

# Learning for a Complex World

A lifewide concept of learning,  
education and personal development

Edited by

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# Chapter 11

## Surrey Lifewide Learning Award: a learning partnership to support lifewide learning

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### **Synopsis**

In 2009 the University of Surrey embarked on a research and development process to develop an award through which students' lifewide learning enterprises could be encouraged, supported, valued and publicly recognised. This chapter describes the award framework and the learning practices it supports, relating it to the concept of a learning partnership described in Chapter 5. It describes the outcomes of piloting the award and considers the learning and achievements demonstrated by participants in the scheme.

### **Introduction**

The University of Surrey is a medium-sized university (14,000 students) whose mission embraces high-quality research and good-quality undergraduate and postgraduate education. It's educational distinctiveness lies in the undergraduate education it provides, which combines academic theory and practice in discipline-based contexts with real world, practical experience. About 70 per cent of undergraduates are enrolled on either a three-year integrated theory and practice based curriculum, or a four-year programme containing a year-long work placement in environments that are relevant to a discipline and/or a learner's own career orientations. The university believes that this is the most effective form of education to prepare learners for their future lives and this is endorsed by the fact that Surrey graduates are amongst the most employable of any UK university.<sup>1</sup>

Taken at face value it would seem that the university has a very effective educational model, so why should we change it? Closer inspection indicates that, if we exclude programmes that have a statutory requirement for a curriculum that integrates professional practice and academic study (e.g. in health programmes), only 50 per cent of undergraduates participate in our work placement scheme. Furthermore, there are concerns about the ongoing impact of the recession and the dramatic increase in tuition fees in 2012, both of which may impact on four-year programmes. We are in a classic change dilemma – do we sustain a proven model that seems to work well for a significant proportion of students, or do we change what we are doing to adapt to changes in the external environment? A further concern is how might we add value to the experience and development of students who currently do not benefit from this educationally effective model?

The university, through the work of its Centre for Excellence in Professional Training and Education (SCEPTrE), concluded that we need to do three things:

- Create a more engaging academic curriculum: one that is based on independent or productive enquiry.
- Diversify the ways in which the university helps learners develop the capability that is important to being a professional using approaches that do not require a year-long placement (Chapters 12 and 13 describe examples).
- Develop a much broader conception of a curriculum to embrace the idea that learners gain valuable personal and professional development through life experiences outside the current academic and work-based curriculum. We called this a 'lifewide curriculum' to emphasise that the whole of a person's life is brought to bear in their unique learning project that enables them to become who they want to become.

This chapter focuses on the third strategy.

## **Lifewide learning proposition**

The thinking and reasoning outlined in the earlier chapters of this book led us to develop the idea of lifewide learning as one possible means of addressing the second and third of these concerns. The idea of lifewide education was intended to embrace the many parallel and interconnected journeys and experiences that individually and collectively contribute to the personal development of individuals while they are studying for their degrees. We reasoned that by reframing the university's perception of what counts as learning, and developing the means to recognise and value learning that is not formally assessed within an academic programme, learners could be helped to develop a deeper understanding of how

and what they were learning in the different parts of their lives. Such enhanced self-awareness is likely to help them become more effective at learning through their own experiences beyond university.

The concept of lifewide learning and a lifewide curriculum was developed through a series of papers (Jackson 2008a, b & c, 2009, 2010a, b & c) and the educational application of the concept developed through the piloting of an award scheme that is described below.

## **Developing and piloting an award framework**

In July 2008, following publication of the University's Student Experience Strategy and Action Plan, SCEPTRe was invited to examine the idea of a lifewide curriculum as a way of developing understanding of the concept of a *more complete education*, which underlies the strategy.

