



Report on EHEA Workshop Series III

Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships, Capacity Building Projects, and Innovative Student-Centred Learning across all Degree Cycles.

1. Organisation

Lead Experts: John Reilly, Michael Blakemore, and Andy Gibbs

Quality Assurance: David Phinnemore

Student Expert: Rebecca Maxwell Stuart

Guest Speakers: Viktor Gronne (Cardiff) and Cristi Popescu (Birmingham) – ESU (European Students' Union)

Locations and participant details:

Date of Workshop	Location	No of Participants	No. of institutions
28 th January 2016	Cardiff	11	6
2 nd February 2016	Birmingham	30	17

2. Introduction

The third and final series of EHEA workshops across the UK were on Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships and Capacity Building Projects, and Innovative Student-Centred Learning across all degree cycles. The aim of these workshops was to help attendees gain a detailed understanding of how to participate in strategic partnerships and capacity building projects. Moreover, the workshops were designed to emphasise the importance of student-centred learning as a key focus in all Erasmus+ projects.

Since the workshops covered a number of different Erasmus+ initiatives, there was flexibility regarding the targeted audience as shown in the following:

- Support services – the workshop was designed to foster 'joined up thinking' in 'internationalisation'
- Academics, international office staff, student union officers and staff, anyone responsible for developing, delivering, and supporting international partnerships and collaboration.
- Anyone planning to submit proposals for funding under the Erasmus+ Programme Key Action 2 – Strategic Partnerships and Capacity Building in Higher Education.

3. Workshop objectives and intended outcomes

There were several aims for the delivery of this workshop. The first was to help participants to gain an effective understanding of the criteria for high-quality applications for Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships and Capacity Building projects. Second, was to understand key European policy and priorities for student-centred learning in all cycles. The third aim was to discuss fields in which UK HEIs may share good practice and work with others to develop innovative projects. Similar to the other workshops, another aim was to explain the relevance of Bologna Process tools to participants, specifically focusing on collaborative projects. The final aim was to provide a practical focus, emphasizing what is involved in project development and understanding in detail the evaluation criteria that are applied to applications.

There were four key themes to this workshop:

1. A review of European policy and initiatives relevant to innovative student-centred learning in all three cycles
2. A focus on building proposals from the student/learner perspective
3. Building and sustaining strong partnerships across Europe and beyond
4. Prerequisites and evaluation criteria for applications for Strategic Partnership and Capacity Building projects.

The workshops benefitted from the in-depth experience of the UK EHEA Experts who have been involved with evaluating and quality assuring strategic partnership and capacity building projects at the European level and in the planning and development of successful applications and their subsequent management. Furthermore, the student expert was able to provide a first-hand perspective on student-centred learning, which was complimented by representatives of the European Students' Union explaining the European PASCL project.

There were two significant reasons for the development of these workshops as stated in the overall UK application. The first was to run workshops that focused on student-centred learning and innovative teaching methods. The second reason was that the workshops aimed to address two problematic areas in UK's attitude to/management of mobility: 1) the need to formalize the ways by which recognition is provided for traineeships/work-placement; and 2) the need for greater flexibility among professional bodies in accommodating mobility in courses which require professional accreditation. The implementation of the overall project has incorporated aspects of these themes in all three sets of workshops (for example, work placements were a feature of the second set of workshops on 'mobility and employability'), whilst aspects of student-centred learning have been incorporated in all three, but more explicitly in this third set of workshops.

4. Programme and Coverage

List of materials prepared before the event:

A series of prompts were compiled in a document and sent to participants prior to the event, in order to help facilitate discussions on the day. A document was prepared showing the headline 2016 specifications for capacity building projects.

Summary of key points covered in presentations [based on PowerPoint or other visual aids]

The Policy Context and Agenda – the basis for project funding

This presentation was delivered by Michael Blakemore. It provided insightful information into how the themes for the workshop fitted within the wider European context, this included information on the Paris Declaration and the Modernisation Agenda. The presentation was summarized with the following points to the participants of the workshop:

- “Understand and acknowledge the policy context
- Be ‘European’ and international in your scope
- Be inter-institutional and inter-disciplinary
- Be inventive and creative
- But, above all, show that proposals are ‘joined up’ and coherent.”

‘How I learned: How I would have liked to learn’

This presentation delivered by Rebecca Maxwell Stuart provided a thoughtful, analytical perspective on student-centred learning based on national and international experiences in different cultural contexts, with illustrated examples of good and bad practice. The presentation went on to address how student-centred learning could be developed for Erasmus+ applications, focusing on how to capture and share best practice according to the Leuven Communiqué definition of the concept.

