

JMUpStart – A Case Study

Enhancing students' professional competency, employability and entrepreneurial skills through integrated work-based learning projects and careers workshops.

By creating a student dance company this project is developing a professional model through which to establish a more effective curriculum design for work-based learning at Level three. The intention is to better integrate students' experience in the university via the tutor-led module, with that gained with a professional host and through careers guidance and support. To some extent, all of these aspects already exist, but they do so in a vacuum. Students tend not to bring these experiences together, thereby losing the opportunity to make valuable links that could enhance their employability and make clear their graduate skills. The hypothesis is that such an integrated approach to work-based learning at level three will enhance student professional competency and entrepreneurial skills, thereby increasing their employability and so giving them a 'jumpstart' from university to the professional world of work.

Project aims and outcomes for JMUpstart include:

- Being central and influential in creating dancers, practitioners and administrators of the future
- Broadening and enhancing the learners' experience through a professional focus
- Facilitating the development of the learner in a professional context that is both safe and supportive
- Facilitating and equipping the learner to progress into the industry with confidence and an awareness of their transferable skills
- Raising the profile of LJMU with feeder schools and community groups
- Building, consolidating and strengthening industry, educational and community links
- Continuing development of the programme through reflecting on and incorporating feedback from participants

For the project, the work-based learning tutor will be aided by three key partners, each with specific responsibilities:

1. Dance Artist in Residence
2. Careers Support Services
3. CETL work-based learning support administrator

Students will have the opportunity to take on a number of different roles within the company supported by these full-time posts.

1. The Dance Artist in Residence, Angela Walton, has responsibility for creating a student company that will perform, teach, tour, and lead others, as part of the *learning through leading principle* integral to LJMU's Centre for Excellence in Leadership and Professional Learning. Continuing the professional model, the students are required to apply and audition/interview for positions in the company. Posts are available in:

- Administration
- Performance – including rehearsal director
- Animateur work – dance development
- Workshop leading

- Choreographing

The current company comprises: 2 administrators, 7 performers and 9 outreach workers within the education unit. Each year Level 3 students will be able to apply for such posts.



The company's first performance and workshop session(s) was held on 26th January, 2006 at Halewood Leisure Centre. The administrators are currently putting together a pack to go to secondary schools and colleges, and have two further performances arranged and a number of residencies for the education unit.

2. The Careers service, in consultation with the work-based learning tutor and Year three tutor, has provided in semester 1, workshops on:

- C.V. writing
- Letter writing/job applications
- Interview techniques
- Goal setting
- Skill reviewing
- Entrepreneurial skills

In Semester 2, they will assist in the organisation of careers talks from guests in the dance profession.

3. Support for the company's student administrators is provided by the **CETL work-based learning administrator**. Together they are promoting the work of the company and sourcing institutions/venues at which the student company will perform and lead educational workshops.

With plans for the company to perform at such diverse venues as the Lowry Theatre and local schools and colleges there is potential for this project to have an impact beyond the individual students. Consideration is being given to how it might provide the focus for the development of an extensive Educational/Community outreach programme as well as being a regional dance resource centre. Local teachers, artists and other individuals may also benefit from a planned programme of in-set training. Whilst support is provided by staff in full-time posts it is the students who will be integral to leading these developments.