

## Higher Education Academy projects to improve the quality of the student learning experience: *Full proposal form*

<b>Contact details</b>	
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<b>Partner details</b> (if applicable). Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary	
Name:	
Institution:	
<b>Project information</b>	
Topic (from list of 7 topics in call):	Successful models for linking university quality assurance and quality enhancement processes and structures
Type of project: <i>put x in one box</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> [ x ] Mainly developing practical recommendation on HE issues, practices or policies <input type="checkbox"/> [ ] Mainly enhancing conceptual/theoretical understanding underpinning the topic
Title:	<b>Strategies for generating 'transformative quality' at sub-institutional level</b>
Grant requested:	£29,800

## Brief project description

*Please provide a brief description of the project which can be used by the Academy for publicity purposes (on the web or in printed form) if your bid is successful. This should be written to be comprehensible to the non-specialist reader. (Maximum 500 words)*

This project arises out of work conducted in the University of Winchester as part of the QuBE (Quality in Business Education) FDTL5 project, which aims to improve quality management in UK business schools.

Presently, quality management in HE is changing. Put briefly, the well-established QAA processes such as institutional audit are seen to be based on a fitness for purpose model. Such an approach, whilst guaranteeing the achievement of good standards, does not provide a framework for radical improvement. In particular, it does not adequately address the transformative conception of quality which may be characterised by achieving objectives such as:

- shifting from teaching to learning;
- developing explicit skills, attitudes, and abilities as well as knowledge;
- developing appropriate assessment procedures;
- rewarding transformative teaching;
- encouraging discussion of pedagogy;
- providing transformative learning for academics;
- fostering new collegiality;
- linking quality improvement to learning;
- auditing improvement.

There have been several attempts to go beyond the QAA model by applying models whose genesis is in commercial practice. An example is the undoubtedly complex EFQM excellence model with its roots in TQM methodology. The eight fundamental underpinning concepts are embodied in an HE version that involves a self-assessment requiring the collection of evidence against nine criteria and thirty-two sub-criteria. Performance is then enhanced through the management of processes at all levels and throughout the institution. The model then is a top-down one, with change initiated through institutional leadership. There is a version of EFQM tailored to HE and in the US the somewhat similar Baldrige model has been widely used.

However such institutional-wide quality initiatives are not the only way to transform quality. Another approach is for departments and schools, much closer to the problems of delivery and development, to undertake their own initiatives. The success of such a bottom-up approach will depend on two main factors: the extent to which the institutional framework encourages quality initiatives and quality development at school and department level and the capability of school and department heads to undertake their own quality changes. This project will concentrate on developing support tools for such people to help them to develop their quality processes. Such tools would encourage innovation in teaching, transfer of good practice, structured reflection, self-evaluation and would be very much peer driven. In adopting such a bottom-up approach it must be recognised that departments and schools vary considerably. The quality assurance issues posed by a few HE students in an FE college are unlikely to be the same as those facing a large university school.

The project therefore aims:

- To investigate the extent to which individual school and department heads have the autonomy to develop quality management;
- To produce material that will help school and departmental heads to develop and implement their own strategies for transformative quality management;
- To characterise the variation with size of school or department, institutional size and structure, extent of departmental autonomy and faculty complexity of issues that impinge upon quality management.

### **Authorisation**

*Completed application forms must be signed by the principal proposer, the head of the hosting department or school and an appropriate authority within the institution. By signing, the signatories are confirming the institution's support for the proposal and its conduct as described on this form. Data on this form may be stored in electronic format and be used by the Academy or Subject Network for future publicity purposes.*

Proposer Dr. David Rush

*Signature:*

*Date:* 26 April 2006

Head of department/school Dr. Helen Betts

*Signature:*

*Date:* 26 April 2006

Institutional authority Professor Chris Turner (Pro Vice-Chancellor)

*Signature:*

*Date:* 26 April 2006

Please refer to *How to submit a full proposal* notes when completing this form

### **Rationale and background to the work**

*This section should include:*

- (a) *A succinct background to the proposed work, including your rationale, the conceptual basis for the work and how it develops from relevant prior work*
- (b) *Aims and objectives for the project, including the deliverables.*

