



University of **HUDDERSFIELD**

University of Huddersfield Repository

Hill, Pat and Tinker, Amanda

Academic skills provision and learning development: situation, synergy and sustainability

Original Citation

Hill, Pat and Tinker, Amanda (2017) Academic skills provision and learning development: situation, synergy and sustainability. In: Exploring Academic Skills Provision at UK Higher Education Institutions, 23 April 2017, Cardiff Metropolitan University, UK. (Unpublished)

This version is available at <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/31926/>

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk.

<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/>

Academic Skills Provision and Learning Development: Situation, Synergy and Sustainability



University of
HUDDERSFIELD

Inspiring tomorrow's professionals

Dr Pat Hill and Dr Amanda Tinker
Exploring the Position of Academic Skills Provision in Higher Education
Cardiff Metropolitan University

25 April 2017

embed@hud.ac.uk

Outline

Our Journey: from Deficiency to Development



Embedding, progression & curriculum design



Sustainability
Inclusion
Multiple strategies



Collaboration with subject specialists, librarians, disability, IT, careers



Seven Schools, Individual Management but sharing best practice



Evaluation & QAA Institutional Audit
Permanent academic contracts



Widening participation
Remedial
Retention & Tutorial focused



2002-2005
HEFCE Project

2002-2005 - Beginnings

Largest HEFC funded TQEF project at the University-
‘The Establishment of a Distributed Academic Skills Unit for the University’

The central aim: To establish academic skills support across the University that will provide support for students with the non-subject aspects of their work, with the target of 200 student contacts per year by 2004.



Controversial Appointments

Huddersfield University is advertising for "academic support tutors" to help students "with grammar" and "to read academic books". How have we arrived at a state where universities are recruiting **remedial teachers** to help students with basic reading and writing skills?

Jane Magill, Huddersfield

Letter to The Sunday Times, 20 September 2002, p.12.

I enclose a newspaper advertisement placed by Huddersfield University for "academic skills tutors" and wonder what you make of it. The university is looking for three such tutors... Their duties are to "teach students how to read academic texts, find information, write clearly and construct arguments". They should also be able to help with "some aspects of numeracy". **I am surprised the need is for only three.**

John Clare, The Daily Telegraph, 2 October, 2002, p.25.

Context

- 1990s expansion and widening participation
(Radford et al, 1997)
- Reacting to a perceived 'problem' or student 'deficit'
(Ivanič and Lea, 2006)
- Retention-focused – diagnostic to identify students 'at risk'



[Times Higher Education \(2016\)](#)



Key Questions: Retention and Achievement

Have you ever seriously
considered leaving your course?

If yes, has the support from your
Academic Skills Tutor kept you
from leaving?

Do you feel that your academic
work has improved as a result of
seeing the AST?

74% cited the help of AST as a
major factor in their decision to
continue.

79% of students said that the
Academic Skills Tutors had
made a significant contribution
to improvement in their
coursework.



Evaluation

The University's internal evaluation of the AST system concluded that the service was highly valued and a **major contributor to retaining students** at the University; the [audit] team had no reason to dissent from this finding...it has the capacity to **improve the confidence** of some first-year students who might otherwise not thrive. Overall, it seemed to the team that the University's development of its AST scheme **represented a feature of good practice**.

University of Huddersfield
QAA Institutional Audit (2004, p.24)





Business

Human and
Health Sciences

Art, Design and
Architecture

Music, Humanities
and Media

Our Devolved Model
7 Schools
13.5 (FTE) Academic Skills Tutors

Applied
Sciences

Computing and
Engineering

Education and
Professional
Development

A Devolved Model

Benefits, Issues, Opportunities

Benefits

- **Part of school**
- **Working relationships with course tutors**
- **Awareness of curriculum and assessment**
- **Timely**
- **Accessible**
- **Team collaboration and liaison with library and Student Services**

Issues

- **Funding of resources/units within Schools varies**
- **Organic (not strategic) growth**
- **Inequality of provision across the University**
- **Ability to cope with periods of high demand**
- **Still some perceptions of deficit model**

Opportunities

- **Research – empirical/action research: writing in the disciplines/ course and curriculum design/student engagement**
- **Further embedding and progressive learning development**
- **Need for staff as well as student development – a ‘whole institution approach’**
(Ganobcsik-Williams, 2004; Wingate, 2006)

Sustainability

Inclusivity, Achievement and Development for All



Why Embed Skills?