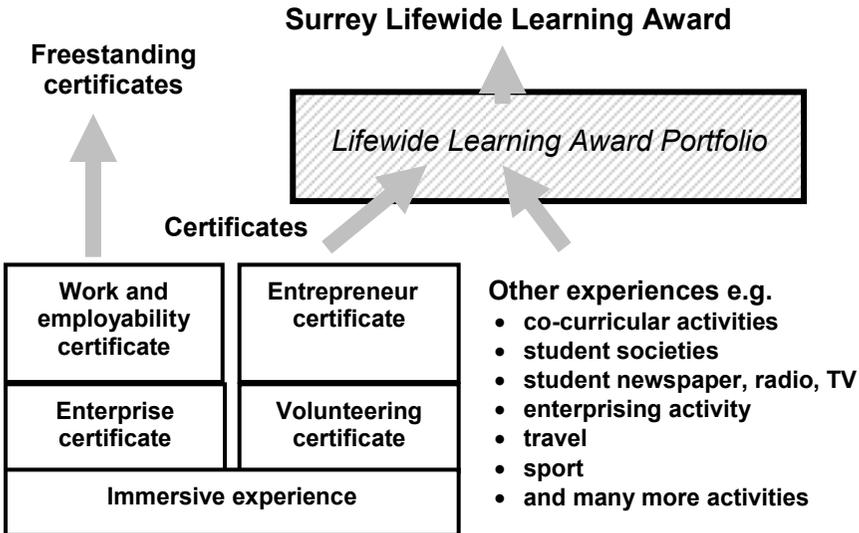
SCEPTRe's response was to propose a *student development award* that embraced and gave meaning to the idea of a more complete education, which we interpreted to mean all the things that students did in addition to their study programmes that made their education more complete. In February 2009, the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy Group invited SCEPTRe to undertake a feasibility study for a 'Surrey Award'. The study was completed and proposals were made to the University Learning and Teaching Committee in January 2010, but the Committee felt that the framework involved too many hours of student effort (300 hours were proposed) and it was too complicated and resource intensive. Revised proposals, which simplified the framework and reduced the time requirement to 150 hours, were accepted by the Committee in March 2010. The framework was piloted between May 2010 and March 2011. The aims of the pilot were to:

- create an award framework and pilot it (including the guidance, infrastructure, operating systems and procedures necessary to promote good learning)
- develop a robust and credible assessment process and develop understanding of standards for learning and achievement
- recruit up to 100 students and support them to enable them to achieve the award or certificates within the framework
- evaluate the process and the outcomes and determine the costs of operating the scheme
- through research and scholarship, develop a knowledge base relating to students' lifewide learning habits

- disseminate the results of the research and development work to the wider community as part of SCEPTRe's national role as a Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

The framework was developed in two stages: first, building on the work undertaken prior to the pilot, an award was developed and the guidance created; second, a series of certificates was created. The award framework is summarised in Figure 11.1. It comprises an overarching award and a family of certificates formed around themes for personal development. They are unified through the idea of lifewide learning and underpinned by a *Capability and Values Statement* (Appendix 1). The Lifewide Learning Award is made by the university to students who demonstrate, through a portfolio, learning and personal development they have gained through co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences, in line with the requirements for the award. A *minimum* involvement of 150 hours of experience-based and reflective learning is required. Students decide what experiences to include in their portfolio but they have to demonstrate new learning and personal development against the Capability and Values Statement for the award.

**Figure 11.1** Lifewide Learning Award framework



Certificates provide a distinctive pathway to the Lifewide Learning Award but there is no obligation to include a certificate in a portfolio. They require a minimum of 100 hours of experience-based and reflective learning and they can

be taken as freestanding certificates or be incorporated into a learner's portfolio for the Lifewide Learning Award. They provide a means of demonstrating capabilities that are important for employability and for being an effective professional. They complement the traditional means of recognising informal learning gained through the university's professional training scheme. Certificates are underpinned by the same Capability and Values Statement that underpins the Lifewide Learning Award.

The framework is intended to support a lifewide concept of higher education and embrace the idea of a lifewide curriculum which is underpinned by the ten principles for an imaginative curriculum elaborated in Chapter 6.

## **A learning partnership**

Most of our learning involves some sort of partnership. Informally, our partnerships involve parents, other family members, friends, colleagues, peers and virtually anyone whom we believe we can learn from. They also involve formal relationships with teachers and other people who are employed to provide advice and guidance, and the organisations that provide infrastructures and resources to promote and support learning. In lifewide education both informal, self-determined and formal, institutionalised partnerships are necessary and encouraged. Indeed, the added value of lifewide education is in its explicit valuing of all forms of partnership for learning.