### **Background to the proposal**

The first phase of the QAA reviews of Teaching Quality Assessment were conducted from 1997-2001 resulting in over 3,000 institutional reports on subject reviews and audits and a further 60 subject overviews. It was estimated that the TQA cost the sector £100 million in paperwork and staff time as well as the QAA's own administrative costs of £3-5 million annually. However, only 4 out of 665 departments were identified in which the teaching was judged to be unacceptably low. Dissatisfaction with the heavier burden posed by subject review has led to the evolution of a 'light touch' approach with periodic audit trails to check the effectiveness of the institution's own mechanisms for quality assurance coupled with an increased focus upon continual quality enhancement. Auditing regimes are already quite heavy apart from QAA (in the Business area we can mention ABS, AMBA, EQUIS, AACSB) Moreover, higher education will need (*vide* NSS) to become responsive to its students who will increasingly regard themselves as customers and to the possibilities of 'third stream' funding for knowledge transfer activities linking universities with their business and professional hinterlands. However, a pessimistic review of the history of quality evaluation has led one prominent researcher (Harvey 2005) to conclude that 'at heart, the British system of quality monitoring failed to engage with transformative learning and teaching' In their content analysis of 164 Business and Management subject review reports, Ottewill and Macfarlane(2004) discerned a mismatch between the espoused philosophy of 'fitness for purpose' and implicit pedagogic principles embodying quality as 'excellence'. They further suggest that these principles (e.g. self-criticism, embedding good practice) can enhance the quality of the student learning experience

### **Conceptual underpinnings and Rationale for the proposal**

'Quality' is a contested concept but the typologies of quality into 'excellence', 'perfection' (or consistency), 'fitness for purpose', 'value for money' and 'transformation' is widely accepted (Harvey and Green, 1993; Harvey 2005). This investigation takes Harvey and Green's notion of 'transformative' quality and uses it to explore quality initiatives conducted largely at sub-institutional (i.e. faculty, departmental ) level. Some researchers are already using the concept of transformative quality as a starting point for the development of alternative and holistic models of quality management (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2005) It is possible that some models (e.g. EFQM, see Pupius and Steed,2005) are already capable of being applied at only a process level. In particular, an interesting question is the extent to which departments can exercise a degree of autonomy in their own quality management given the fact that they are also part of a wider system of quality assurance in their host universities. The proposal recognizes that quality assurance on the one hand and 'transformative' teaching and learning on the other may well map onto differing routes of accountability within a university and this may be reflected by differing communities of practice and even find expression in the spheres of influence exerted for quality assurance on the one hand (QAA) and transformative quality on the other (The Higher Education Academy). This proposal seeks to investigate systematically how 'transformative quality' can be nurtured and operationalised and how departments which exhibit a culture of excellence demonstrate transformative quality in their modus operandi and departmental policies. Moreover, by developing the concept of quality trajectories, the authors aim to investigate the organizational and cultural parameters that encourage (or inhibit) developments in transformative quality.

## **Aims and Objectives for the proposal**

Given the larger aim of the proposal is an examination of transformative quality, the objectives are to investigate by a series of interviews and first-hand observations the ways in which institutions are developing their own paths to transformative quality (even if not specifically labeled as such) Within the constraints of the time-span of the project (12 calendar months), it is intended to utilize the experience gained from participation in the QuBE project (QUBE, 2006) to explore a variety of institutions that broadly reflect the diversity, size and geographical spread of institutions. The subject mix will take business as a starting point (as quality models may well have been more explicitly adopted therein) but will extend to cognate areas in the social sciences, humanities and education.

It is intended that attention will be directed at each of a series of levels

- the *cultural* level ('what makes for a culture of excellence?')
- the *policy* level (how do faculties encourage, facilitate and reward innovative, transferable and reflective approaches through their own departmental auditing, reporting and committee structures?)
- the *operational* level (are there particular exemplars of realizing transformative quality that can be illustrated, via workshops and communities of practice to the rest of the sector?)

Given the above rationale the aims of the proposed project are:

- To investigate the extent to which individual school and department heads have the autonomy to develop quality management;
- To produce material that will help school and departmental heads to develop and implement their own strategies for transformative quality management;
- To characterise the variation with size of school or department, institutional size and structure, extent of departmental autonomy and faculty complexity.of issues that impinge upon quality management.

