

Learning and Teaching Strategy

2008 – 2012

Creating an
Inspirational Learning
Community

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Aston University Learning and Teaching Strategy 2008 – 2012

Creating an inspirational learning community

1 Learning and Teaching Strategy – Background

Founded in 1895 and a University since 1966, Aston is a long established research-led University known for its world-class teaching quality and strong links to industry, government and commerce. With an outstanding international reputation for research the University is also regularly ranked within the top 5 in terms of graduate employment. Aston has gained sound accolades from the National Student Survey (NSS) as a small, friendly university that provides an excellent learning experience. In the 2008 NSS survey there was an 89% satisfaction rating from our students that resulted in the current position of 11th in the UK. In 2008 the university gained 12th position in the UK, in the Good University Guide. Aston has always had a mission to be an

'International centre of excellence in teaching, research and consultancy, focusing on subjects of professional and vocational relevance in the sciences, engineering, business and the humanities'

In 2006 the University appointed Professor Julia King as the Vice-Chancellor of the University and her vision was for Aston to become an 'inspirational place to work'. She recognised that to achieve this vision there needed to be rebalancing of the mission to recognise and reward staff engaged in or supporting research, learning and teaching or community engagement equally and the concept of a new balanced mission provided the focus for the development of a new strategic plan 'Aston 2012'.

This balanced mission recognises that excellent learning and teaching needs to take place within an environment in which staff are actively engaged in leading-edge research, scholarly activity and professional practice. This research underpins and enriches teaching and learning in a variety of ways: the curriculum of programmes is constantly being refreshed and enhanced by new research findings; specialist modules and dissertations in taught programmes often reflect the research interests and expertise of staff; students have the opportunity to learn about how knowledge is developed and created and to take part in the research process and thereby to develop valuable research skills; undergraduate and taught postgraduate students are invited to attend research workshops, seminars, staff presentations and guest lectures organised by the University, their School or subject areas. This sharing of knowledge between disciplines and research approaches is the way to create a dynamic learning community in which everybody is valued and their contribution recognised. The Learning and Teaching aspects of this approach are the key focus of this document.

The first part of the paper looks at the National priorities for learning and teaching and presents Aston's position and potential with respect to these. The next section gives a brief review of the development of learning and teaching strategies over the last ten years within the University before going on to set out the various stages in the development of the new learning and teaching strategy 'Creating an Inspirational

Learning Community'. This first stage in the implementation of the new strategy has brought together staff from within the institution to form a Centre for Learning, Innovation and Professional Practice. A centre to provide academic leadership for learning and teaching innovation, research and support for the Schools and Interdisciplinary Studies (IDS) in the implementation and embedding of their learning and teaching plans. The paper goes on to look at the reasons behind the approach and the progress that has been made to date. Finally it tables the Schools and IDS action and implementation plans for the 2008-9 academic year and sets out a time line for the monitoring and evaluation, as well as providing the key performance indicators to be used by the University Council.

2 Introduction

Over the last five years there have been numerous national developments within Higher Education that have had an impact on Learning and Teaching within the university sector. This section provides a context for learning and teaching developments at Aston.

2.1 Widening Participation

The move to widen participation had a government target to enable 50% of 18-30 year olds to engage with higher education by 2010. The latest participation figures indicate minimal overall growth in participation from 39-40% over the six years from 1999-2007 <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000780/sfrdius02-2008.pdf>

HEFCE policy on widening participation provides a background context that matches the position taken by Aston.

'Our aim is to promote and provide the opportunity of successful participation in higher education to everyone who can benefit from it. This is vital for social justice and economic competitiveness. Widening participation addresses the large discrepancies in the take-up of higher education opportunities between different social groups. Under-representation is closely connected with broader issues of equity and social inclusion, so we are concerned with ensuring equality of opportunity for disabled students, mature students, women and men, and all ethnic group.' <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/>

Aston University has a diverse staff and student base. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) figures show that 89% of students starting full-time first-degree courses at Aston in 2005-6 came from state school backgrounds and 57% are from minority ethnic groups, with 46% coming from the West Midlands. http://www.aston.ac.uk/downloads/marketing/fact-sheets/widening_factsheet.pdf

Aston has an excellent reputation for widening participation and its outreach work with schools and colleges with the received funding always deployed to recruit, retain a diverse student body. For example in 2006 a Learning Development Centre was established. <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/current-students/ldc/> in an area within Library and Information Systems. The success of this centre and other widening participation activities such as peer mentoring, volunteering, personal development planning and preparing for placements can be evidenced by the very low 4% drop out rate as the 2005-6 HESA data presented in the Guardian indicates. <http://education.guardian.co.uk/universityaccess/table/0,,2283706,00.html>

The University has also engaged successfully with Aim Higher, the new Life-Long Learning Networks and leads the regional National and Gifted Talented Youth Hub (NAGTY). All this excellent and innovative activity was managed through support

service departments with support from teaching staff. It was monitored by various hubs, steering committees and working groups through an annually agreed budget.

2.2 Employer Engagement

Aston has always worked closely with industry and commerce and currently about 80% of students on programmes have a placement or some form of work experience. Research has indicated that students who have the opportunity to gain work experience during their programme of study in general obtain at least one degree classification higher than those without

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/2007/oct/06/graduates2>

as a result of which the new strategy aims to be able to offer all students work-based experience by 2012. The key recommendations from the Leitch report (2006) http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/523/43/leitch_finalreport051206.pdf align well with Aston's strengths and strategy.

- *Increasing employer investment in higher level qualifications, especially in apprenticeships and in degree and postgraduate levels; significantly more training in the workplace*
- *Raising people's aspirations and awareness of the value of skills,*
- *Government to introduce compulsory education or workplace training up to age 18 following introduction of new Diplomas and expanded Apprenticeship route*

Aston has expanded its foundation degrees from 25 students in 2006-7 to 100 in 2007-8 and 350 in 2008-9. As a result of the development of these programmes the University was successful in gaining £1.6million from the HEFCE Strategic Development Fund to for the purpose of setting up a Foundation Degree Centre. <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/econsoc/employer/projects/show.asp?id=1>

There is considerable interest from employers and the student numbers on these bespoke programmes is expected to reach 500 by 2010. In September 2008 in recognition of the quality of the relationship with the employers and the programmes the University was short listed for the Times Higher Education Awards for Employer Engagement.

2.3 E-Learning

HEFCE has developed a 10-year strategy to integrate e-Learning into higher education, 'HEFCE strategy for e-learning' ([HEFCE 2005/12](#)). The strategy is intended to enable all universities and colleges to make the best use of information and communications technologies in their learning and teaching. The necessity of embedding learning technologies and e-Learning appropriately to enhance student learning is a major challenge for HE institutions. It is a key component of the latest HEFCE strategic plan 2006-2011 <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/aboutus/stratplan/> and in the capital allocations announced in January 2008 ([HEFCE 2008/04](#)), e-learning is specified as one of the areas of national strategic priority for the use of the Learning and Teaching Capital Investment Fund over the period 2008-2011.

