA processes (UU)
- Involve students more effectively in Quality Assurance processes (UW)

**2. Outcomes**

The Partnership set out to start dissemination as soon as possible after commencement of project research. Accordingly the QuBE content management system (CMS) at [www.qube.ac.uk](http://www.qube.ac.uk) was launched within the first quarter of project year 1.

All planned deliverables were completed by year 3 qtr 1, optimised for web distribution and made freely available in the public area of the QuBE Content Management System at <http://www.qube.ac.uk>. These resources, products and tools are summarised in the 'Site Map' at the top left corner of our homepage (or see Annex C in our 2<sup>nd</sup> annual report at ).



Illustrations from the QuBE CMS

In the main online menu, 'Toolbox' takes the visitor to the QuBE Manifesto for inspiration and motivation and to a comprehensive set of resources created by QuBE partners for fostering and embedding a quality culture. 'Library' collates relevant information by third parties. 'Quality roadmap' offers a printable 1-page map and an interactive table linking relevant QuBE resources to the headline issues for quality enhancement.

The QuBE CMS is attracting up to 10,000 hits per month and about 750 unique visitors per month who are downloading some 375 MB of products.

The site will be maintained for a further 12 months in support of the project's Transferability phase. Then QuBE webmaster, Messrs Text Matters, will transfer hosting to the HEA's BMAF website. In addition, cross links have been provided to the Jorum team.

**3. Dissemination**

In parallel with our online activities, QuBE partners have produced and delivered some 50 publications, conference papers, seminars and workshops around the UK and abroad. A summary of the collection is in the QuBE online library at: <http://www.qube.ac.uk/QuBE/library>

During year 3 the partners created the QuBE Manifesto as the primary means for promulgating project findings and resources. This 6-page leaflet is designed to be more accessible than a conventional final report. It succinctly sets out the consortium partners' key recommendations and their original research, case studies and practical tools that assist implementation of these recommendations. The QuBE Manifesto can be viewed/downloaded at <http://www.qube.ac.uk/QuBE/toolbox/manifesto/view>



Tangible resources to accelerate dissemination

QuBE materials now underpin ABS development programmes for senior managers and deans designate. The diagnostics and tools have attracted particular interest and positive feedback. A number of institutions report having tailored and used them to suit their particular needs. The QuBE Dialogue Sheet and the Dean's Dilemma exercises have been deployed at several major conferences – eg: of ABS, of CIPD and of EFMD.

Key lessons learned by QuBE partners in the course of the project include:

- Cass: While academics in general seek to improve the student experience they tend to view quality initiatives as tedious, bureaucratic box-ticking procedures. Following QAA pressure almost all business schools in Britain now achieve *satisfactory* levels of quality. QuBE finds that the best schools strive to achieve and maintain *extraordinary* levels of quality – and so attract the best students and teachers. Business schools must embed a quality culture – but lag far behind industry and commerce in this regard. QuBE has responded with a Roadmap that integrates and offers inspiration and practical tools for the quality journey from 'compliant' to 'outstanding'.
- LMU: Having a high quality content management system, professionally managed, was a key factor in coordinating the project and raising the profile of QuBE. Utilizing external networks (e.g. ABS, BMAF) is a must not only in terms of dissemination but also in accessing and eliciting support for project activity.
- NTU: The strategy regarding dissemination of the findings took place throughout the three years of the project although inevitably the number of outputs during year three was greater than during the previous years. It was important that dissemination was local to own institution and the collaborating partners as well as the sector nationally and internationally. Feedback as a result of dissemination appears to support the conclusion that there is a need for institutions to provide a greater opportunity for academic staff to become reflective learners and practitioners within quality enhancement organisational cultures.
- OBU: The key lessons we have learned are:
  - The key weakness in the module evaluation process is the lack of communication of the

outcomes of feedback to students – even though students do recognise giving feedback as an important activity

- HE institutions are under pressure to deal with increasing numbers of students and at the same time to maintain quality. Sufficient resources to facilitate the module evaluation process might be a problem in the future. Collecting and processing feedback from 200 students and above is a considerable challenge.

The cooperation and collaboration of QUBE partners has been very fruitful and stimulating. The QUBE consortium has been a forum for debate, critical evaluation of draft proposals, and supporting mechanisms which have enabled the collection of data and the sharing of findings with partners.

- UU: Good attendances at our conference/workshop sessions showed strong interest in, and engagement with, the student support agenda and it appeared to be a common and topical issue for all HE Institutions.

In particular there was a high level of interest in student support issues as related to first year students, which was the focus of the UU/BMAF Workshop which attracted over 60 participants, across a range of subjects, representing some 20 Institutions within the British Isles.

- UW: The strategy adopted for project management by the QuBE consortium was to have, in addition to regular project meetings, a ready means of communication through a website, email lists and audio conferences. This guided our work based on literature searching and interviews in universities and FE Colleges.

Perhaps the most important lesson learned through our work is to have effective feedback mechanisms so that staff know the impact of their teaching and learning methods. Also important is to:

- Create a culture of improvement; a quality culture
- Get staff, in groups, to decide for themselves how their teaching can be improved
- Raise awareness of alternative styles and methods of teaching and learning

#### **4. Evaluation**

The project's independent, external evaluator Professor Chris Greensted has reported, in terms, that the project has achieved its goals and delivered value for money.

Full copies of Prof Greensted's annual interim reports and his final report are at:

<http://www.qube.ac.uk/QuBE/aboutus/ProjectReports>

#### **5. Continuation strategy & associated activities**

a) The QuBE consortium has been awarded a Transferability grant of £25,000 to enable 4 additional schools to be inducted into the partnership and then helped to select, test, develop and deploy QuBE resources across their organizations. The 4 new partner business schools are at Aston, Bournemouth, Herts and Northumbria universities.

b) University of Winchester has been awarded a grant of £30,000 for their project "Transformative Quality for Business Schools". This initiative runs parallel with QuBE's third year and is being managed by Professor Mike Hart and Dr David Rush of the Business Management Group. Mike and David have played a seminal role in QuBE as University of Winchester's representatives and see their Transformative Quality project as a 'son of QuBE'.