## **Deliverables**

The key deliverables will be as follows:

- Conference Presentations to relevant national and international conferences
- Papers in refereed journals
- Workshops at relevant bodies (e.g. HEA Subject groups such as BMAF) where key philosophies, concepts and tools of transformative quality may be demonstrated
- Wide dissemination of reports, tools and findings through a content-management system embedded in a website. It is anticipated that the website hosted and maintained by the University of Winchester will remain in the foreseeable future after the lifetime of the current project
- Final report

## *References*

Harvey, L and Green, D. (1993), 'Defining Quality' *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, **18**(1) pp. 9-34

Harvey, L. (2005), 'A history and critique of quality evaluation in the UK', *Quality Assurance in Education*, **13**(4), May

Ottewill, R. and Macfarlane, B. (2004). *Explicit and Implicit Judgements of Quality – an analysis of the QAA Business and Management Subject Review Reports, 2000-2001* (National Report for the Business Education Support Team-BEST)

Pupius, M. and Steed, C. (2005) *Embedding Excellence in Higher Education*, Sheffield Hallam University. Centre for Integral Excellence  
<http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/integralexcelsence> (Current: 26 April, 2006)

QuBE (Quality in Business Education) (2006), [www.qube.ac.uk](http://www.qube.ac.uk), (Current: 26 April, 2006)

Srikanthan, G. and Dalrymple, J. (2002), 'Implementation of a Holistic Model for Quality in Higher Education' *Quality in Higher Education*, 11(1) April, pp. 69-81.

### **Methodology and workplan**

*Please give details of your methodology, including an outline timetable for the work.*

The philosophical underpinnings to the whole enquiry will be derived principally from interpretivism which then lends itself to field work methods such as interviewing. Interviews will be conducted with a sample of departmental managers and other key personnel (in teaching and learning) with an avowed commitment to quality enhancement. Where invited to do so, opportunities will be taken to undertake to explore exemplars of innovative teaching approaches and to gather examples of reflection-in-practice. Content analysis of 'quality-related' minutes will also be utilised as available and appropriate.

Institutions will be selected as a source of informants that will broadly reflect the size, geographical spread (including Northern Ireland) and diversity of the sector. The opportunity will be taken to test ideas gleaned from the Scottish approach and experience (which has taken a more proactive approach to quality enhancement than in England and Wales)

Conventional literature researching techniques will be used to enhance a critical review of the literature in this area (some of which has already been undertaken as part of the QuBE project)

#### *Timetable*

*Phase 1:* (August- September, 2006)

Briefing meetings. Convening of advisory committee. Preliminary literature review (building on QuBE experience)

*Phase 2:* (October-December, 2006)

First tranche of interviewing. Completion of literature review. Report to Advisory Committee of progress/findings to date

*Phase 3:* (January-March)

Second tranche of interviewing. Development of tools derived from investigations with a view to workshop presentations. Some presentations of work to date in conferences and workshops (e.g. BMAF, HEA, ABS)

*Phase 4:* (April-July)

Dissemination of findings to stakeholders. Preparation of Conference and Workshop Presentations (e.g. BMAF, ABS, HEA, European Academy of Management and Journal articles based upon the results)

*Phase 5* (August)

Preparation of final report.

(NB – Website [currently <http://trans-qm.org.uk>] will reflect current materials and will act as its own content management system/dissemination source)

### **Project dissemination and impact**

*Please describe how you plan to engage relevant communities for effective dissemination of the outcomes of the project. Describe the likely impact of the project on understanding, policy or practice in relation to the aims of the project.*

The project will make a significant contribution to the ongoing development of quality models and frameworks in UK HE. There is increasing debate as to the applicability of such institution-wide quality models as EFQM. They have often been presented as the only alternative to fitness for purpose models such as that of the QAA. Yet they have been met in some academic circles with a deal of scepticism, and that not simply because of their roots in industrial and commercial practice. It will be a long time, if ever, that institution-wide quality models are accepted as the standard for quality management in UK HE. In the meantime there is the need to make significant improvements in the practice of quality. This project will help to demonstrate that placing the focus on the school and department and adopting a bottom-up approach can lead to progress towards transformative quality. It will also help to throw light on the applicability of different quality models in the circumstance of variations such as institutional size and structure, extent of departmental autonomy and faculty complexity. Although this will only be one aspect of the present project it is seen as a promising line for future research with significant implications for public policy in the areas of effective spending on HE expansion, and the institutional structure of the sector. Investigations of the elements of a 'culture of excellence' may point the way to a development of further practical tools. Insofar as change management is suggested, then appropriate reference will be made of advice and material suggested in the Effecting Change in Higher Education project at Luton University (Luton University, 2003)