The Lifewide Learning Award framework and support mechanisms display the characteristics of a 'learning partnership' (Baxter Magolda 2004b, 2009b and Chapter 5).

The Learning Partnerships Model (LPM) creates an evolutionary bridge by merging three supportive components with three challenges in the learning environment. Support is offered through *three principles*: validating learners' ability to know, situating learning in learners' experience, and defining learning as mutually constructing meaning. Participants reported greater willingness to take responsibility for constructing knowledge and their own beliefs when educators validated their potential to do so. Using their experience offered a foundation for learning provided support in this challenging process. Having learning defined as mutual construction made it acceptable to participate in the process. These supports assist learners in engaging in the *three challenges* of learning environments that promote self-authorship: knowledge is complex and socially constructed, self is central to knowledge construction, and authority and expertise are shared among

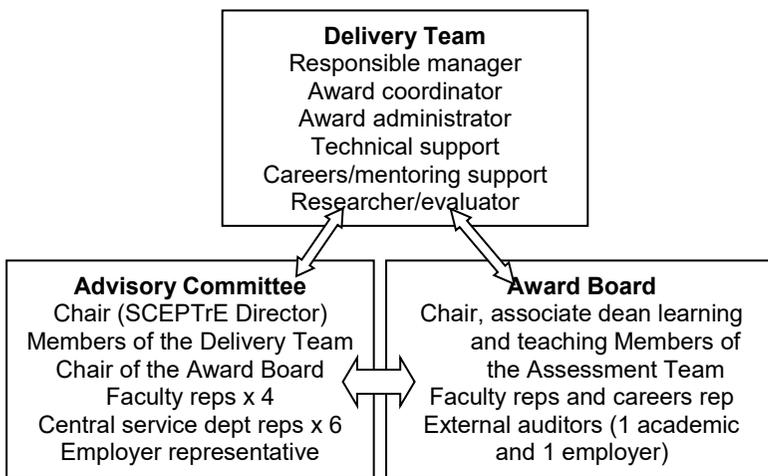
**Table 11.1** Relationship of Surrey Lifewide Learning Award Framework to Baxter Magolda's (2004a) learning partnership principles LPP

<b>LPP</b>	<b>Infrastructure</b>	<b>Institutional support and engagement</b>
<p>1 Validating students as knowers – <i>means acknowledging their capacity to hold a point of view, recognising their current understandings and supporting them in explaining their views</i></p>	<p>1) Capability and values statement encourages learners to be aware of their knowledge development process            2) Guidance emphasises complexity of knowledge            3) Framework requires learners to make explicit their personal knowledges gained through their lifewide experiences through their portfolio            4) Process for making judgements validates learners' representations of their experiential knowing</p>	<p>1) Through induction process and opportunities for conversation with scheme co-ordinator            2) Through the portfolio checks when feedback is given by scheme co-ordinator            3) Through the assessment process which recognises and values students as developers of knowledge and encourages them to offer their perspectives and views.</p>
<p>2 Situating learning in learners' experiences – <i>means using students' experiences, lives and current knowledge as a resource for learning and personal development</i></p>	<p>The Lifewide Learning Award framework is concerned with learners' experiential learning. Being able to deal with situations is an important focus in the Capability and Values Statement (Appendix 1). The principles on which the lifewide curriculum is based encourage learners to participate in situations that will enable them to develop 'epistemological, intrapersonal and interpersonal complexity' (Baxter Magolda 2004a:41 and chapter 5)</p>	<p>1) Through induction process and informal opportunities for conversation with scheme co-ordinator</p>
<p>3 Mutually constructing meaning – <i>involves educators, employers and others sharing and connecting their knowledge so that all participants have the opportunity to develop more complex understandings and decisions</i></p>	<p>The life place map encourages participants to identify in their everyday situations who they are interacting with and how they are interacting</p> <p>Portfolios and personal accounts encourage participants to reveal who the significant others are in their lives, who help them learn in their different contexts and experiences</p> <p>The creation of a portfolio is itself a constructive, creative, meaning making process</p>	<p>Teachers and employers are only two of many possible 'partners' in an individual's lifewide learning enterprises; others may include parents, other family members, friends, peers, colleagues</p> <p>Significant others involved in supporting the award include the scheme co-ordinator, other SCEPTRe team members (coaching), careers advisors and alumni mentors</p>