At Aston the Schools have used two different VLE's that staff have developed on an individual basis. Technical computing support is centrally available through Information Systems Aston (ISA) and an externally focussed organisation Aston Media has provided the main support for the exploration of learning technologies. Schools with funding were able to contract Aston Media to develop learning resources. In 2005, HEFCE allocated funds to all HEI's to support the development of

e-learning activity and strategic plans. Aston received £157,000 and http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/circlets/2005/cl05_05/cl05_05a.xls This was used for a variety of e-learning initiatives the main one being a Centre for E-languages. At the same time teaching quality enhancement funds were deployed by central staff development to establish a Flexible Learning Development Centre (FLDC). The aim of the centre being to support staff interested in developing new approaches to delivery by providing small amounts of funding as well as a forum to share the emerging practice.

The FLDC was crucial to the aspiration to be offering modules and programmes by a much more flexible delivery tailored to individual needs. Many interesting projects have been conducted with real benefits to the subject group involved but much of the work has been at School level with occasional good practice days for wider sharing. There is real scope to both develop and deploy technology in learning and teaching but the existing resource is scattered within the University, between the Schools, Interdisciplinary Studies, ISA and Aston Media and there are no regular forums to bring the expertise between these well qualified and talented groups of staff together.

Library and Information Services at Aston work closely with the Schools and Departments to support the staff and students through a range of electronic resources. They have readily integrated library resources and training materials into the VLEs through digitisation of book chapters and journal articles, and recently introduced a Library Matters module. They are actively involved in the current debate sponsored by JISC about the future of libraries: <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/librariesofthefuture> .

2.4 Research and learning and teaching

Teaching at Aston takes place within an environment in which staff are actively engaged in leading-edge research. Research underpins and enriches teaching and learning in a variety of ways. For example, the specialist modules and dissertations in taught programmes often reflect the research interests and expertise of staff. Thus programmes are constantly being refreshed and enhanced by new research findings and students have the opportunity to learn about the research process and about how knowledge is developed and created. Undergraduate and taught postgraduate students are invited to attend research workshops, seminars, staff presentations and guest lectures organised by their School or subject areas. Within all programmes there are research components in various formats, from clinical research through to more traditional laboratory and library based research. Schools have strong links with employers and there are opportunities to undertake research projects within the work-based environment. Many module specifications include a "contribution of research" section. In line with the University's approach there have been national moves to encourage universities to support 'research-informed' teaching. In October 2005, HEFCE announced the approval of "additional funding to support teaching informed by research, for 2006-07 and 2007-08 to be allocated in inverse proportion to an institution's research funding." These funds were included within the institutional allocated teaching quality enhancement funds, for learning and teaching strategic plans. http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2006/06_11/06_11a.xls These monies will be used to initiate learning and teaching research projects in 2008.

2.5 Rewarding and developing staff in higher education

Aston introduced 'Teaching Excellence Awards' in 2005 for both teaching and support staff. This was managed by central staff development and there has been a steady expansion of the scheme. They have also supplied opportunities for staff to attend leadership development programmes at all levels and support for new staff and

postgraduate students to participate in a postgraduate certificate in teaching and learning.

Staff development also proactively used funds from within rewarding and developing staff to employ a FLDC Centre Manager; as well as sponsoring a number of staff projects to enhance individual skills. Effective deployment of these funds also led to the support for other enhancement initiatives such as the sponsoring of the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences Learning and Teaching Network.

2.6 The learning environment and learning systems

In the last few years, the University has spent over £31 million pounds in developing its buildings. This has included the Aston Academy of Life and Health Sciences building and a new extension to the facilities within the Business School along with significant refurbishment. In the 2007-8 academic year, there have been areas of social learning space created on all levels within the main building and a new one stop student services area on the ground floor. Over the next six years there are two further major projects planned, one to improve the teaching facilities and a major new build of the student residences at a further cost of £120 million. It is imperative during this time staff involved in delivering the student learning experience have the opportunity to work closely with estates to ensure that the learning environment meets the highest standards of modern university learning. The new strategy seeks to ensure that the learning systems are continually developed so that the student experience is of the highest possible quality.

This section has briefly highlighted the six main aspects that impact on the student learning experience at Aston, widening participation, employer-led programmes, e-learning, research informed teaching and rewarding and developing staff. There has been a considerable amount of innovation in all of these areas and a high level of commitment from staff. The aim of a new learning and teaching strategy is to enable an even greater level of sharing good practice and exploitation of technology to enhance the student learning experience.

In November 2007 the new strategic plan placed Learning and Teaching Innovation as the first key objective seeking to become a nationally recognised centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching by 2012.

<http://www1.aston.ac.uk/EasysiteWeb/getresource.axd?AssetID=4119&type=full&serVICETYPE=Attachment>

3 Learning and Teaching Strategy Development at Aston

This section provides a brief review of the development of learning and teaching strategies over the last ten years and the aims and objectives for learning and teaching within the new strategic plan, Aston 2012.

3.1 Historical Review of Learning and Teaching Strategies at Aston

The first Learning and Teaching strategy consisted of a statement drawn up in September 1998 by the Quality and Standards Committee following consultation with Schools and Learning Support Services. This was introduced to raise the profile of learning and teaching at Aston and to provide an operational steer to the achievement of excellence in this area. This original statement had four main strands:

- Professional Development in Learning and Teaching
- ICT Developments in Learning and Teaching

- Skills Development and the Curriculum
- Encouraging and Supporting Good Practice in Learning and Teaching

These key areas have remained the focus of learning and teaching over the last ten years and between 1998 and 2003 led to the development of a postgraduate certificate in Learning and Teaching for new staff and postdoctoral students. In addition all academic staff were encouraged to join the Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, which later became the Higher Education Academy. Two virtual learning environments were implemented WebCT in Life and Health Science and Engineering and Blackboard 6.3 in the Aston Business School and Languages and Social Sciences.

The first learning and teaching statement evolved to provide the institution with the first learning and teaching strategy in 2003. This focussed on five key areas:

- Innovation in the New Environment
- Diversity of Infrastructure and modes of delivery
- The Virtual Learning Environment
- Approaches to Learning and Teaching
- The professional Life of the Academic

Over the next three years (2003-2006), the University developed and maintained the previous work. The overall monitoring and evaluation was the responsibility of the University Quality Committee, reporting to Senate. Each School had a Teaching Committee that developed, monitored and evaluated the quality of all taught programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. This strategy was extended in 2006, using the same overall objectives, but with updated targets.

This was a highly successful era in which the university increased the quality of its student intake whilst maintaining a very good outreach and widening participation activity. It introduced a range of internal support mechanisms to enable the achievement of its increasingly diverse and international intake, established a flexible learning development centre to support staff in exploiting technology for the delivery for the curriculum and student support and continued to develop the support for new staff and postgraduate students.

The aim of the new strategy is to embed the strengths of the previous strategies within the mainstream operation of the University. The next section sets out the vision and mission for learning and teaching as contained in the University Strategic Plan Aston 2012.

3.2 Relationship to the University Strategic Plan

University Vision and Mission 2008-2012

“To be an inspirational place - where people can't wait to come back.”

We have broad strengths at Aston. We start from a position where our staff members have a strong commitment to teaching and to research and real strengths in both. We combine close and important links to our local community (24% of our students come from Birmingham, 42% from the West Midlands) with a growing international reputation. This gives us an exciting, but particularly challenging mission – especially for a small university – to develop the three corners of our triangle: delivering an

excellent learning experience for our students, enhanced by interaction with internationally recognised, relevant research, and linked to innovative support for local companies and engagement with schools and the community, involving students and staff in raising aspirations and attainment.