The project has been discussed with the following experts in HE quality management: Paul Evans (Liverpool John Moores University), Carol Steed (Centre for Integral Excellence, Sheffield Hallam University), Philip Sullivan (De Montfort University) and their advice has been taken into account in its formulation. Positive support has been received from the CEO of ABS, Jonathan Slack, who wrote:

*'This is an interesting and timely proposal which seeks to explore the 'transformative' nature of quality in an era of rapid change. I envisage that ABS members will utilise some of the project outputs in their search for quality enhancement'*

Similarly Professor Jean Woodall, Director of the BMAF Subject Centre indicates:

*'This project, by supporting business school managers in development of their quality management processes, will help them to address the key issues they face as identified in the recent BMAF survey of business schools'*

These positive reactions indicate that project outputs could play a significant role in the sector.

The University of Winchester warmly endorses this proposal. It believes that the proposed project will provide strong support for its own emerging plans for quality enhancement.

Planned dissemination activities include: presenting papers at various UK conferences where quality is on the agenda such as the HEA annual conference; presenting papers at relevant European conferences (see for example, Hart and Rush, 2006); submitting papers to

relevant HE educational journals; trialling tools at relevant workshops and revising them in accordance with experience gained; establishing a content management system to contain material produced by the project and other relevant material. It is also anticipated that the QuBE network can be utilized to disseminate exemplars of good practice revealed by the investigation. Utilizing the collaborative nature of the partnerships will aid the dissemination of presentation of findings and materials both within the contributing universities and beyond. A web presence already exists (<http://trans-qm.org.uk>) – if the bid is approved, application will be made to acquire the URL of <http://trans-qm.ac.uk> to be hosted and maintained by the University of Winchester.

#### Reference

Hart, M and Rush, D (2006) *Student incorporation into the quality process – an examination of the business and management student experience*. Paper accepted for European Academy of Management Conference, Oslo 2006

Luton University (2003) *Effecting Change in Higher Education* project (HEFCE Good Management Practice Project 201, December 2003).

#### Projected costs

Please provide a full costing for the project, including *staffing, travel and subsistence, equipment, dissemination, miscellaneous, other contributions to full economic costs*. Indicate any contributions by hosting institutions. (Refer to *How to submit a full proposal* for details.)

##### Project Costs

Staffing	£ 22000
Travel and subsistence	£ 4500
Equipment	
Consumables	£ 300
Overheads and other contributions to full economic costs	£ 3000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 29800</b>

##### Notes on project costs:

The staffing costs are to employ the two researchers, currently both on fractional contracts at the university. Travel and subsistence is to cover travel to interviews and dissemination at workshops and conferences. The University estimates its costs on projects as approximately 22% of the total. Thus the 10% overhead in this project represents a significant contribution from the institution. In addition the university would host the content management site at [trans-qm.ac.uk](http://trans-qm.ac.uk) (this URL subject to approval). QuBE partners have agreed that dissemination activities of this project could be included along with the QuBE Oct 06 to Oct 07 dissemination phase activities, thus providing enhanced value for this expenditure.

#### Project management and staffing

*List staff involved in the project and their roles; indicate how the project will be managed; list any anticipated benefits in developing capacity for research, development or scholarship.*

**Staff**            Professor Mike Hart, researcher  
                          Dr David Rush Project Manager and researcher

It can be seen from the appendix that these researchers have an excellent background in this field. Professor Mike Hart obtained his PhD in 1997 on the subject of Quality Improvement in NHS Outpatient Clinics. They have broad experience of implementing quality procedures and strategies in HE. More recently, through the QuBE project, they have gained detailed knowledge of the latest developments in quality management within HE.