knowledgeable peers. Explicit portrayal of knowledge as complex and socially constructed challenged learners to move toward epistemological complexity. Emphasis on the role of the self in knowledge construction challenged them to bring their identity into learning thus moving them toward construction of an internal identity. Sharing of expertise and authority in the learning process engaged learners in mutually constructing knowledge and helped them develop more mature relationships. These six components connect to all phases of the journey because the educator is mutually constructing the educational process with the learner. The partnership adjusts as the learner adopts more complex ways of making meaning.  
 (Baxter Magolda 2009b:150)

Table 11.1 relates Baxter Magolda's principles for a learning partnership to the infrastructures and support for learning provided through the Lifewide Learning Award framework. Student development is facilitated by a small team (Figure 11.2). The award co-ordinator did most of the day-to-day running of the scheme. An Advisory Committee was created to support the team, with representatives from faculties and industry. The function of the Committee was to act as a think tank to generate new ideas and a sounding board to help the team with decisions. Members of the Committee, particular faculty members, were also expected to be advocates for the scheme. The Committee reviewed ideas, monitored progress, considered plans and discussed results. The Committee also received formal and informal reports from two external auditors.

**Figure 11.2** Lifewide Learning Award delivery team and committee structures



The concept of an award for lifewide learning is predicated on students operating independently and self-managing their learning over a period of time (up to nine months during the pilot). To encourage and support this enterprise a website was developed ([www.surreylifewideaward.net](http://www.surreylifewideaward.net)) to enable students to register and to provide guidance on how to complete the award. The website contained a supplementary 'Student Voice' micro-website that provided many accounts written by students engaged in lifewide learning.

Learners were expected to learn through their experiences independently. This was intentional (to align with the underpinning theory of learning) but it was also pragmatic (to minimise staff costs). Working and learning independently in this way can be a lonely experience so the strategies used to keep in touch with students and keep them connected to the award were vital. Day-to-day support was provided by the award co-ordinator. Support was given in the following ways.

- responses to general enquiries and specific questions by email or telephone
- provision of induction and reflective writing workshops
- informal drop-in conversations
- feedback on portfolios
- reflective learning and writing workshops
- bi-weekly email newsletters celebrating successes of students on the scheme
- ongoing news items for the website
- social events like Christmas party
- help with reflective accounts e.g. if written English was poor
- annual lifewide learning essay prize.

## **Focus for learning**

Situations are the focus for learning and claims for personal development. Eduard Lindeman, writing in 1926 under the influence of his friend John Dewey, provides us with the rationale for focusing attention on situations as the basic building block of living, learning and developing, and this rationale was utilised in the Lifewide Learning Award.

the approach to adult education will be via the route of *situations*, not subjects. Our academic system has grown in reverse order; subjects and teachers constitute the starting-point, students are secondary. In conventional education the student is required to adjust himself to an established curriculum; in adult education the curriculum is built around the student's needs and interests. Every adult person finds himself in specific situations

with respect to his work, his recreation, his family-life, his community-life et cetera – situations which call for adjustments. Adult education begins at this point. Subject matter is brought into the situation, is put to work, when needed. Texts and teachers play a new and secondary role in this type of education; they must give way to the primary importance of the learner ... The situation-approach to education means that the learning process is at the outset given a setting of reality. Intelligence performs its functions in relation to actualities, not abstractions.

(Smith 2004: quoting Eduard Lindeman 1927)

**Figure 11.3** Dealing with situations



To perform and make things happen we have to be able to deal with and create situations. Our life is full of situations that we have to deal with and deal with in an appropriate and effective manner. When we encounter a situation, no matter what the context, we assess it, decide what to do, do it and, if appropriate, reflect on what happened (Figure 11.3) so that we understand it more. This process is reminiscent of Kolb’s (1984) learning cycle, beginning with a concrete experience (the situation we encounter or create).