In order to deliver this strategy the University appointed a Pro-Vice Chancellor for Learning and Teaching Innovation, responsible for this strategic objective the overarching aims and objectives within the new strategic plan is to create a national and international recognised:

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN LEARNING AND TEACHING BY 2012

WITH PRIORITIES TO:

- Create intellectual challenge in a supportive environment
- Build partnerships to widen participation and enhance the professional and vocational focus of our programmes
- Offer flexible delivery tailored to individual needs

HIGH LEVEL KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- League Table Rankings – an aspiration to enter the top 10.
- Quality of the Student Intake as measured by the entrance grades.
- Employability as measured by graduate employment statistics.
- Student Satisfaction as measured by the National Student Survey.

OBJECTIVES

- To promote intellectual development in a high quality learning environment
- To deliver a world-class, and continuously improving, student learning experience within a research-informed environment
- To develop the curriculum, retaining our focus on disciplines of professional and vocational relevance
- To further develop the international profile of Aston's learning and teaching
- To develop our partnerships with a range of stakeholders
- To deliver of outstanding 'value for money' to students and funders
- To maintain wide accessibility to our programmes
- To increase the national and international profile of Aston as a Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching

PRIORITY ACTIONS 2007/8

- Revise and publish the Learning and Teaching Strategy
- Establish the Foundation Degree Centre
- Establish the Centre for Learning, Innovation and Professional Practice (CLIPP)

- Celebrate excellence in L&T through awards, promotions etc.
- Understand student performance issues and implement improvement plans

LONGER TERM PLANS TO 2012

- Re-assess the course portfolio to 2012
- Launch new programmes aimed at mature and part-time students using flexible learning approaches.
- Develop a strategy for Learning and Teaching research
- Develop our strategy for relationships with Academies and Trusts, beyond the partnership with St Alban's School and provide the Lead Sponsorship for the Aston University Engineering Academy
- Develop our vision for learning and teaching provision across the campus as part of the campus development plan

4. Towards a new Learning and Teaching Strategy:

This section outlines the purpose and plan for meeting the strategic objective to become nationally known as a centre of excellence in learning and teaching by 2012 and to create an inspirational learning community.

4.1 University wide objectives for Learning and Teaching

Discussions about the new strategic plan and the specific focus for the objectives of a new learning and teaching strategy took place over a three month period between November 2007 and February 2008 with a variety of groups and individual staff and students across the University. The Senior Management Teams in Schools and the Executive agreed to eight generic objectives in March 2008. There were four objectives focussed on staff and four for students.

For staff to:

1. Promote creativity and innovation in curriculum design and delivery which supports the needs of a diverse student population and their employment needs
2. Enable staff to support student learning and assessment through an effective use of e-learning technologies and appropriate pedagogic research
3. Develop recognition/reward opportunities and career paths for learning and teaching
4. Develop strong subject led curriculum partnerships with our regional, national and international partners.

For students to:

1. Enable all students to deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills to enhance their achievement and employability
2. Provide flexible and interactive learning opportunities within all programmes tailored to student needs
3. Continue to enhance learner support systems to enable student achievement

4. Provide a learning environment that is compatible with flexible delivery options to enhance student learning.

For these learning and teaching objectives to be achieved there was a consensus that the following aspects were key.

- Central leadership and co-ordination working with the four academic Schools, the former Combined Honours unit and key service departments to support learning and teaching leaders within the Schools and provide the benefits of synergy across the institution
- The evolution, restructuring and branding of the successful Combined Honours unit to form Interdisciplinary Studies, with a remit to foster part-time flexible delivery of university modules through collaborative regional engagement
- A critical mass of innovative curriculum developers, researchers, technical innovators and professional practitioners within the Schools that have clearly defined roles as learning and teaching innovators/champions
- Inspirational leadership and delivery reflecting the very best learning experience for the staff on for the PG Cert. This needed to be delivered in partnership with the Schools and illustrate the role of an academic practitioner at Aston. Work-based Masters and Doctorate opportunities would be validated for progression from the PG Cert along with transparent career paths to readerships and professorships in Learning and Teaching
- Support and resource for both internal and external dissemination of learning and teaching innovation and research to raise the external profile at Aston.
- Income generation to support the development of the curriculum, innovation, pedagogical research and scholarship in Learning and Teaching.
- Mainstreaming the innovative work of the widening participation task groups (learner support, student mentoring and volunteering, employability and placements) and the media and learning technology opportunities from Aston Media into the curriculum.

4.2 Restructuring and Leadership to form the new centre

It was seen as crucial to the success of the plan that staff engaged in student facing work that was relevant to the development of innovative curriculum, delivery and assessment methods were brought together. These included staff working in the outreach and widening participation office who were engaged in learner development and peer mentoring, staff from human resources engaged in delivering the postgraduate certificate, the whole of Aston media and the foundation degree centre staff as well as staff in the Learning Development Centre. In this restructuring all key areas crucial to development in learning and teaching namely Widening Participation, Employer Engagement, E-Learning, Research in Learning and teaching, and professional development for student facing staff have been co-located in newly refurbished rooms and form a new Centre for Learning, Innovation and Professional Practice (CLIPP).

CLIPP has appointed four new senior academic department heads all of whom report directly to the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Learning and Teaching Innovation. These are Heads of Curriculum and Learner Development, Media and Learning Technologies, Learning and Teaching Research and the Director of the Foundation Degree Centre.

Associated closely with CLIPP, through shared management by the PVC LTI and shared interests in L&T development, the new Interdisciplinary Studies unit will provide academic support for CLIPP developments through its interdisciplinary students, lifelong learning provision, foundation degree work, regional engagement and research student registration and support.

CLIPP will build on existing good practice and by aligning staff engaged in developing innovative curriculum, delivery and assessment methods and forming learning and teaching research team it will provide staff a central academic resource. The centre will provide leadership in technical innovation, pedagogical research and curriculum delivery and assessment as well as financial and practical resource to the Schools to enable them to develop action plans to deliver the agreed learning and teaching objectives.

4.3 Buy in and resource for innovator/champions from Schools

A second key aspect of the strategic solution was the creation of learning and teaching innovator/champion roles within the each of the four Schools and the academic leaders within Interdisciplinary studies. These staff will work collaboratively with staff in CLIPP to share intelligence, innovative approaches and research informed good practice. The plan was to seek at least three innovators /champions from each School within the three key areas of professional practice.

- Curriculum and Learner Development
- Technology Innovation
- Learning and Teaching Research

The staff are responsible for developing the learning community in each School, IDS and department and will be led by a senior manager responsible for Learning and Teaching. In Interdisciplinary studies the role of champion is a key part of the academic role of the three senior academic staff. The role of these teams is the development, implementation and evaluation of the learning and teaching action plans and targets to meet the University wide learning and teaching objectives.

All four Executive Deans of the Academic Schools agreed to fund the innovator/champion roles in their Schools. It is envisaged that each of these roles will be within 0.2 and 0.3 of a total work-load and that each role will be responsible for specific parts of the School Learning and Teaching Action Plan. Schools can change or renew the innovators on an annual basis depending on School priorities and identified areas of development.