### **Project management**

The responsibility for planning, execution, dissemination and reporting on the project will lie with the University of Winchester. There will be a small steering committee which will monitor the project's progress. It is hoped that it will include representation from BMAF, the Association of Business Schools, the QuBE consortium, a senior manager from local government (Hampshire County Council) and an experienced academic from a subject other than business. The committee will have one face-to face meeting at the start of the project. Thereafter, to limit expenditure, quarterly meetings will be by teleconference, a mode of interaction that QuBE experience has shown to be an effective use of the time of all participants.

The focus of the project will be a straightforward web content management system, hosted at <http://trans-qm.ac.uk> (subject to approval). The functions of this system will be the storage of documents, both public for download and working documents restricted to the project team, dissemination and communication.

### **Benefits**

There have been benefits both to the business group and the university as the researchers have reported on their QuBE activities. The proposed project would undoubtedly extend these benefits, as lessons learnt are propagated through the faculty and institution. More widely there would be benefits to the business and management subject as project material was used in BMAF and ABS workshops. Since much of the material would be generic in nature, it would be promoted for use in other subjects. The project team is in process of building its capability to support HE quality management; this project would help considerably in that development.

### **Nominated reviewer**

Please provide the name and contact details (address, phone, email) of one nominee who would be prepared to review your proposal.

Professor Clive Holtham, Professor of Information Management, Cass Business School, City University, 106 Bunhill Row, London, EC1Y 8TZ,

[c.w.holtham@city.ac.uk](mailto:c.w.holtham@city.ac.uk) +44 -20-7040-8622

Please send an electronic copy plus one signed paper copy of the completed form to Cristina Sin at the following address, to arrive by 5pm on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2006.

The Higher Education Academy, Innovation Way,  
York Science Park, Heslington, York YO10 5BR, UK  
Email: [Cristina.Sin@heacademy.ac.uk](mailto:Cristina.Sin@heacademy.ac.uk)

**Professor Mike Hart**

After publishing a series of papers in the area of Health Services quality, Mike Hart obtained his PhD in 1997 awarded by De Montfort University where he had been employed in the Leicester Business School. Whilst there, he wrote several suites of easily accessible statistical software which were bundled with best selling books of Quantitative Methods. He was also external examiner at three universities and undertook two periods of teaching abroad, one in Jakarta, Indonesia upon the De Montfort University MBA program and the other teaching (in Spanish) at the Complutense University in Madrid. He subsequently took up his position in 1997 as Professor of Business and Informatics in the University of Winchester.

At Winchester, he was primarily responsible for the successful launch of a degree in Business and Management which continues to expand and to be well evaluated in national surveys. In 2001 in collaboration with Hampshire County Council he launched an innovative course (now a Foundation Degree) in Public Services Information Management, designed to fit the needs of para-information professionals employed in neighbouring local authorities. As well as leading a small but rapidly growing Business and Management Group, he also chaired the School Quality Committee. The Business Management group now ranks in the third decile of Business and Management provision (Guardian rankings, 2005)

Since 2002, he has been particularly active writing a series of papers relating to e-learning and pedagogy in higher education delivered at a series of international conferences. Together with a colleague, Dr. David Rush, he has recently been researching student involvement in quality processes in higher education which forms the University of Winchester contribution to QuBE (Quality in Business Education) project funded by HEFCE (see publications arising from this at <http://trans-qm.org.uk>)

**Dr David Rush**

Dr Rush has a special interest in quality management in HE. He was Chair of the Faculty Quality Committee from 2000-2003 with responsibility for programme monitoring, validation and review. The QAA Business and Management Subject Review report of February 2001 commented favourably on the quality processes implemented by the Business and Management Group. He was part of the team organising the successful bid from King Alfred's College, as it was then, for taught Degree Awarding Powers.

He has extensive experience in HE as an academic developing, leading and delivering undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at several universities. At Teesside and Portsmouth he was responsible for service provision as Head of Computer Services. He has also held headships of academic departments at two universities and external examinerships at three universities. His recent academic interests have encompassed the practical development of web related and object-oriented technologies, particularly for e-learning.

Over the last two years, along with colleague Professor Mike Hart, he has played an active part in the QuBE consortium. Winchester's responsibility was to investigate student involvement in quality management. This proved an illuminating aspect of the quality process. Investigating it in departments within institutions ranging from FE colleges to Russell Group Universities has given the Winchester team an opportunity to gain knowledge and experience of many current quality management issues.