The award encourages participants to learn and recognise their development through:

- heightened self-awareness of the significance of situations and experiences through which they are learning and developing across their lives
- use of the Capability and Values Statement to draw attention to forms of learning and development that are particularly relevant to understanding and performing effectively in situations
- planning (more like a rough design) for future situation-based learning

- observing and recognising this emergent learning and development and recording of experiences and insights gained through a diary, sketchbook, blog, portfolio, video or other representation
- reflecting on experiences and situations and making more sense of and creating deeper meanings from these experiences
- revealing their meaning making through an integrative account of experiences, learning and development.

For the learner the process begins with enhancing their self-awareness of the many spaces and places they inhabit in which they have their everyday experiences and encounter or create situations. By creating a simple map of their life<sup>2</sup> they reveal how they are choosing to live their lives. Typically, students recognise between four to seven distinct areas in their life, although the boundaries between different areas may be blurred.

In their life map they reveal the building blocks of their life. They show what they do in different spaces and places, and the significant people with whom they interact and learn from. The enhanced self-awareness developed through the creation of a life map is intended to help learners think about the opportunities they have for developing themselves and opportunities for further development. This thinking informs the preparation of a personal development plan. Using the award Capability and Values Statement learners identify where they have had opportunities to develop each element of the statement and where they might further develop capabilities and values in future.

The process of mapping, reflecting and imagining is intended to encourage learners to appreciate their whole lives as the means of engaging with what (Baxter Magolda 2004a and Chapter 5) calls the 'epistemological, intrapersonal and interpersonal complexity' that characterises living and working in the unpredictable world outside formal education. Engaging with such complexity facilitates development of 'one's internal belief system [and] crafting an integrated sense of self' (Baxter Magolda 2004a:29). We agree with this author's claims that self-authorship should be a central aim of higher education, and the Lifewide Learning Award framework addresses, through its focus on learning in and through situations, the three assumptions that underlie self-authorship, namely: 1) *knowledge is complex and socially constructed*; 2) *self is central to knowledge construction* and it is important to define yourself and bring this to your way of learning and being; and 3) *authority and expertise are shared in the mutual co-construction of knowledge among peers*.

## Assessing personal enhancements

Lifewide learning poses considerable challenges in an institutionalised environment that seems to value only learning that can be predicted and measured. As we have seen in earlier chapters we are dealing with complex achievements that are difficult or impossible to explain or represent. They include: multiple conceptions of knowledge; capabilities that are integrative in their nature; performance that at best will only ever be partially understood, revealed and explained; and outcomes that are meaningful to an individual because she has been through a unique experience and appreciated their value to herself. Such forms of learning and development are deeply personal and highly situated. Peter Knight (2005:2) offers realistic advice in such situations.

I am arguing that different sorts of learning and different achievements have to be judged in different ways ... it is a mistake to apply a form of judgement – such as measurement – to achievements that are not, epistemologically speaking, measurable. It is no wonder that so many people have so much trouble trying to measure 'key' or 'generic achievements' or 'skills'. Once we move away from the simplest of the achievements, we are dealing with complex and changing constructs which do not have the qualities necessary for them to be measurable

there are highly subjective areas of human experience ... in which connoisseurship (Eisner, 1985) is an appropriate form of judgement. Connoisseurs are experts with rich knowledge of a field. They offer opinions and argue their points of view but, even so, there are different points of view because the material in question evokes such different subjective responses.