“...non-embedded skills teaching tends to be perceived negatively by many students.”

(Wall, 2006, p.xii).

“bolt-on’ study skills provision ‘has severe limitations’
(Wingate, 2006, p.457).

“...writing development needs to be contextualized within the disciplines, and interest in adapting such approaches to the UK context is burgeoning” (Clughen & Connell, 2012, p.333).

“ ...is embedded in the curriculum as a compulsory requirement and is inclusive of all groups whatever their linguistic backgrounds. It is firmly framed as being concerned with the next stage of students’ development and is not in any way remedial or compensating for any deficiency (Hathaway, 2015, p.507).

One quick question...

What does embedding skills in the curriculum mean to you?



“...the integration of critical thinking, to inform study and critical writing, to inform the demonstration of understanding and application of knowledge, into each stage of a student’s journey through their degree. Each year stage is different requiring incrementally different skills.”

“It can mean different things according to context...but the word 'embedding' implies that something is to be integrated, not added on at the end or done separately.”

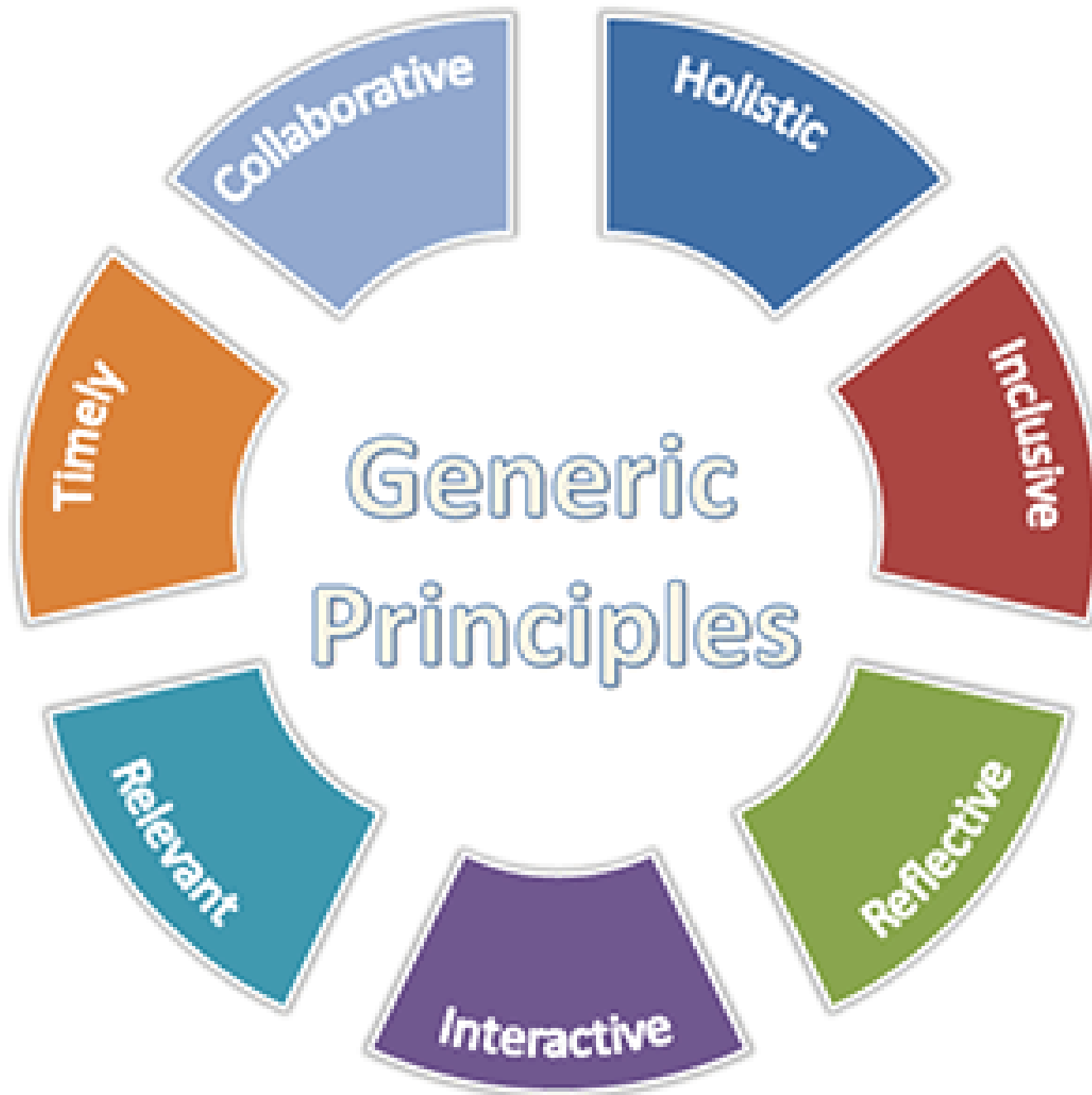
“It means cutting back on genuine academic content. It also means patronising our 18-21 year old students with Mickey Mouse bullshit they’ve already learned in school and patronising our mature students by treating them like school kids.”