4.4 A New Committee Structure

In line with the new balanced mission the committee structure of the University has been reviewed and refreshed. The former Quality and Standards Committee that had a Quality Enhancement sub-committee that dealt with Learning and Teaching, has been replaced with a major Learning and Teaching Committee, with a Quality Assurance, Regulations, Curriculum and Learner Development and Learning Technologies sub-committees. The CLIPP heads will chair the latter two with cross-University representation including the School innovators and relevant staff from the support departments. All relevant funding streams, widening participation, teaching

quality enhancement, employer engagement, research for learning and teaching will be planned and monitored via these groups to ensure that there is a transparent and strategic deployment that benefits the plans of the academic Schools. CLIPP will also act as a focus to share practice and support the experimentation of new methods of enhancing learning. The planned developments of Interdisciplinary Studies as an academic programme deliverer to support part-time, flexible and employer engagement agendas has led to the establishment of the Interdisciplinary and Work-based learning board reporting directly to Senate. This board replaces the former Combined Honours Management Group.

4.5 Rewarding and Developing Staff

Responsibility for the Post Graduate Certificate in Professional Practice has been transferred from Staff Development, who have developed and driven the programme from its inception, to CLIPP and is now led by the Head of Curriculum and Learner Development. All Executive Deans have agreed that this programme is important for new staff and the programme was redeveloped with School teams and validated in June 2008. Interdisciplinary Studies will offer all the modules developed for this programme and other modules for the development of professional practice on a stand alone basis. This will enable staff to gain credit towards high level qualifications.

New promotion criteria to recognise and reward staff whose main focus was innovative curriculum development, academic leadership of programmes and research and dissemination of their practice were approved in February 2008.

The Aston Teaching Awards were expanded in May 2008 to recognise the role that a wider group of staff play in delivering a successful University experience, including international student support and learner support. These internal developments will be used as a pre-cursor to the support and develop submissions for the National Teaching Fellowship and other external awards such as the Times Higher Education Awards.

Given the increasing diversity of the traditional academic role, it is imperative that staff have opportunities for relevant and timely professional development as well as clearly articulated career paths, whether that is in research, teaching or third stream activity. CLIPP will lead the development of professional practice for student facing staff and ensure the latest research informs best practice. The new staff on these programmes will become natural champions to sustain and embed innovation in learning and teaching within the institution.

5 Development of the new Learning and Teaching Strategy

5.1 Establishment of Centre for Learning Innovation and Professional Practice (CLIPP)

CLIPP was initiated on September 1st 2008. Overall there are 52 staff all of whom are core funded. In creating the Centre only one external appointment has been made that of the Head of Curriculum and Learner Development, the Head of Aston Media became the Head of Media and Learning Technologies, and a previous National Teaching Fellow holder from the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences was appointed as the Head of Learning and Teaching Research. Research informed best practice will be at the core of the centre's philosophy and income generation for core business essential to sustainability. CLIPP will provide academic leadership on innovative and research approaches, specialist workshops, individual support, information on national initiatives, access to national networking and dissemination of good practice. The centre will be jointly responsible with the Schools and champions for the development, implementation, evaluation and sustainability of the University

Learning and Teaching Strategy. The aims and objectives for CLIPP are provided in Appendix 2 – page 28.

5.2 Transformation of Combined Honours into Interdisciplinary Studies

The University has been providing undergraduate opportunities for cross-disciplinary study for many years, through its Combined Honours programme. At anyone time around 900 undergraduates are registered for Combined Honours degrees, taking two subjects equally weighted to Honours level. In recent years Combined Honours has initiated some Foundation Degree developments, in collaboration with a local FEI. The Director of Combined Honours led a Change Academy team project to identify changes needed to enhance regional engagement by the University. Combined Honours has been engaged in pilot schemes and research improving student support.

In 2007 Combined Honours gained external funding from the Birmingham, Black Country and Solihull Lifelong learning Network to implement a Lifelong Learning Centre, realising a long-term aspiration to provide part-time education through Combined Honours modules.

Recognising the potential contribution of cross-disciplinary part time study to the achievement of University strategic aims in both learning and teaching and in regional engagement, in September 2008 the Combined Honours unit was renamed Interdisciplinary Studies, to recognise its expanded mission. The staff team has been realigned and upgraded to meet the increased responsibility. IDS will be closely associated with CLIPP in the implementation of its aims through collaboration with academic Schools, central services, employers, and external institutions and agencies.

5.3 Appointment and empowerment of School Teams

All Schools and IDS have appointed innovator/champions and led by a Senior Academic responsible for learning and teaching in the School. These teams have developed learning and teaching action plans for 2008-9 (Appendix 1- page 17-27) to meet the agreed University wide objectives. These plans include the development of new curriculum, the deployment of innovative approaches and research projects to enhance the learning and teaching experience. Staff taking on these roles are crucial to the successful implementation and embedding of the new Learning and Teaching Strategy. The appointed champions are all mainstream members of staff, based in his/her own school and have credibility in the areas of innovative curriculum and learner development, pedagogical research and the innovative and effective use of technology to support learning. These staff have a good working knowledge of learning and teaching practices and will be able to motivate staff, encouraging the sharing of current practice and working with staff in developing their practice and dissemination skills.

5.4 Making the new committee structure work

Committees only work if the staff on them are clear about their roles and feel empowered. There is a current enthusiasm to ensure they become decision-making, practice sharing bodies, which enable staff to do things differently and more effectively. Advance use will be made of technology so that staff can comment and question papers that are to be received outside of the meeting with high quality meeting time being spent on discussion and decision making. The new committee structure is to be implemented in the first semester of the 2008-9 academic year. All terms of reference, work plans and progress are to be reviewed initially in December 2008.

5.5 Rewarding and developing staff

The new PG Certificate in Professional Practice has thirty new staff that have been asked to attend the programme by their academic Schools and departments. With this new programme staff engaged in delivering teaching sessions are encouraged to attend the programme. Staff from with Library and Information Services spend much of the first term teaching information skills to undergraduate and taught postgraduate students, at the request of academic staff, and they are expected them to study this programme. was intended to engender some debate about this. It is to be delivered through a series of residentials, seminars, action learning sets, the virtual learning environment and an e-portfolio. Aspirations are high for new programme and the programme leader has expectations that over 90% of staff will complete in the first year.

The new promotion criteria have been implemented with the internal promotion of two professorships in Learning and Teaching, a Readership and several Senior Lectureships such positive action has set out a clear agenda for the increased value placed on Learning and Teaching within the institution.

The expansion of the Aston Awards has been well received by staff from whom there were a large number of applications from both individuals and teams. There were celebrated by a lunch hosted by the Vice- Chancellor in September 2008.

6 Implementation, Evaluation and Embedding

The Learning and Teaching committee is where the responsibility for the development and evaluation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy, the assurance of the quality, standards, regulations and enhancement of all taught programmes resides. It receives and approves the School Learning and Teaching action plans and targets on behalf of Senate. It oversees the operational effectiveness of CLIPP and all University learning and teaching initiatives, development and effective use of the virtual learning environment, and other emerging technologies that support flexible and independent learning as well as developments in effective assessment and feedback that fall within the Learning and Teaching strategy. It is also the steering committee for the Post Graduate Certificate in Professional Practice.