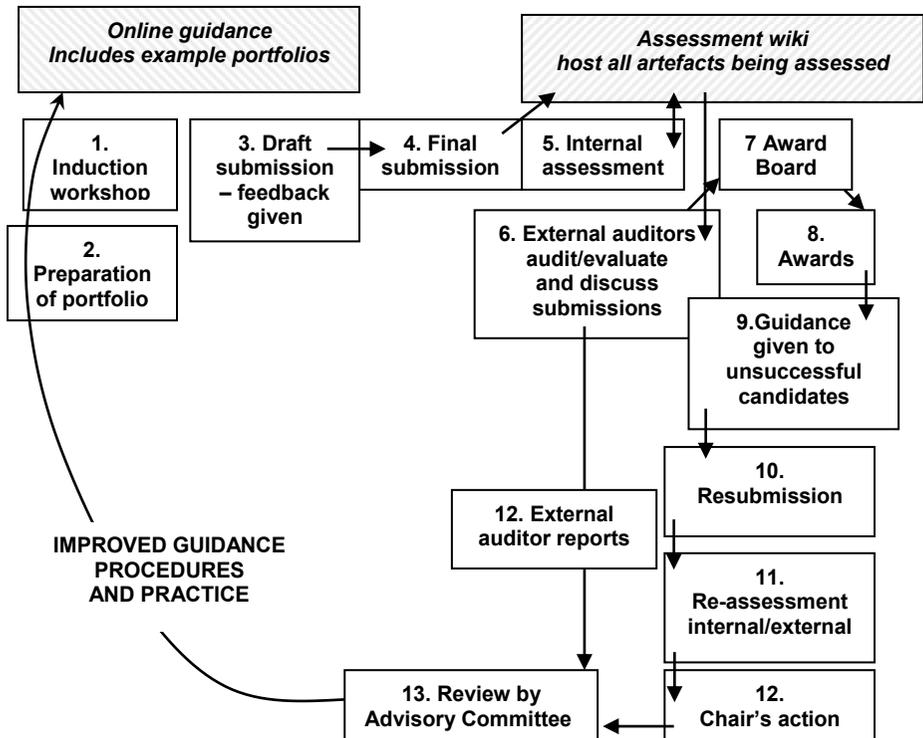
Making judgements about lifewide learning requires an ongoing conversation among a group of peers who are both empathetic and prepared to make judgements based on the evidence of learning that is presented. In reaching judgements as to whether a learner warrants the Lifewide Learning Award assessors were forced to declare what they were valuing and recognising, namely:

- learners' commitments to their own personal development through self-directed and unplanned activities over a period of time
- learners' self-awareness – their ability to recognise that they are learning and developing in different ways through their lifewide experiences

- learners' ability to reveal, explain and communicate their self-awareness of learning, development and personal change using the tools and frameworks provided and artefacts that they created
- evidence of learners honouring the self-directed learning process.

We are not dealing with notions of academic level. We anticipated that the abilities of students to reflect upon their experiences and represent and evidence their self-awareness and development would not vary according to the stage of their education (i.e. a postgraduate student would be better than an undergraduate student); rather, it would reflect individuals' preparedness and capability for recognising and representing their informal learning. Bound up with this preparedness and capability are likely to be cultural issues such as the general reluctance of students in sciences and engineering to reveal personal feelings. The award is intended to enhance this dimension of capability. So the evaluation of the experience by the learner and anyone assessing a learner's claims is an evaluation of the learner's representation of her own enhancement<sup>3</sup> – the journey that she has taken.

**Figure 11.4** Assessment procedures developed through the pilot



Lifewide learning for an individual at a certain stage in her development is revealed and self-judged in accordance with the extent to which it enhances and especially widens her ability to create meaning from her life, and her self-knowledge and capabilities in evaluating and representing her own development beyond her initial stage of development. These perspectives on learning and achievement are consistent with the earlier statements relating to an individual's journey towards self-authorship.

### **Assessment procedures**

Assessment procedures are summarised in Figure 11.4. For the institutional assessor, assessment of a learner's claims for personal enhancement involves reaching an informed judgement about a learner's claims for personal enhancement through the journey they have described in their mediating artefacts (life space map, personal development plan, portfolio, integrative account and perhaps photos, videos, audio records and other items that provide evidence of their experiences and the learning they have gained). Peer review of assessor judgements is through two independent external auditors who had access to learners' portfolios through an assessment wiki. Their role is to audit assessors' judgements on the sufficiency and quality of evidence of learning and personal development and offering an opinion that either endorsed or invited reconsideration of the assessor's judgement. The results of this process are formally presented to an Award Board which makes the final pass/fail decision for each candidate. On completion of the process the External Auditors provide a written report to the University on the assessment process with suggestions and recommendations for improvement. This report is formally considered by the Lifewide Learning Advisory Board.

### **Patterns of lifewide learning and development**

Here we examine the nature and patterns of learning and development (personal enhancements) through the narratives and artefacts students present in their portfolios.