“If skills are truly embedded students shouldn’t be aware that they are learning them, as opposed to the subject material, and the delivery should be by the core academic staff.”

“..something that can be used at a later date in employment, after the student has graduated...we should highlight the need for cross-transferable skills in our modules and record what they are. Things like critical thinking, problem solving, initiative, planning, collaboration etc.”

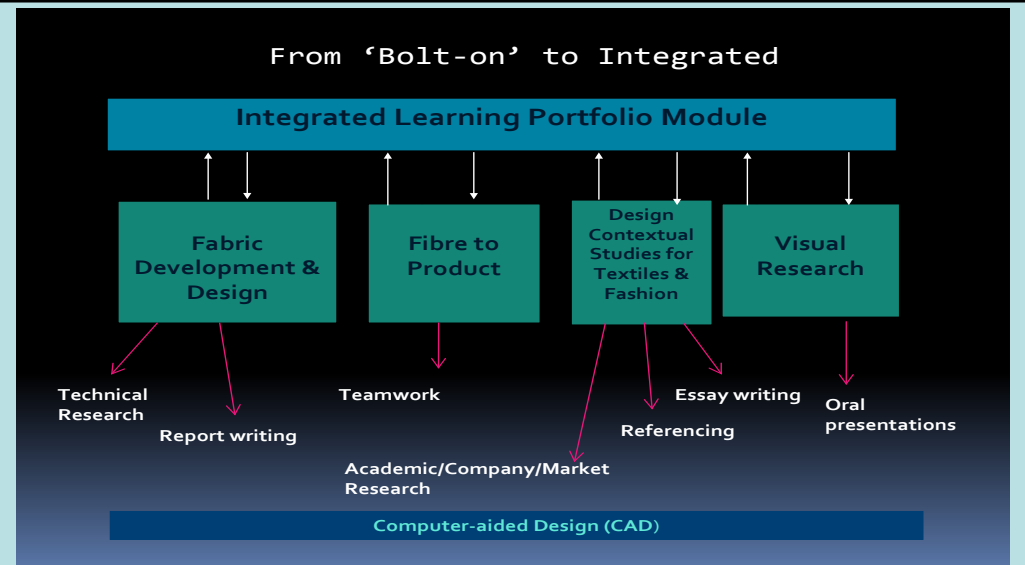
“Clear alignment within the assessment criteria, learning outcomes and assessment task of activity which evidences the skills you’re trying to embed, together with clear direction on supporting information within teaching.”