The Pro Vice Chancellor Learning and Teaching Innovation chairs the committee, and its membership includes Senior School Managers responsible for Learning and Teaching, and School and Departments representatives for Learning and Teaching.

Between 2008-12 School strategies will be evaluated by this Committee to ensure progress and to share the good and innovative practice within Schools and Departments. There will be a range of events from good practice days, seminars, as well as an annual learning and teaching project conference day that will take place annually in June. The main evaluation and planning will take place over a two day residential event in July. The key aspects of the evaluation and planning cycle are shown in Appendix 3 on page 30.

The annual School Learning and Teaching priorities, actions and targets will be presented to and approved by LTC. The committee will also lead the internal course review process. Key outcomes from School Learning and Teaching Committees will also be presented to this committee. This committee meets four times a year. Four sub-committees will conduct the main operational business of the committee. Curriculum and Learner Development, Learning Technologies, Quality Assurance and Regulations. The responsibility for their annual work plans resides with those

sub-committees. The terms of reference of the new Learning and Teaching Committee and its subcommittees will be reviewed in July 2009.

APPENDIX 1 – SCHOOL ACTION PLANS

Aston Business School: Learning and Teaching Action Plan 2008/9

STAFF

Strategic Priority One: To enable our staff to develop their learning and teaching expertise in order to enhance the student learning experience.

Objectives	Targets 2008/9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Promote creativity and innovation in curriculum design and delivery which supports the needs of a diverse student population and their employment needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll recently reviewed and enhanced Peer Review Scheme Roll out new PG Cert across appropriate staff with the School Publish Good Practice Guide
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.2 Enable staff to support student learning and assessment through an effective use of e-learning technologies and appropriate pedagogic research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectively roll out Blackboard8 across the School Further encourage innovative use of Blackboard Carry out evaluative research project in this area Investigate user technologies for use in Maths and Operational Research work Champions to encourage more staff to engage with CLIPP and pedagogic activity to enhance a REF return under Unit 64 (Learning and Teaching Research) at the next research exercise Produce a list of target journals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.3 Develop recognition and reward opportunities and career paths for learning and teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work on new PRP criteria Continue HELM small research grants and expand them in numbers and size Ensure that the promotion criteria to Chairs and Senior Lecturers include appropriate recognition for Learning and Teaching Make successful nominations for Aston Excellence Awards Achieve one institutional nomination for National Teaching Fellowships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.4 Develop strong subject-led curriculum partnerships with our regional, national and international partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop further the links with European Masters in Management international partners Participate in HEA Subject Centre Employability and International Special Interest Group Steering Groups and related activities Participate in other subject groups and HEA activities as appropriate Participate in other national and international groups on pedagogy as appropriate Develop EU Atlantis grant proposal to encourage student exchanges with Canada and USA Develop PMI2 grant applications on UK China Employability and international exchanges between Aston and Korea

STUDENTS

Strategic Priority Two: To enable our diverse students to access and achieve a set of understandings, skills and personal attributes which will enhance their achievement and employability

Objectives	Targets 2008/9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.1 Enable all students to deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills to enhance their achievement and employability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on Intercultural competence training by embedding this into first year curriculum • Work on methods for developing innovative MSc dissertation methodologies which allow for group dissertations and more projects linked with companies • Develop proposals to implement the EU MISLEM project findings on Employability Competences into the curriculum • Work with students on deep/analytical learner project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.2 Provide flexible and interactive learning opportunities within all programmes tailored to student needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on the development of a part-time blended learning version of CH ABS final year curriculum as appropriate articulation for students on FD in HE/FE Management and Administration • Work on the development of proposal for employer partnership version of MAS degree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.3 Continue to enhance learner support systems to enable student achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stream diagnostic tests via BB8 in Maths and IT at pre-enrolment and use to provide extra support as required • Offer students the benefit of core writing skills project • Work with Royal Literary Fellow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.4 Provide a learning environment that is compatible with flexible delivery options to enhance student learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop greater use of BB8 for giving feedback to students on their work • Develop greater use of BB8 for learner support, provision of learning materials (including via digitalisation) and for learner support • Carry out Pebble Pad pilot project for production of Placement student reflective learning journals

6th October 2008

Interdisciplinary Studies: Learning and Teaching Action Plan 2008/9

STAFF

Strategic Priority One: To enable our staff to develop their learning and teaching expertise in order to enhance the student learning experience.

Objectives	Targets 2008/9
1.1 Promote creativity and innovation in curriculum design and delivery which supports the needs of a diverse student population and their employment needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop the role of IDS as a vehicle for staff to experiment in learning and teaching innovation through the establishment of a lifelong learning provision involving blended learning provision and part-time study modes. • Review the existing academic portfolio and proactively work with Schools to develop new modules, subjects and interdisciplinary programmes • To promote the development of employability skills through the validation of a suite of modules accrediting extracurricular experiential learning. Pilot and evaluation by CH students. • Set up and lead University task and complete group using Change Academy methods to lead an institutional review of timetabling arrangements to promote more flexible programme design and delivery • To continue development and evaluation for cross-subject integration
1.2 Enable staff to support student learning and assessment through an effective use of e-learning technologies and appropriate pedagogic research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with colleagues to engage in evaluation research through shared bidding – 1-2 bids per year. • Contribute to institutional development of existing and new technological provision through continued membership of relevant task and working groups (AVPRG, Web User Group; Blackboard user group, etc) • Disseminate work done by IDS staff in their own module delivery. Participation in professional development and CLIPP activity; internal and external publications and reports 1- 2 high quality papers per year.
1.3 Develop recognition and reward opportunities and career paths for learning and teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To prepare IDS staff for career progression through the activity outlined in this strategy reinforced by PDR, IDS management, University and external recognition and reward systems. • Provide development opportunities for colleagues in Schools and support services by collaborating across disciplines in development and research into learning and teaching, student support, programme administration & management, and other areas • To promote cross-disciplinary research and development in learning and teaching through the IDS&WBL Board, IDS Learning and Teaching Committee, and IDS Research Committee
1.4 Develop strong subject-led curriculum partnerships with our regional, national and international partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the partnership with Newman University College through the Maths, Chemistry QTS programmes and explore further QTS developments and development of shared interdisciplinary programmes. • Develop and expand lifelong learning collaborative provision through the Lifelong Learning Centre, and

	<p>work with existing FEI partners using Aston-validated modules and employers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and lead a national network of HEI providing interdisciplinary studies • Build international collaborations around interdisciplinary studies programmes
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STUDENTS

Strategic Priority Two: To enable our diverse students to access and achieve a set of understandings, skills and personal attributes which will enhance their achievement and employability