Peer Assessment of Student-Centred Learning

This presentation was delivered by a representative of the European Students’ Union. The presentation explored understanding of ‘student centred learning’ and set it in the wider context of learner engagement. It acknowledged that although all European policy statements assert the need for ‘student centred learning’ the application of the approach at the institutional level varied in quality. The presenter explained that the PASCL project is designed to support HEI’s in the implementation of SCL and provides a mechanism for quality assurance. This was followed by how attendees could become involved in the PASCL project.

The Relevance of Bologna – EHEA

This presentation was delivered by John Reilly. Similar to the previous sets of workshops, it focused on innovative student-centred learning with emphasis on Bologna Process tools and how they related to UK HEIs. There was specific mention to how student-centred learning could be approached at all degree cycles. There was also emphasis on the Diploma Supplement and reference to the Higher Education Achievement Report, which is the UK’s equivalent to the Diploma Supplement and is being adopted in many UK HEIs. A key focus was on the new ECTS Guide and the support which it provides for a learner centred approach in all cycles and the emphasis in EU projects on the use of ECTS as a mechanism for supporting curriculum development and ensuring transparency and recognition. Attention was drawn to sections of the revised European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance which emphasise the need to engage students in curriculum development and the new Quality code for Joint programmes approved in Yerevan in 2015.

Capacity Building

This presentation was delivered by Andy Gibbs, focusing on Erasmus+ Capacity Building projects in HE. It focused on two types of projects: Joint projects and structural projects. The presentation was illustrated with examples of each type of capacity building project, with information on who can participate and examples of the different possible configurations of consortia. Practical information

was also provided on the updated specifications, alongside the application and selection procedures of the projects.

Strategic Partnerships

This presentation was delivered by John Reilly, focusing on Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships. It provided practical guidance on applications, highlighting the need for the proposals to address either at least one horizontal priority or at least one specific priority in the field of education impacted. There was also specific reference to the award criteria to help inform attendees of how to create a successful bid. The presentation was summarized in the following tips:

- “Read the Guide
- Address policy priorities
- Respond to award criteria
- Remember
 - Innovative
 - Socially Inclusive
 - Recognition and transparency
 - Modernisation
 - Refugees
- Write clear ‘international’ English to be understood by other specialists”

5. Evaluation

All those who completed evaluation forms stated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied that the workshop aims had been met and that they found the workshop valuable and instructive. Feedback also indicated that most participants found all of the presentations useful or very useful. Feedback comments indicated that participants found the presentations on Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships and Capacity Building Projects particularly informative.

Responses to the question, ‘*What was the most useful part of the workshop?*’ included the following:

‘Understanding that ideas we have could actually work’

‘Learning what is possible and an outline of criteria and regulations’

‘Policy context, details behind strategic partnerships/capacity building projects’

‘Networking and discussing activity with other institutions’ Clarity on Strategic Partnerships and Capacity Building Projects’

‘A chance to listen to an overview of the whole process’

‘Going through individual aspects of Erasmus+ which need to be covered in order to complete a good application’

‘Discussion on Student-Centred Learning and signposting resources’

‘Having little knowledge, I found the workshops extremely illuminating’

In response to the question 'What follow up activities would be helpful for you?' participants indicated the following:

- 'Access to the presentations and any other useful resources'
- 'Contact with useful people to develop ideas'
- 'An opportunity to look more closely at applications/Application preparation workshop'
- 'Example of successful Capacity Building and Strategic Partnership projects'
- 'Sharing the contact details of participants'

The level of interest in CBHE was quite high with many questions and a good deal of experience from workshop participants.

Informal feedback from the two workshops indicated that for many of those attending it had been a genuine learning experience. They valued the presentations on the wider policy and Bologna (EHEA) context, the student perspective and the focus on practical aspects of applying for projects. There is evidently an ongoing need for a designated list of accredited experts to whom HEIs can turn for support in gaining a wider understanding of EU policy and funding initiatives.