Hill and Tinker
(2013)

Integrated Learning Portfolio (First Year Textiles Module)

Academic Skills Tutor works alongside module tutors to give relevant input at the appropriate time. Assessment is through a reflective blog and final portfolio in which the students are encouraged to apply their learning holistically.



Introduction to Critical and Cultural Theory Second Year English Module



Weekly seminars but lectures are put on podcasts to allow room for team-taught workshops on:

- Reflecting on learning (1)
- Presentation skills and peer evaluation
- Reading the cultural landscape
- Using critical theory to analyse a text
- Library- Information Literacy
- Essay structure and planning
- Essay Assessment Criteria
- Self-evaluation
- Applying theory to cultural materials
- Understanding and using assessment
- Evaluating and including sources
- Putting a portfolio together
- Reflecting on learning (2)

'Working with the Converted'

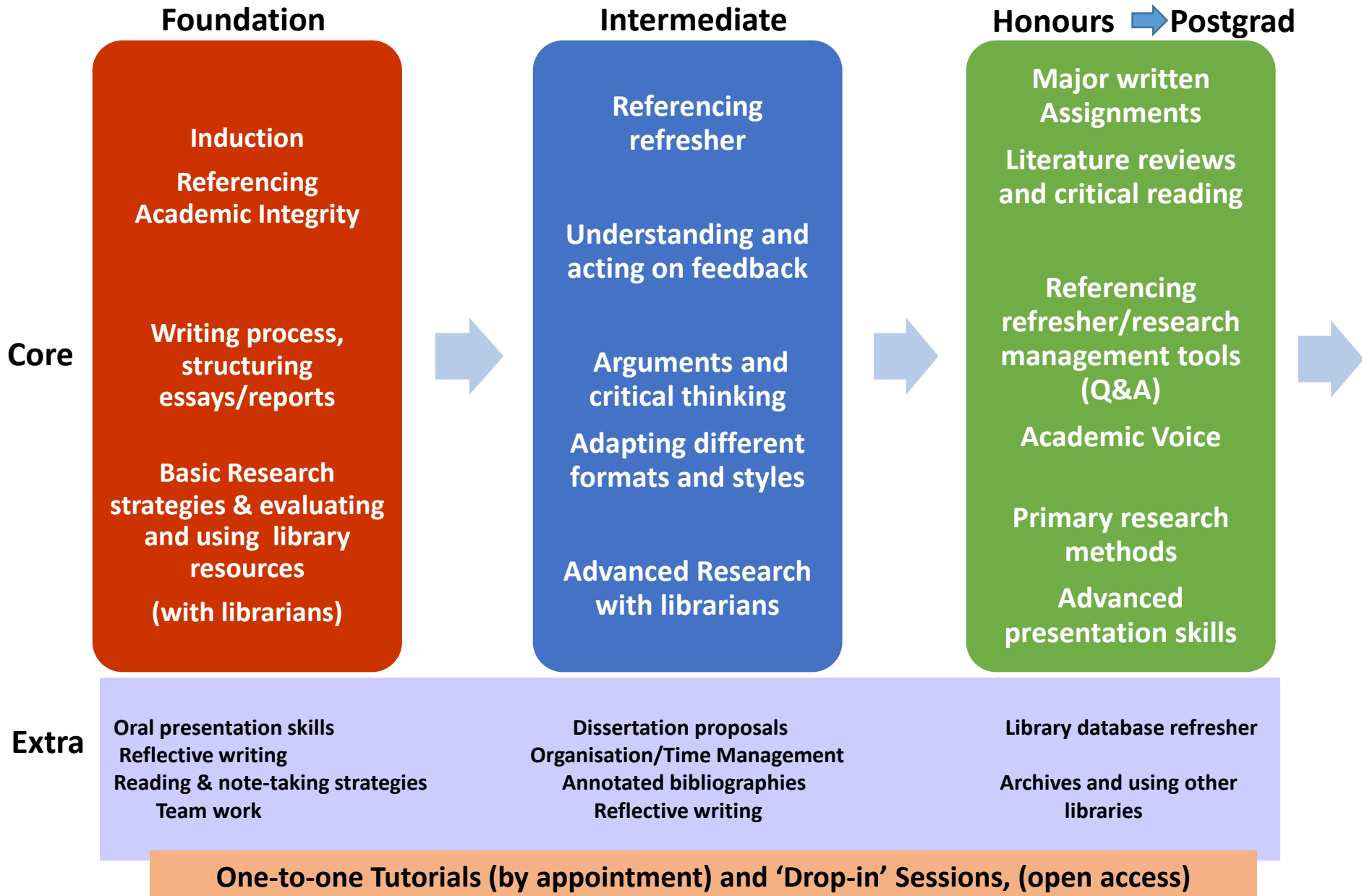
Collaboration

Initiator	What stage	Who is involved	Medium	Context given	Degree involved	Integration	Delivery
Course Team	Programme stage	LD	Face to face arranged	Assignment brief	Preparation	Stand alone general	solo
Course Leader	Curriculum design	Subject staff	Face to face casual	VLE access	Delivery	Stand alone Specific cohort	observed
Module leader	Term Semester in advance	Library	Email	Teaching on course	Assessment	Outside curriculum	Team taught
LD	Weeks in advance	Careers	Telephone	Subject staff issues	Evaluation	Within curriculum	
Careers/ Library/IT	Days in advance	IT staff		Student issues			

Collaboration

Initiator	What stage	Who is involved	Medium	Context given	Degree involved	Integration	Delivery
Course Team	Programme stage	LD	Face to face arranged	Assignment brief	Preparation	Stand alone general	solo
Course Leader	Curriculum design	Subject staff	Face to face casual	VLE access	Delivery	Stand alone Specific cohort	observed
Module leader	Term Semester in advance	Library	Email	Teaching on course	Assessment	Outside curriculum	Team taught
LD	Weeks in advance	Careers	Telephone	Subject staff issues	Evaluation	Within curriculum	
Careers/ Library/IT	Days in advance	IT staff		Student issues			