#### **Portfolios**

The portfolio is the physical or virtual medium for students to record and represent their learning and development. Its role is intended to encourage learners to develop the habit of thinking about and recording their experiences, drawing out deeper meanings and understandings in the process.

Although the requirements for the award specify that a portfolio be produced containing various documentary artefacts (life space map, personal development

plan, evidence of ongoing reflection, final written reflective account and updated CV), the presentation of this portfolio is entirely the choice of the individual. This *freedom to choose* reinforces the self-managed ethos that underpins the award and allows for creative self-expression.

Porter and Cleland (1995) discuss the need for students to have agency over their portfolios and the importance of allowing them to determine what to include, as it allows them to learn from their own ‘personal interpretations and insights’. It also fosters a sense of ownership which can lead to greater empowerment for learners, enabling them to become the author of their own stories; expressing this in their own unique voices, in a medium that they feel comfortable with – whether using a video diary, blog or scrapbook.

Adopting this reasoning, participants in the Lifewide Learning Award are able to choose the format and style of portfolio but they are required to demonstrate an ongoing interaction and engagement with it, ensuring that they revisit it at least once a week throughout the process. The emphasis here is on commitment to a process of critical reflection rather than purely listing or describing activities. The portfolios submitted for the award have been rich and diverse (Table 11.2).

**Table 11.2** Categorisation of portfolios in the pilot study n=28

‘Shoebox’; literally a physical container into which representations of learning are deposited and explained	0
Handwritten diary essentially text based – could be a Word document	9
Scrapbook containing text, photos, drawings and diagrams, and other artefacts like tickets/mementos of events	8
PowerPoint	1
Digital story	1
Blog or wiki	6
E-portfolio	1
Personal website	1
Mixed media – part physical part virtual	1

Some students used blogs and e-portfolios, enabling them to blend or connect technologies and resources such as digital images, audio and video. One student enjoyed the immediacy of being able to record spoken reflection on a mobile telephone when suddenly inspired and was then able to send this directly to her blog. Seeing how people mix and adapt these technologies shows how using a virtual portfolio has the advantage of immediacy and accessibility; being able to add to it from almost anywhere, at any time – for example one blog site that allowed you to update your blog via email or texting from a smart phone.

Such accessibility appeared to be helpful in maintaining engagement and developing the narratives of the experiences through which learning and understanding emerges.

In contrast to the electronic/virtual environments some students opted with enthusiasm to produce a physical portfolio in the form of a scrapbook rich in images and mementos of the events that they had experienced as well as the textual descriptions and reflective evaluations.

### **Narrative themes**

A number of recurrent themes can be recognised in the experiences that students describe in their lifewide learning portfolios and integrating accounts, namely:

- employability and career related experiences
- personal, emotional or spiritual wellbeing / overcoming or coping with challenging situations
- travel and being immersed in new cultures or countries
- involvement in societies or clubs either as an organiser or participant
- personal interests and hobbies
- volunteering, caring for others and mentoring
- being creative and enterprising.

When portfolios and integrating accounts are audited for their content, generalised patterns of responses can be identified (Tables 11.3 and 11.4). These patterns are also manifest in interviews with participants and they seem to represent a fundamental orientation in their pattern of lifewide learning. They were also seen in essays submitted for two competitions on the theme of lifewide learning (see chapter 9). In this set of narratives, five focus on career, employability and development for being an effective professional; thirteen are oriented towards personal growth and self-actualisation; and nine appear to combine these orientations.

Participants are expected to show, in their personal accounts, how their learning and development relates to the Capability and Values Statement. This is normally achieved by relating aspects of their account to specific items in the statement. Table 11.4 shows how statements are referenced in fifteen accounts and also uses the three categories outline above to show the different orientations.