Objectives	Targets 2008/9
2.1 Enable all students to deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills to enhance their achievement and employability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To continue development and evaluation of methods for cross-subject integration by exploring the creation of interdisciplinary projects, research methods delivery; study skills delivery. • To promote awareness among students of national and regional policies and development relating to skills development and employability through contacts with employers and external organisations • To promote activity adding employability value to the Combined Honours programme exploiting the potential for university wide modules including professional practice, mentoring and volunteering opportunities • To provide supportive transition processes for incoming students through the FD progression countdown group, development of academic induction material in collaboration with subject staff, and engagement with University induction developments
2.2 Provide flexible and interactive learning opportunities within all programmes tailored to student needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued provision and development of IDS programmes for students based on principles of choice and flexibility • To develop the Lifelong Learning Centre provision of personally and professionally tailored programmes of study for part time students and their employers • Collaboration with subject teams and CLIPP to exploit opportunities for development of blended learning approaches to module delivery suited to the needs of part time students • Work with BPU, the LLN or its successor organisation and employers to validate employer provided education and training • Develop procedures for supervision and assessment of work-based projects for IDS students • Develop rigorous AP(E)L procedures for accreditation of work-based learning • Collaboration in e-learning and other projects with CLIPP and subject teams and external organisations such as FEI and employers • Refinement of existing portfolio assessment processes in modules delivered by IDS staff and use of PebblePad to develop assessed portfolios in the employability skills modules for IDS students • Refinement of use of Blackboard by IDS staff in programme management and module delivery

<p>2.3 Continue to enhance learner support systems to enable student achievement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To continue to provide excellent pastoral, academic and administrative support and advice to IDS students to facilitate their studies and extension of current good practice to new cohorts • Collaboration with colleagues in subject areas, CLIPP and student support services to evaluate and improve service delivery through evidence-based practice • To develop and evaluate programmes of pre-entry support and transition management for IDS student cohorts; an academic induction programme for FT/SW students; Structured transition arrangements and support for FD progression students; • Development of IDS International student support in transition to UK HE in collaboration with Schools, International Office and Student Support
<p>2.4 Provide a learning environment that is compatible with flexible delivery options to enhance student learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop the Lifelong Learning Centre as a regional resource for flexible learning through collaboration with subject teams, CLIPP, LLN, FEI and other external stakeholders. • To continue to explore the scope for provision of new FD programmes leading to progression at Aston • To extend IDS provision to Postgraduate level • Host cross-disciplinary and pedagogical PGR activity for CLIPP

School of Life and Health Sciences: Learning and Teaching Action Plan 2008/9.**STAFF**

Strategic Priority One: To enable our staff to develop their learning and teaching expertise in order to enhance the student learning experience

Objective	Targets 2008/9
1.1 Promote creativity and innovation in curriculum design and delivery which supports the needs of a diverse student population and their employment needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a review of teaching, learning and assessment within LHS programmes and identify and publish a good practice guide. • Develop an information resource to aid teachers in developing innovative and appropriate assessment strategies • To audit the PDP programme integrated into the first year of the Optometry programme (08-09). Consult with other programme areas in order to develop models for PDP implementation across the School for introduction into the 09-10 academic year. • IVIMEDS (International Virtual Medical School) provides a repository of peer reviewed e-learning materials and virtual patients (VPs). To continue implementation and evaluation of the use of VPs in clinical teaching workshops with 3rd year pharmacy students and carry out a pilot study in the use of VPs to broaden a patient centred approach in other areas of undergraduate pharmacy curriculum.
1.2 Enable staff to support student learning and assessment through an effective use of e-learning technologies and appropriate pedagogic research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the new LHS Health E-learning centre to provide a central locus for e-learning development. • Identify, buy and promote appropriate use of automated marking systems within the school for existing assessments. • Develop expertise in EMQ and other types of assessments suitable for automated marking, and for formative assessment, and promote their use in pharmacy. • Evaluation of IVIMEDS as in 1.1. • To carry out a baseline audit of e-learning currently being used in LHS courses, via personal communication with teaching staff. • Work with CLIPP to ensure that the University has adequate resources to support pedagogical research, publications, and grant applications. • Review the pedagogical journals that are available and work with the library to optimise support in this area
1.3 Develop recognition/reward opportunities and career paths for learning and teaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas of innovation and excellence in the school (through results of surveys) • Develop a seminar programme for exchange of best practice in teaching, learning and pedagogical research, which can be incorporated into, and will raise awareness of, the PG Cert in Professional Practice.
1.4 Develop strong subject led curriculum partnerships with our regional, national and international partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To monitor changing educational requirements of professional bodies. • IVIMEDS members include UK and international medical schools. This partnership will continue during the evaluation. • To further investigate e-learning initiatives currently in use in partner health care institutions.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a programme of mock interview exercises for students with participation of industrial partners and professional bodies. To enable students to develop good interview techniques and meet local employers. |
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STUDENTS

Strategic Priority Two: To enable our diverse students to access and achieve a set of understandings, skills and personal attributes which will enhance their achievement and employability.

Objective	Target 2008-09
2.1 Enable all students to deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills to enhance their achievement and employability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey UG students attitudes to and understanding of the NSS (UG projects, second term). Identify areas of concern to students in the school. - Feedback findings to School PDP has been designed to integrate reflection of learning into the programme in order that students can identify acquired knowledge, skills and develop action plans to enhance achievement and employability. Evaluate role of IVIMEDS as a tool to provide patient centred learning in 3rd year pharmacy students. Carry out an audit of careers support across the School and identify areas for development. Develop a programme of career development for optometry students.
2.2 Provide flexible and interactive learning opportunities within all programmes tailored to student needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey of use of formative assessment in LHS, and nature of feedback given. Investigate the potential for use of IVIMEDS virtual patients and repository tools within workshops, lectures and student directed learning. Develop interactive interview scenarios for students with people from outside the university.
2.3 Continue to enhance learner support systems to enable student achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an information resource to aid teachers in developing innovative and appropriate assessment strategies. As Additionally, to develop long distance pastoral and technical support for students and staff in partnership institutions e.g. 1+2 and 2+2 programmes in Optometry and Pharmacy and the Audiology Foundation degree.
2.4 Provide a learning environment that is compatible with flexible delivery options to enhance student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey of use of formative assessment in LHS, and nature of feedback given. (as in 2.2) Audit the school to identify areas where multimedia materials (practical and clinical skills) and self assessment tools can be developed to supplement the existing programmes delivered in the School. Dissemination of best practice via VLE and workshops. Initial evaluation of VPs in tutor lead workshops as 1.1.

School of Languages and Social Sciences: Learning and Teaching Action Plan 2008/09

STAFF

Strategic Priority One: To enable our staff to develop their learning and teaching expertise in order to enhance the student learning experience

STRATEGIC AIM	Target 2008/9
1.1 Promote creativity and innovation in curriculum design and delivery which supports the needs of a diverse student population and their employment needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify new teaching fellows between February and April 2009, appoint them to learning and teaching group, and support them • Invite each ASG to conduct thorough annual review of programmes • Hold annual School Strategic planning days to debate key issues • Encourage and develop interdisciplinary collaboration in programme delivery to improve the LSS offer of learning opportunities, including consolidating widening participation activities through targeted activities designed to support the different student populations within LSS by working closely with IDS and CLIPP
1.2 Ensure that all staff are fully equipped to support student learning and assessment through the effective use of e-Learning technologies and appropriate pedagogic research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School learning and teaching working group to Identify and monitor staff needs and manage resources, review annually by May • Define role of learning support team (pedagogical, technical and administrative) • Select targeted projects for research by pedagogical specialist/s each year by June • Fund small-scale projects conducting research into applied learning support methods/pilot schemes in October • Facilitate sharing of best practice • Secure ISA support agreement to meet LSS needs and review annually • Recommendations to be made to School Management Committee on development of learning resources and facilities • Investigate support needs (equipment, software, staff) to promote and facilitate independent learning
1.3 Develop recognition/reward opportunities and career paths for learning and teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective operation of new PDR system with agreed targets related to LSS development strategy and published criteria for determining successful achievement of agreed targets to be completed by May each year, with the necessary training in place. • Ensure all staff are made aware of the new criteria for promotion and provide individual advice sessions in February
1.4 Develop strong subject led curriculum partnerships with our regional, national and international partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline-based collaboration, outreach and research-led activities. Annual programme to be developed for each area of activity by the relevant School staff <p>Local/regional/national: Build LSS reputation, encourage students to progress to university, make Aston first choice</p> <p>Community Engagement: Work with School and university experts in Community engagement</p> <p>International: Build on existing links</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek new opportunities (see LSS International Strategy and action plan)

STUDENTS

Strategic Priority Two: To enable our diverse students to access and achieve a set of understandings, skills and personal attributes which will enhance their achievement and employability.

STRATEGIC AIM	Targets 2008-9
2.1 Enable all students to deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills to enhance their achievement and employability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the placements teams staff involved to secure a large number and variety of relevant placement opportunities • Build on and develop new contacts with national and international companies • Engage with national placement schemes and liaise with other AU placements teams • Motivate students to take up non-compulsory placement through training and promotion of benefits via Targeted programme • Improve awareness of benefits of placement year – placements team and academic staff to collaborate • Link discussion of student feedback to module review in context of curriculum review to ensure enhancement of employability and transferable skills
2.2 Provide flexible and interactive e-learning opportunities within all programmes tailored to student needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint highly qualified learning and teaching support team with expertise in pedagogical support and technical support • Further develop e-learning resources 10th floor and by subject group • Targeted bids to identified sources, internal and external to AU, with advice from CLIPP
2.3 Continue to enhance learner support systems to enable student achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School learning and teaching champions to investigate and share current discipline-based practices • Attract funding to allow enhancement of resources • Encourage effective use of staff and learning support resources through programme review, sharing relevant modules and review of programme offerings to prioritise strengths within LSS and promote distinctive offerings. • Encourage effective use of staff and learning support resources through programme review, sharing relevant modules and review of programme offerings to prioritise strengths within LSS and promote distinctive offerings.
2.4 Provide a learning environment that is compatible with flexible delivery options to enhance student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate potential market demand for flexible delivery at undergraduate and post-graduate levels. • Increase engagement with local communities (Schools Liaison, Widening Participation, Routes into Languages, and in the longer-term, investigate involvement in non-mainline provision of Learning and Teaching, such as distance-learning (English ASG). • Expand opportunities for flexible participation by recruitment of associate students to undergraduate or postgraduate modules, to UWLP and through extended CELCA activities. • Consider potential employer interest in Foundation Degrees for LSS subjects or within combined studies with CH team.

School of Engineering & Applied Science: Learning and Teaching Action Plan 2008/9

STAFF

Strategic Priority One: To enable our staff to develop their learning and teaching expertise in order to enhance the student learning experience

Objective	2008-9 targets
1.1 Promote creativity and innovation in curriculum design and delivery which supports the needs of a diverse student population and their employment needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance Learning – developing new variants for DL programmes through making use of VLE’s capabilities and local e-communities structured by Personal Learning or Eportfolio Systems such as Pebblepad. • Pebblepad – piloting the software with small groups of UGs during their industrial placement, maintaining University links and supervision whilst students are absent. Pebblepad encourages reflective thinking through the building up of PDPs and enables students to be self-assessing in their progress and learning. • Work-based learning – explore expanding programme structures to accommodate more flexible work-based learning such as the PT final year bespoke stage three in BSc Electro-Mechanical Systems resulting in a level six qualification and in the Foundation Degrees, such as Power Engineering.
1.2 Enable staff to support student learning and assessment through an effective use of e-learning technologies and appropriate pedagogic research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blackboard 8 – to enable the mounting of teaching material and modules mounted on BB8. Complete embedding of BB8 as vehicle for student learning with help of support team and BB8 specialist assigned to the School to be extended into TP2. • Turnitin – School-wide survey to be done via email to ascertain current usage of Turnitin or other plagiarism software within SEAS. Survey results used to guide further discussions in the area of assessments and issues surrounding plagiarism.
1.3 Develop recognition/reward opportunities and career paths for learning and teaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDR – initially implemented earlier this year, Performance Development Review is ready to be fully embedded through developing robust mechanisms that will take place at a School level. • Inform all staff of new criteria for promotion that is not so research centred. • Publicise and use Aston Excellence Awards within the School as an incentive for staff.
1.4 Develop strong subject led curriculum partnerships with our regional, national and international partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FD Power Engineering – further strengthens links with related industries and industrial partnerships at a regional and national level. • School Industrial Advisory Board – develop a bi-annual board that can advise on programme curricula and ensure our degree programmes are in line with industry requirements. • Smallpeice Residential July 09 – SEAS to host 3 day residential for Y12 in Power Engineering. Power Engineering provides links regional and national industrial partners. • Progression Mapping for three local FE colleges to be completed by December 2008. Mapping non A-Level routes from local colleges encourages local and regional links with FE institutions that share subject & curriculum links. Also part of a wider, national initiative run by the LLN. • Investigate more formal international partnerships, eg. 2 + 2 links, involving for example Chemical and Mechanical Engineering.

STUDENTS

Strategic Priority Two: To enable our diverse students to access and achieve a set of understandings, skills and personal attributes which will enhance their achievement and employability

Objectives	Target 2008-09
2.1 Enable all students to deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills to enhance their achievement and employability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandwich placement – SEAS recognises that experience and learning opportunities gained during an industry placement can dramatically enhance knowledge and employability and seeks to achieve greater participation from students in sandwich years. • Peer Mentoring – important leadership skills and other professional attributes can be developed outside the programme curriculum through practical modules combining core skills with programme modules. SEAS are currently exploring mentoring activities between UG and local primary/secondary schools.
2.2 Provide flexible and interactive learning opportunities within all programmes tailored to student needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation Degrees – developing further flexible learning approaches for Foundation degrees including PT and DL to suit students with diverse learning requirements. (See 1.1) • Investigate work-based MSc Professional Engineering in partnership with the ECUK. • Also new I-Eng progression route under development from ECUK as progression route for FdSc students.
2.3 Continue to enhance learner support systems to enable student achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement Office – industrial placements are recognised as valuable learning opportunities allowing students to gain unique experience before graduation. The office is being expanded to accommodate more support staff and being modernised through a stronger web presence. • Assessment & feedback – an issue consistently raised in NSS results. Work being undertaken by the L & T Champions, eg. a user trial on e-CAF (Electronic Coursework & Assessment Feedback system) for 2008/09 as new e-Assessment tool. The trial will study the learner's perception of structured feedback against their observed behaviour and overall performance. Ultimate goal to address issue of assessment and feedback to improve NSS results in the future.
2.4 Provide a learning environment that is compatible with flexible delivery options to enhance student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pebblepad – innovative and flexible personal learning system that is being trialled within SEAS for 08/09 at UG level and plans to incorporate it at a PG/Research level to suit the needs of diverse learners, e.g., distance learners, part-time students, work-based programmes and placements students. • To encourage the further development of the use of Blackboard to provide an improved learning environment for students.

