

## Case Study - University of Leeds

This particular case study focuses on the Work Based Learning Unit's partnership with Yorkshire Water; however the WBL Unit also has programmes with the Cabinet Office's Emergency Planning College and Abu Dhabi Police Force.

### **Procedures and Practice of WBL**

The WBL Unit at Leeds University has developed an academic framework for Postgraduate Diploma (PgD), Masters, Postgraduate Certificate, City and Guilds Licentiateship (LCGI) and Graduateship, that enables modules to be mixed and matched and supplemented with other modules, as long as the compulsory modules of induction, evaluation and research methods are taken.

This framework provides flexibility to the University in meeting the needs of business and industry, but still ensures academic rigour in the development of the programmes.

The structure of the programmes is based on the capabilities of the students and focuses on demonstrating key skills in work performance in a variety of areas.

### **The Learning Contract**

The learning contract forms part of the 'Learning Development Plan' and is a detailed account of what the student's learning objectives are and what they are going to do to achieve their stated learning objectives. The contract establishes what is expected between all parties – the student, the industrial supervisor/manager and the WBL unit.

The contract includes identification of when assignments are to be delivered and what would happen if assignments are delivered late.

### **Student Support**

Each of the programmes included induction and required the establishment of a 'Learning Set' to enable the students to self-manage throughout the programme. In the programmes, the students were encouraged to be supportive with each other in the 'Learning Set'. The tutor and industrial supervisor worked on ensuring everyone got through and passed the programme. The environment of learning was more camaraderie than competitive.

The students on the programme were encouraged to write their own business case to their own line manager. This ensured a level of commitment, motivation and dedication to completing the programme. If any student appeared to be flagging, they would be interviewed by two WBL university staff.

It was a requirement for every WBL student to have a Mentor at work and attend Continual Learning meetings, as a large portion of the WBL was concerned with the mentoring process and management of learning.

### **The Industrial Relationship**

#### *Background*

In 1995, Yorkshire Water was ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in the OFWAT ratings. Following a board change in 1995, Yorkshire Water looked to how they could improve business and

management performance. They wanted to prepare leaders to head up the organisation. At the time, people development was not a focus and the operation was very silo-based. There was little integration of managers and management development. By 1999, the workforce had shrunk by 20% (500 people) and leadership was being seen as more important than management.

Yorkshire Water employed 'Kelda' to review Universities for corporate learning programmes. Subsequently, Leeds University was selected. Yorkshire Water explained that they needed a route through to higher level management qualifications. It was the tradition that people at Yorkshire Water became managers because of their technical skills and not their people management skills. It was their people management skills that needed improving. The junior to middle managers needed a post graduate diploma level programme in management.

Yorkshire Water also needed a postgraduate programme in asset management, but it could not be examined, as the idea of exams and tests made management staff uncomfortable.

The WBL unit put forward their academic framework to identify what needed to be undertaken academically to obtain the postgraduate award. Yorkshire Water then placed into the framework their own learning requirements. The focus was not to make the learning too prescriptive, however it was important to show that it wasn't just the Yorkshire Water process showing best practice but the best way to do a process using knowledge of that process in the wider context. The framework afforded the opportunity to give the learning relevance in terms of Yorkshire Water practices, processes and procedures but also attributed a broader context that may not have been apparent had the learning just been focused on Yorkshire Water activity.

The PgD in management was entirely work based and assessment was not examined. Five of the modules were selected from the existing MBA module, together with a customised induction and evaluation module.

### **Assessment and Feedback**

The Graduateship programme required a number of assignments to be undertaken that built into a project report. A presentation to the group and to the tutor was also required. The students had to include a reflective report, to reflect on what they had learnt and how they had learnt it.

The students were required to create a 'Learning Development Plan' at their induction stage, which would enable monitoring, on a monthly basis, of what they were doing in terms of learning and the learning objectives associated with each activity.

### **Accreditation and Value Addition**

A City and Guilds Licentiate qualification is offered on degree, Postgraduate Certificate and MSc.

### **Motivation for WBL**

The University has used WBL to meet a need in the business community, instead of just offering a prescriptive programme, the WBL academic framework enabled the 'picking and mixing' of taught modules with work-based assignments, projects and reports to create a customised programme focused on industry needs.