Enabling Change

JISC

The challenge

Aiming for effective BCE

BCE practitioners often undertake a unique role within their institutions. They require a varied collection of skills, knowledge and behaviours in order to carry out their role successfully.

A key challenge exists in identifying these and providing support and further development to enable individual practitioners to develop in their roles.

There are also important considerations en route to well-sustained BCE, including managing processes and implementing technological changes. There needs to be a better connection between BCE functions and other central functions such as IT, administration, marketing, procurement and human resources.

The Enabling Change project stream supported and guided institutions to implement and sustain efficient and effective Business and Community Engagement.

One of the projects, *Embedding BCE*, focused on having a more coherent approach to BCE within institutions enhancing compatibility and synergy between relevant strategy, process and systems through information management and process improvement.

Supporting Training, CPD and Staff Exchange sought to determine the support and enhancement needs of existing BCE training provision and the needs of BCE practitioners.

It addressed these by means of a professional development framework complemented by an online diagnostic tool backed up by appropriate training resources.

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> If it's not embedded in the core organisation strategy it will not be seen as a key strategic objective and will remain marginalised within that organisation.

Ian Jervis, Head of Business Engagement, Shrewsbury College of Technology & Arts

embedding
Business & Community Engagement

> "
> The problem the [CPD] project is attempting to solve has been here for a few years and will continue to be there for some time. It's a long-term issue.

Simon Whittemore, Jisc BCE programme manager

Expected benefits

/ Bringing BCE activity to the fore, bringing it to the attention of some people for the first time, recognising and better understanding the activity and confirming the extent of such activity, its resource implications and its achievements.

/ Identifying strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvements, leading to a development plan for future growth and stronger engagement and relationship both within and external to the organisation.

/ Raising the profile of the unique skills BCE practitioners possess, and providing guidance and resources to support their professional development.

Addressing the challenge

Professional Development for BCE

Jisc, together with a wide range of stakeholders, are addressing the issue of skills and training for staff working in BCE.

AURIL (The Association for University Research and Industry Links) developed a professional development framework for BCE staff carrying out knowledge transfer activities.

Jisc, in collaboration with AURIL and a working group representing the breadth of BCE and representatives from a range of institutions, has redeveloped the framework to bring it up to date with current skills needs and to ensure it encompasses all of the four dimensions of BCE.

The working group focused on engaging with institutions to ensure that the framework is embedded as widely as possible across Higher and Further Education plus other suitable organisations such as Public Sector Research Establishments.

Phase 1

Supporting Training, CPD and Staff Exchange

The primary output from the first phase of the project was the pilot diagnostic tool which allows staff working in BCE to map their skills to the (current) AURIL CPD Framework.

They are then presented with results highlighting gaps in their skills and offered links to CPD provision provided by both Jisc and external providers.

The first phase of the project produced a series of videos focusing on workplace secondments, outlining what BCE practitioners wanted to achieve from their industrial experiences; how this new knowledge was transferred to peers, learners and their organisation and describing the benefits and impact of staff exchange.

Strong collaboration with interested stakeholders across the four dimensions of BCE has resulted in strong buy-in to the framework development and will likely result in increased usage of the revised framework and associated resources.

Phase 2

Supporting and Embedding CPD for BCE

The second phase of the project has allowed for the CPD working group to consider a revised AURIL Framework expanded to encompass the four dimensions of BCE: Employer Engagement, Knowledge Transfer and Exchange, Lifelong Learning, and Public, Community and Cultural Engagement.

This led to the development of an online tool with following components:

Framework — 16 key processes with knowledge, skills and behaviours covering the breadth of BCE activities.

Self diagnosis — Skills development planning and an aid to recruitment, appraisal and career planning.

Resource finder — Training and development resources catalogue mapped against the new framework.

www.netskills.ac.uk/bcecpd2/

Embedding BCE

The Embedding BCE project investigated how well Business and Community Engagement (BCE) activities are integrated within Further Education Colleges (FECs) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the UK.

The project focused on processes and systems across the internal functions within pilot institutions, for example, IT, human resources and finance.

The project, which was led by Jisc infoNet, worked with 4 HEIs and 1 FEC. The partner institutions represented a range of organisations at varying stages of 'readiness' for BCE.

Embedding BCE infoKit

This resource distills the learning from working with each of our five institutional partners.