6. Dissemination

We promoted EHEA, the workshops and associated resources at appropriate times over nine months from August 2015 until April 2016 through various British Council and UK Erasmus+ National Agency (NA) channels, including:

- The International Higher Education digest – a bi-monthly online news round-up sent to over 3,600 HE contacts;
- The Erasmus+ enewsletter sent out to over 4,000 contacts;
- The British Council Erasmus+ Higher Education enewsletter;
- A [blog](#) on EHEA and the workshops on the Erasmus+ website;
- Key information about the workshops on both the [Erasmus+](#) and British Council [IHE](#) websites;
- Published all the workshop presentations and associated information on the British Council [IHE](#) website;
- Promoted the workshops on the Erasmus+ NA Facebook page which has over 6,000 followers as well as via the NA Twitter account;
- This report will be sent to attendees and published on the British Council [IHE](#) website.
- Providing a printed information sheet for the Erasmus+ Learning Networks Event (May)

Also:

- Promotion of the workshops and resources through the International Unit channels including a printed information sheet at the Go International Conference;
- All reports and presentations will also be published on the EHEA Peer Community portal <http://eheacomunity.ning.com> which is accessible to all EHEA Project Coordinators.

7. Conclusion

Overall assessment of the workshops. Have the objectives and intended outcomes been achieved?

1. *To help participants gain an effective understanding of the criteria for high-quality applications for Erasmus+. Strategic Partnerships and Capacity Building projects*

It is believed that this aim was achieved, as there were dedicated presentations on both Strategic Partnerships and Capacity Building projects. During discussions with attendees, it was clear that they had a clearer understanding of these initiatives, compared to prior knowledge.

2. *To understand key European policy and priorities for student-centred learning in all cycles*

This aim was achieved through a practical presentation delivered by the student expert on how students' perceive student-centred learning alongside focusing on the Leuven Communiqué's definition of the concept. This therefore helped to identify student-centred learning as part of the Modernisation Agenda. Additionally, there was a presentation on the European Commission supported PASCL project.

3. *To discuss fields in which UK HEIs may share good practice and work with others to develop innovative projects.*

This aim was achieved through breakout sessions and informal networking during breaks.

4. *To explain the relevance of Bologna Process tools in enabling successful collaborative projects*

It is too early to fully evaluate the impact of these workshops, since it is difficult to assess if there will be an associated increase in applications from UK HEIs that attended the events. However, the experts believe that raising awareness of such initiatives and the overall Bologna Process has been achieved, for those that attended the workshop.

5. *To provide a practical focus, emphasising what is involved in project development and understanding in detail the evaluation criteria that are applied to applications.*

This was achieved as all of the presentations focused on the practical elements of the projects, particularly with guidance on the application procedures of Capacity Building and Strategic Partnership projects.

Challenges identified to be taken forward at policy level:

One challenge that was identified was the need for shorter mobility projects. The majority of attendees from universities were not aware of VET funding. There is a need for a coordinated approach to raising awareness of different mobility schemes.

Another challenge that became evident was that the attendees were mainly from an administrative background. There is a need to capture the interest and inform senior management of UK HEIs because while the workshops helped to raise awareness of these opportunities there are limitations in their dissemination.

Lessons learned for the planning and delivery of future events:

Initially, there was to be another workshop delivered in Scotland. However, it was cancelled due to low registration numbers. Moreover, since only a small number of representatives from UK HEIs attended the workshops, there is the need for further promotion of such events in the future. One idea for future workshops would be for an increase in marketing avenues to promote the workshops alongside the British Council and Department for Business, Innovation & Skills.

As the majority of attendees were from an administrative role, typically with a remit focusing on international activities, it may be worthwhile focusing on designing future events around this audience. It is also worthwhile considering different types of events for different audiences, for example how can we design a workshop for student officers or academics with teaching remits?

Assessment of impact in terms of a wider and deeper sectoral understanding of the Bologna Process and how it relates to the national priorities in higher education

There were a significant number of attendees who knew little about the two Erasmus+ actions or the project (Capacity Building, Strategic Partnerships and PASCL). As the promotion of internationalisation is an important objective within UK HEIs, alongside increasing partnerships with international universities, this workshop helped to promote such opportunities as means of developing these strategies.

However, it is important to note that the number of attendees only represented a small percentage of UK HEIs (17 different HEIs for the workshop in Birmingham and 6 for the workshop in Cardiff). Thus, there is still a significant number of UK HEIs which may not be fully aware of these opportunities, or that they can also participate.

These workshops helped to promote the Bologna Process through focusing on these initiatives as well as providing a concise explanation of Bologna Tools that UK HEIs might usefully be aware of, such as the role of the European Quality Assurance Register, and the European Standards & Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG).