

Surrey Lifewide Learning Award Pilot for Postgraduate Students

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One of the things we quickly realise when we leave formal education behind, is that most of the things we learn when we are in the workplace are learned informally. There are no books to tell us what to do so mostly we learn by doing, by talking to people, watching and copying other people, or by trying things out and learning the 'hard way'. That is life in the real world and we have to get good at these ways of learning to survive and prosper. These informal ways of learning and performing in contexts where learning is a bi-product of work rather than the goal of work are not normally recognised in higher education. Being good at learning to pass exams is no guarantee that we will be good at learning informally in the workplace so the University's new Surrey Lifewide Learning Award has been developed to highlight the importance of informal learning and to give it the recognition it deserves.

John Watkins, Director of Learning and Professional Development, at PKF Accountants and Business Advisers, who has been helping SCEPTrE develop the award agrees, 'It is experience that counts and that cannot be taught or bought.....Learning to juggle, balance and prioritise the many competing demands and experiences that make up a university experience is the best preparation for the rest of your life.'

SCEPTrE has been developing and trying out parts of the scheme for over two years but in March this year we were finally given approval by the University's Learning and Teaching Committee to undertake a pilot and we now have nearly 50 undergraduate students building portfolios which describe the learning and personal development they are gaining through at least 150 hours of experiences such as part time work, volunteering, organising events, running USSU societies or clubs, mentoring or coaching others, participating in sports, engaging in travel and cultural experiences and many more. 150 hours may sound a lot, but the hours accumulate quickly and you can include time already logged through activities undertaken during the summer.

The first stage of the pilot was limited to undergraduate students but we are now extending the pilot to provide upto **30** places on the scheme for post-graduate students on a 'first come first served' basis.

You can find comprehensive information about the award on the website we have created www.surreylifewideaward.net including testimony of students who have already participated in the scheme. In addition to text based information there are tutorial podcasts and video clips to help you understand what is expected. The podcasts introduce all aspects of the Award, the idea of lifewide learning and the reflective tools to help the portfolio building process. Alternatively, if you prefer a more social experience you can join one of the introductory workshops run by Charlie Betts the Award coordinator.

We have also created an on-line *Directory of Opportunities* containing comprehensive information on the many interesting activities available on and off campus that encourage and support personal development. The directory has sections on life skills, including workshops and training based activities, work experience with information on searching for part-time work or internships, volunteering, whether in the local community or further afield and other opportunities including mentoring, sports, arts and culture or being enterprising.

The nature of the Award means that each individual combines their own lifewide experiences in whatever way they wish and then keeps a reflective record alongside these within their portfolio.

This has resulted in some very exciting and unique portfolios, some in the form of online blogs or webfolios. But we are conscious that for some students their sense of identity comes through the creation of imaginative paper creations, diaries and sketchbooks, or shoeboxes filled with snippets of information and images, or perhaps the making of a film, digital story or song. We value greatly the individual passions and creativity that shines through carefully constructed and creative portfolios truly reflect the unique nature of each person's own journey through life and the meanings they create for the things they do. This is at the heart our individual lifewide learning enterprises.

An optional aspect of the Award is the opportunity to meet with a careers advisor, coach or mentor for 1:1 discussions on personal or career development. There are three options available: for those that have a clear career path in mind we will try to link them to a professional in this field to help further ideas and plans, for those that have no firm career plans but feel they would benefit from considering their options meetings can be organised with a careers advisor and for those that would simply like some professional input into their development plan meetings with a coach can be organised to discuss aspirations and aims.

For some students having the piece of paper that they can cite on their CV is important, but for most students the real value of the Award is in the encouragement and support it gives to thinking in a structured and professional way about their informal learning so that they are able to represent what they know and can do to potential employers.

In October we held our first Award Board that was set up in exactly the same way as any other university Award Board with two independent External Auditors to check our procedures and standards. Twelve students made submissions for either the full Award or the Learning through Work Certificate and eleven were successful. Commenting on the standards of learning exhibited in students' submissions one experienced external auditor wrote:

'In my considered professional judgement, it is a feature of this programme that the Award and the Certificate which we have reviewed set out to encourage students to work almost entirely to aims at the higher levels of the cognitive, interpersonal and affective domains. This they do adequately, or more than adequately. Thus, in relation to the national Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, standards here are either comparable or superior.' We are very proud of the achievements of our pioneering students to elicit such a response at our first attempt.

Please visit the Lifewide Learning Award website for further information www.surreylifewideaward.net

Surrey Life-Wide Learning Award
Valuing and recognising a more complete education

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COME TO THE EDGE!
And they came,
and he pushed,
and they flew.

Come to the edge.
We might fall.
Come to the edge.
It's too high!

Christopher Logue

Surrey Life-Wide Learning Award Pilot
The value of a more complete education
The Surrey Life-wide Learning Award encourages you to make your own education more complete through the things you do on or off campus in addition to your academic programme. It is this 'whole life' or 'life-wide' learning that enables you to become the person you want to be.

Introductory Workshop Dates (click on a date to register)
Tues 8th June 17:00 - 19:30
Wed 9th June 14:00 - 16:30
Mon 14th June 17:00 - 19:30
Wed 16th June 14:00 - 16:30