It provides resources to review business and community engagement activities within your own institution, and an explanation of barriers and/or issues associated with business and community engagement activities within further and higher education.

🔗 www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/infokits/embedding-bce

Each institution was led through a series of one-to-one interviews and facilitated workshops led by the project team to guide them through completing a **Diagnostic and Self Evaluation Workbook** produced by the project and available for other institutions to use. This involved some challenging discussions and debates to ascertain the extent to which BCE is embedded within institutions.

Following the interviews and workshops a set of strengths and weaknesses for each partner were identified leading to the production of a change plan which was acted upon.

Follow-up meetings have been held bringing each of the partners together to update on progress and gauge the impact the project has had on each institution. These are documented in the resource.

Institutional case studies

University of Glamorgan

The study found that there was a huge diversity of BCE work at Glamorgan, the impact of which is significant both internally and across the broader community. There is a current focus to create strategic partnerships to promote community links and build social capital, for example in links to FE colleges to create seamless provision and flexibility of access to education.

Newcastle University

During the project the University was in the process of drawing up a new strategy for BCE, including the establishment, maintenance and strengthening of partnerships and alliances. It was found that commercial engagement using collaborative approaches was an established part of the culture in many parts of the University.

University of Strathclyde

The study found that the breadth, variety, richness and impact of BCE work at Strathclyde was significant, especially with regards to its commitment to connect learning and research through knowledge exchange to make an impact on society. At the time of the study, the university was undergoing a major restructure; proposed changes aim to strengthen external engagement commitment and partnership development.

Keele University

The study found that there was significant amounts of BCE activity at Keele, this was viewed to be both strategically important, and a key way to achieve corporate growth. There was an Enterprise strategy, and challenging targets have been set to increase activity; however, in spite of its prioritised status, Enterprise was not widely understood across the institution and there was no employer engagement strategy.

Shrewsbury College of Arts & Technology

The study found that although there was a variety of BCE work at Shrewsbury, it was generally characterised by off-site course provision for adult learners. The College has reorganised its management structure, in part in response to meeting the BCE agenda. The restructuring reflects the need to organise roles into an integrated approach for business engagement.

🔗 jiscinfonet.ac.uk/infokits/embedding-bce/case-studies

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Benefits and impact

Embedding BCE

The project has enabled institutions to make vital strategic linkages across traditional boundaries that they would have not otherwise made. As a result external partnerships are better supported and deliver more value to the institution.

Institutions have utilised the Embedding BCE workbook to develop their business opportunities and their reputation and have made significant operational improvements and advances, including developing new partnerships and business opportunities, formalising an institutional self-assessment culture and developing customer awareness processes.

Impact examples

At Keele University, a new employer engagement unit has been established, to improve links with local business and community organisations, along with a new strategy and employer board.

At Shrewsbury College, operations have become more efficient along with success rates. Achieving the Training Quality Standard was one of the main highlights and the development of the customer charter and other tools along the way has aided a more joined up approach to employer and community engagement.

> A key benefit was the Jisc team's deliberate engagement of a broad range of constituencies across the University … In particular, the importance of ensuring all parts of the University are aware of BCE and how it impacts on their activity (be that research, IT support, finance, student support etc) was clearly illustrated.
>
> Pete Hooper, Keele University

> The Embedding BCE project was a major help in improving processes and one of the major contributors to a 300% increase in revenue over 2 years.
>
> Ian Jervis, Head of Business Engagement, Shrewsbury College of Technology & Arts

Professional Development for BCE

The CPD project brought together multiple stakeholders from a wide range of organisations to strengthen the links between the various aspects that make up BCE.

Benefits from the tool identified from user testing and feedback include helping BCE practitioners, senior management and human resources to:

- Assess knowledge
- Evaluate skills
- Find professional development resources
- Create a profile of competencies individually and within a team
- Prepare for recruitment of engagement-related roles

> For universities to maintain their momentum in enhancing collaboration, improved enterprise and collaboration skills are needed. The Professional Development Diagnostic tool for BCE offers practical help to individuals in developing those skills.
>
> Sir Tim Wilson, author of the Wilson Review

> These tools will help to develop the workforce and establish standards against which to measure one's efforts.
>
> Professor Freda Tallantyre, Higher Education Academy

> The Framework and Diagnostic Tool provide important information on the practical skills needed to succeed.
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> Dr Alasdair Cameron, Executive Director of AURIL