APPENDIX 2 – CLIPP: Aims and Objectives

1. To establish the Centre and provide a critical mass of academic leaders, researchers, technical innovators and professional practitioners to support technical innovation, development and research in Learning and Teaching

- To recruit staff to lead technical innovation, pedagogical research and innovative curriculum development to provide academic leadership and sustainability
- To provide the necessary focus and organisational structure to bring staff engaged in innovation in learning and teaching together from across the University.
- To establish champions/coordinators within the Schools and services to enable the best practice to be shared and staff involved with developments in Learning and Teaching to focus on research and dissemination.
- To sponsor development, innovative and research projects with the Schools and Services to support the development of the University Learning and Teaching strategy

2. To provide academic leadership for the work based learning and teaching programme for new staff, and establish work-based Masters and Doctorate opportunities and transparent career paths to readerships and professorships in Learning and Teaching

- To develop an inspirational programme of professional practice, with staff from the School, Services and Partner organisations to enable staff to understand the role of student facing member of staff at Aston University
- To explore the development of a staff mentoring scheme to provide potential readers and professors career paths in innovation and research in Learning and Teaching
- To develop and validate work based learning Masters and Professional Doctorates in Learner development, Technology Supported Learning and Professional Development to support pedagogical research in Learning and Teaching.
- To work with the Head of Staff Development to expand the current internal, rewarding excellence scheme in teaching, innovation, research, peer mentoring etc to celebrate and value the innovative work of staff and students.

3. To focus learning and teaching innovation and research towards pedagogical publications and externally published outcomes

- The Head of Learning and Teaching Research, working in partnership with the co-ordinators from the Schools and Services will establish support networks and teams to develop robust pedagogical research themes.
- Funds will be made available to bring in national and international leaders for pedagogical research,
- Reading and Writing workshops and retreats will be established to encourage internal dissemination and external publication.
- Information on good practice and all projects as well as learning and teaching journals, conferences, workshops and seminars will be available on the Centre's web-site and disseminated through the School and service champions.

4. To generate income to support the development of innovation, pedagogical research and scholarship in Learning and Teaching

- All CLIPP Heads will have income generation targets to gain funds from National bodies such as HEFCE, HEA, JISC, ALT, LSC AWM and EU etc
- Bids and funding submissions for L and T Developments and pedagogical research will be co-ordinated by the centre working with the Research Support office.
- By hosting national and international events on Innovation and Research in Learning and Teaching
- By conducting consultancy for public and private sector organisations

5. To raise the national profile of the excellence of learning and teaching

- To provide support to the Head of Staff Development to develop the cases for the National Teaching Fellowships and the Times Higher Education Awards.
- To participate in a Times Higher Education Awards working group chaired by the PVC Learning and Teaching Innovation
- To engage with the Higher Education Academy and the subject discipline centres
- To encourage and support all bids for national awards in Learning and Teaching.
- By working with the local community, schools and colleges providing mentors and volunteers and seamless progression from education into work.
- By experimenting with innovative technology to support learning at all levels.
- To contribute regular research updates and articles to the Aston Aspects and explore the benefits of a separate Learning and Teaching Research Newsletter

APPENDIX 3 – Timeline for the development, implementation and evaluation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2008-2012

February 2008	Executive agrees to the implementation model that appoints, co-ordinates and supports School, CLIPP and ISA staff to deliver the Schools' targets and action plans.
May 2008	Validation of PG Certificate
May/June 2008	Senior Manager in Schools and IDS responsible for L and T and PVC – Learning and Teaching Innovation agree appointment procedure for champions, roles and School and IDS objectives for 2008 – 9
June 2008	Validation of the Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice
June 2008	Staff promoted to Chairs and Senior Lectureships on the strength of Learning and Teaching
July 2008	Business and Finance Plan for the Centre for Learning, Innovation and Professional Practice approved
September 2008	Formal establishment of Centre for Learning Innovation and Professional Practice
October 2008	School Learning and Teaching Action Plans agreed through School Teaching Committees
November 2008	Learning and Teaching Committee to discuss the new strategy and forward it to Senate.
Jan 2009 – March 2009	Senior Managers in Schools and IDS in conjunction with champions and Teaching Committees to agree new L&T targets for 2009-2010 in line with School Business Plan and L&T Strategic objectives
June/July 2009	End of year conference. Residential to evaluate the 2008-9 Strategy. Confirmation of 2009-10 action plans, sharing of good practice.
2009 – 2012	The Learning and Teaching Strategy will follow an annual cycle: July Annual L&T targets and action plans confirmed by Schools, IDS and relevant departments Oct Annual L&T targets presented to LTC Feb Mid term review School and departmental teams with PVC - LTI, Senior CLIPP staff and Senior School Manager July Annual monitoring, evaluation and sharing at conference. New targets and action plan confirmed for next academic year.

The Learning and Teaching Committee will monitor achievement of university deadlines. The School and IDS Teaching committees will be responsible for the monitoring of their targets and action plans reporting good practice and challenges to LTC.

The Senior Manager responsible for Learning and Teaching from each School, IDS and relevant department with the PVC Learning and Teaching Innovation will be responsible for monitoring the achievement of university objectives. The Centre for Learning Innovation and Professional Practice will provide guidance and support for the strategic and operational delivery of the Strategy.

APPENDIX 4 – TOP LEVEL KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR COUNCIL							
FACTOR	MEASURES	TARGET 2012	PREVIOUS FULL PERIOD	LAST FULL PERIOD	TARGET THIS PERIOD	PERFORMANCE TO DATE	ON TRACK?
OBJECTIVE 1: LEARNING & TEACHING	Non-continuation rates ⁱ (percent full time first degree entrants not proceeding to next year)	Better than benchmark ⁱⁱ	Benchmk 7.0% Actual 6.9% (2004-5)	Benchmk 6.6% Actual 4.8% (2005-6)	Benchmk 6.0%, Actual < 4.8% (2006-7) ⁱⁱⁱ		
	Percent 1 st /2i degrees awarded (replace with Value Added score ^{iv})	Within UK top 10 >74%	61.3% (2005-06)	65.2% (2006-07)	>68% (2007-08)	Update after degree ceremonies	
	Employability – % in graduate employment within 6 months ^v	Within UK top 5 >81%	79% (2006 graduates)	76% (2007 graduates)	>80% (2008 graduates)		

ⁱ Refer to 'year of entry' – the latest set is the current period, (2006_07 PIs) which look at 2005-06 entrants, previous period is the 2005-06 PIs, looking at 2004-05 entrants

ⁱⁱ Benchmarks change year on year, some years we are going to be looking at targets which are lower (higher for non-continuation rates) than the previous year when ideally we would be looking to improve on figures year on year as well as meeting/exceeding benchmarks

ⁱⁱⁱ (Actual not available till 2008-09)

^{iv} Aston will develop their own 'Value Added' methodology – to be developed

^v Use figures published in Times League Tables as a guide only. The underlying level of detail required to identify graduate destinations for the top 5 performing HEIs in this measure is not publicly available