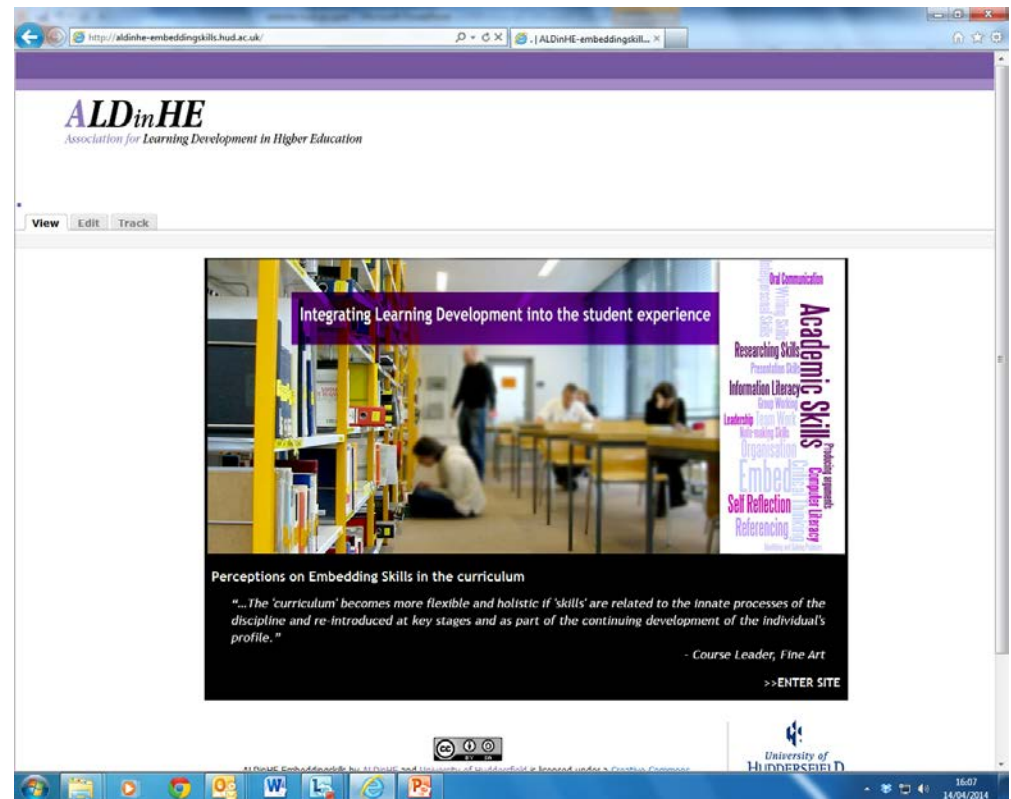
Progressive Learning Development



Embedding Web Resource

- Current Research
- Generic principles
- Embedding Skills?
- Progressive Learning Development
- Challenges and Solutions
- Embedding Journeys
- Case studies, videos, templates and workshop materials

<http://aldinhe-embeddingskills.hud.ac.uk>



Teaching Excellence Framework

Teaching Quality

- Feedback
- Specialist support staff

Learning Environment

- Development of independent study and research skills
- Personalised Learning
- Non-continuation (retention)

Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

- Lifelong Learning Skills
- Graduate attributes
- Students' learning gain

Conclusion

- Not a straightforward journey
- Flexibility
- Promotion, relationship building and collaboration
- Challenges: status; visibility; measuring impact



Thank you

p.a.hill@hud.ac.uk
a.tinker@hud.ac.uk



References

- Clughen, L. & Conell, M., (2012). Writing and resistance: reflections on the practice of embedding writing in the curriculum. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 11 (4), 333-345.
- Ganobcsik-Williams, L. (2004). *A Report on the teaching of academic writing in UK higher education* [s.l.]: The Royal Literary Fund. Retrieved from http://www.rlf.org.uk/fellowship_scheme/documents/TeachingWritingUKHE.pdf
- Hathaway, J., (2015).. Developing that voice: locating academic writing tuition in the mainstream of higher education, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 20 (5), 506-517, DOI: 10.1080/13562517.2015.1026891
- HEFCE (2016). *Teaching Excellence Framework Year two additional guidance*. Retrieved from http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Pubs/2016/201632/HEFCE2016_32.pdf
- Hill, P., Tinker, A., & Catterall, S. (2010). From deficiency to development: the evolution of academic skills provision at one UK university. *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education*, (2). Retrieved from <http://www.aldinhe.ac.uk/ojs/>
- Hill, P. & Tinker, A. (2013) Integrating learning development into the student experience. *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education* 5. Retrieved from <http://www.aldinhe.ac.uk/ojs/>
- Ivanic, R. & Lea, M. R. (2006) 'New contexts, new challenges: the teaching of writing in UK higher education', pp. 6-15 in Ganobcsik-Williams, L. (ed.) *Teaching in UK higher education: theories, practices and models*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2004). *University of Huddersfield, institutional audit, December 2004*. Retrieved from <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/reports/institutional/Huddersfield04/Huddersfield04.pdf>
- Radford, J, Raaheim, K. de Vries, P.. & Williams, R. (1997). Quantity and quality in Higher Education. *Higher Education policy* series 40, London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Wall, A.. (2006). Introduction, xi-xv, in Davies, S., Swinburne, D. and Williams., G. (eds) *Writing matters: the Royal Literary Fund report on student writing in higher education*,. London: Royal Literary Fund.
- Wingate, U. (2006). Doing away with "study skills". *Teaching in Higher Education*, 11 (4) 457-469.

