

Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund 2020/21: Final Report

Title of Project:

EMBEDDING CHANGEMAKER SKILLS AND SOCIAL INNOVATION INTO STUDENT LEARNING

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This report is intended to provide an opportunity to reflect on your project, with an emphasis on impact (actual and potential) and also on the process itself. It will be used to inform future developments in learning and teaching stemming from the project and the development of the Innovation Funds generally. Thank you for your work on the project and we look forward to helping you disseminate and build on your findings.

Please return the completed report to Marie Graham (marie.graham@northampton.ac.uk) by 30th June 2021. Please also make a copy available on your project blog.

1. Briefly describe your project, with particular reference to the impact on learning and teaching practice – yours, your colleagues and for the wider university. This could be immediate or potential impact.

In the cross-faculty innovation project, design and entrepreneurship students have gained insights from different faculties (FBL/FAST) and each other's subject expertise through a variety of scheduled activities throughout the academic year that challenged, developed and supported their soft and discipline skills.

The project funding allowed the development, time and resource to facilitate the specially created workshops which incorporated different elements of the University. It also supported additional resources including student researchers who experienced the breadth of research from project management, to ethics, polls/questionnaires/topic guide creation, workshop and focus facilitators to data collecting. The project also funded a designer who led on UI/UX workshop content and the creation of visual guidelines for dissemination and future university wide use as well as gave access to a host of other University support staff.

Through a structured workshop series, with the possibility of new venture creation based on the new product development (NPD) methodology, data collection and evaluation, this project demonstrates how changemaker skills and social innovation can be embedded into student learning. It proposes an iterative model and a roadmap to enhance the delivery of the current Changemaker Certificate, which is an employability initiative developed by the university.

In our research, the suitability of workshops, student researchers as facilitators, and visual guidelines for University use have been created. The student engagement and entrepreneurial activity has been evaluated and shared through blog, dedicated NILE site and dissemination at internal and external conferences.

The immediate impact on our students and staff has been to initiate changes to how students learn and staff teach. This project reviews practice at business and design studies at our university, MKT3031 and 3DD4003 modules in particular by evolving the skills that students need. This is supported by student feedback we received which informs the setup and delivery of future workshops and assignments. Longer term impacts include the students' trajectory and their ability to develop themselves and network(s), and staff to develop and test their area of expertise and embrace cross faculty ideas and engage on students learning journey.

The immediate impact on our colleagues due to our initial dissemination shows has identified potential new ways of faculty/Institution working, and to start to break down silos. In addition impact on colleagues and the university will be supported by offering the findings of the learning innovation of 'inter-faculty student and staff collaboration' to other programmes. This will warrant the impact and to increase the reach, we have developed an iterative model and toolkit for cross collaboration, including a project timeline and a roadmap infographic, which is a visual road map of journey. These are contained in a toolkit of assets in a dedicated NILE module and communicated through blog and conferences.

This shows a potential impact on our and our colleagues learning and teaching practices which can have impact on the wider university. This has led to discussions with our mentor and project team to consider proposing internal policy change, consider the scaling up and testing of our methods and also, mapping the workshop series onto and semesterised curriculum.

2. Describe how you have, or intend to, disseminate your findings. What would help you with this activity?

Initially using an outward facing blog, was used to maintain momentum and disseminate our approach. The team devised a dissemination strategy during the project, using a shared space which has 12 entries across different media including book chapters, academic and professional Journals as well as local radio.

Research output already disseminated includes:

- Images of Research 2021
- Students as researcher – British Conference for Undergraduate Research 2021 (Leeds)
- Institute of Learning and Teaching Conference 2021 (Cracker - Barrel session, and Roadmap poster)
- UON Research Conference 2021 (Opportunities Strand: Virtual Prototyping Presentation)
- Paper accepted at peer reviewed International Conference on Engineering and Product Design Education (9+10 September 2021). Conference Proceedings
- Develop and build on our model and roadmap of cross-faculty innovation

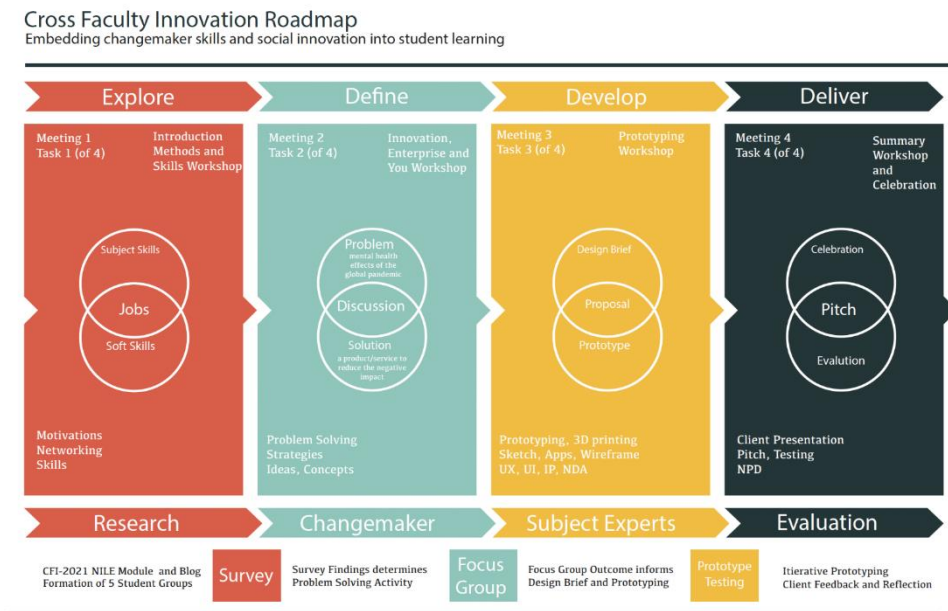


Figure: Student groups from two faculties attend four virtual workshops. Process visualised in a roadmap diagram

The Learning and Teaching Conference (15 June) and UON Research Conference (16 and 17 June) has prepared the ground for wider cross-faculty networking. This considers offering a collaborative space to demonstrate the project and its outcomes, and to encourage other colleagues to work more collaboratively or to bid for a project by sharing our experiences.

The current aims are to develop the conference papers into academic and practitioner Journal articles which can be submitted to peer reviewed Journals to support colleagues, UoN as well as best practice for students and their future.

We hope that UoN will support us in attending conferences where we can receive peer feedback in order to strengthen our submissions around students as researchers, cross-faculty collaborations and university wide policy. We further hope that the staff will be further supported in developing their research through time and resource to enable the successful dissemination of this pilot project.

3. Please reflect on the research process. What was most enjoyable and interesting about it? What barriers if any did you encounter? What would have made the project easier to complete? How did the mentoring relationship help and what would make it more useful in future?

What was most enjoyable and interesting about it?

Overall this was a great experience bringing together faculties, support staff as well as changemaker in an 'official' project giving it gravitas and belonging. Feeling supported and funded (ie believed in) by the university was inspiring and motivating for the staff and infectious for the research assistants as well as participants. We were able to achieve things (despite being online) which without the bid would not have been doable including bridging and building skills gaps, identifying new areas for student and programme development as well as initial steps to a roadmap to support the institution work more collaboratively which can benefit both staff and students. The most interesting phase was working together as a team and bringing in each persons strength to develop something even stronger than we had initially imagined, but also to encounter new ideas through mentorship.

We used Blackboard /NILE which suits record management needs but is unsuitable for visual learning. MIRO is a much better canvas to collaborate remotely. We found a good space between doing a 'good job and learning'.

What barriers if any did you encounter?

The only barriers encountered were internal processes which hindered progress. Therefore, items such as raising PO forms, working with Unitemps to pay our researchers and general admin tasks which were very time intensive and put an extra strain on the project. This is because they were not factored in to the management for the staff when devising the workplan.

What would have made the project easier to complete?

The project went smoothly, having an admin assistant to deal with all the paperwork (see above) but other than that, the team completed all the steps they wanted to and achieved the outcomes of the project.

How did the mentoring relationship help and what would make it more useful in future?

The mentoring, which was not expected, added value by re-affirming the importance and the interest in the project. It was nice to be 'officially' heard and mentored. It supported the team by having extra milestone and also, gave way to a new research avenue(s) which supported the teams in considering their next steps during the project but also next steps. The external voice helped guide us through the ups and downs of the project and identified new potential areas of interest for the project team. Maintaining and building on this mentoring relationship should further support us. In the future, we suggest (as we did), setting an agenda for each meeting, agreeing milestones and openly debating concerns and worries. We found the mentoring really valuable and suggest it is kept for future bids.

4. What other reflections on the project do you have that will make the scheme better for participants and the university community?

This project has been a steep learning curve – great fun but also very challenging. We are very grateful for the ILT bid which supported our project team and enabled the a cross faculty experience for our students. While there were many ‘extras’ – meetings, mentoring sessions and resource intensive admin tasks, we think there are several things that future participants and the university community should to consider:

- Everything takes much longer than you expect. Be clear on your scope and try to not do too much. We think that creating supportive teams (colleagues) to work together to assist each other, lessen the time constraints, motivates and lowers demands on individuals. We think this is very beneficial and should be encouraged.
- Start early – we were (despite lockdown) able to navigate and adjust our ideas and hold virtual workshops and data collection sessions. All were successful as we gave ourselves time (even if we worked over time to get it all done!) That being said, extending the submission time for the final report, by a month, would have been really helpful.
- Internal systems are hard to navigate – if there would have been one ‘go to’ person for PO’s, paying different departments, supporting on the paperwork – that would have been time saving.
- Encourage more students as researchers (or at least to be part of the team). Our students learnt to so much and grew as students and researchers. Be mindful that if you are using student researchers their recruitment and training is vital. Maybe there could be more support here. We would like to put forward the idea of a 30min ‘power’ session - how Unitemps write and post job adverts, how to navigate their payment system and basic training needs.
- Use NILE. We created a module CFI-2021 (new organisation on NILE) that we can now use to ‘show’ off our great work and that of our students. The students know it, it is a safe space and it can now be used to expand our scope of the project.
- Working together not just as cross-faculty but across academic and employability services is needed to support students learning journeys. The project highlighted the different approaches and priorities that exist within the university. Opening up the dialogue across the university (such as hot desking was supposed to) proved useful in understanding our learners. Our students felt Changemaker was inconsequential to their futures, having not realised its potential or all of the offerings. Embedding changemaker into our bid and workshops supported cross university learning. We encourage others benefit from the expertise available to them. Finally, we think we should all ask ourselves: How can we, as a University be clearer and make departments work better together?