**Table 11.3** Orientations in portfolios, integrating accounts and interviews of 27 students who submitted for the Award

<p><b>1) Career, employability and professional development orientation –</b> <i>mostly aligned to the goal of developing myself for employment or a vocation/career in a particular field</i></p>	<p>G – wants to work in HR, so volunteering and working variously with other people P – hobbies and character traits are strictly aligned with his area of study/career (astronomy and machines) T – event management, but some personal activities e.g. cooking – cultures DP – work experience, music and creative experiences JH – mostly surrounding her learning for the dance management world, though includes some volunteering experiences</p>
<p><b>2) Self-actualisation –</b> <i>mostly aligned to personal interests, passions and growth as an individual</i></p>	<p>B – choir, leadership, autistic boy, band K – responsibilities at work, mentoring, course rep, leadership in group U – dev. in six months in new culture, personality, language, career goals, casual work C – Brownies, Guides, HCA O – deliberately focuses on these; exemplary, volunteering, setting up own business, hobbies F – painting room, cooking, growing own food, sewing, police officer, learning Spanish M – drama, cooking, dining, gardening, achievements in placement, photography, friends, travel E – coaching and leading canoeing teams, increased self-confidence and transferability of skills I – overcoming her anxiety through facing travel; mentor L – HR research, ALS, course rep all related to her philosophy that personal skills more important than academic Z – SCEPTRe experiences, Mukono work, USA voluntary work AI – vast range of experiences including CoLab, social enterprise, radio, social expeditions FO – St John’s ambulance, netball, mentoring, Uganda volunteering, university society</p>
<p><b>3) Combined self-actualisation and career</b></p>	<p>H – culminates in her seeking counselling and drawing all together (translation, marriage) N – largely work-related, but then includes SIFE and hospice admin work D – wide range, police, own business, student ambassador, aimed at being person he wants to be R – most career oriented but also conscious effort to broaden her activities e.g. gym, team, language S – career as economist but conscious dev of inter-personal and other skills, travel to India, teaching, cooking, friendships, mentoring A – begins with career focus then moves into his lack of social skills; developed lot as PG, but from an ‘abnormal’ starting point (autistic?) J – mature student of law, PT in Australia, photographer’s, theatre writing, cinema usher, serendipity CF – travel, sport, placement, volunteering, health, skills, creative activities MR – SIFE, volunteering in primary schools, academic rep, academies, language learning</p>

**Table 11.4** Analysis of 15 of the 21 integrating accounts (A–O) submitted for the Lifewide Learning Award in March 2011

Capability and Values Statement	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
1 Managing and evaluating my own development	1	4	4	3	5	1	5	17	8	19	5	4	17	5	4
2 Being able to deal with situations, solve problems, work with challenge and take advantage of opportunity	1	4	6	3	6	1	8	13	4	12	5	5	10	7	10
3 Being able to find out what you need to know to do what you need to do		3	1	4	1	2	4	10	6	13	2		14	2	5
4 Being creative and enterprising	1	2	2	2	2	1	4	9	5	15	1		9	2	6
5 Being a good communicator	1	5	4	4	5	2	5	5	5	15	3	1	10	8	2
6 Being able to work with and lead others	1	5	5	5	6		6	3	4	12	3	4	11	7	3
7 Behaving ethically and with social responsibility	1	2	2	2			2	3	3	11	3	3	5	3	3
8 Other areas for personal dev that are important to me			6					10	2	14	4	1	9	2	
9 My will to be and become who I want to be		6	4	2		1	3	12	5	11	2	6	16	2	5
10 My values and the value I add to my enterprises		3		3			2	10	3	8	3	1 5	17	1	2
11 My growing confidence in my own ability		3	4	4			5	14	4	11	5	2	1	3	6

Explanation: Numbers indicate the number of times a student claimed this form of development in his/her account. The 21 accounts can be classified into one of three orientations: grey = career orientation (n=3); white = self-actualisation (n=11); speckled = combination (n=7).

As might be expected, every individual's experience creates a unique pattern. As a general rule, those with the greater number of references reveal a richer mix of learning and these learners appear to be more aware of their learning. For example, account J demonstrates, through examining a serendipitous series of apparently unrelated events, how she has come to surmount lifelong anxieties

to become a different person. Evidence of the journey towards self-authorship is present in all accounts, even the weaker ones

*Career, employability and professional development orientation*

Portfolios, integrating accounts and interviews for students with this lifewide learning orientation are focused on experiences and personal enhancement that can be related to their *will* to gain employment in a certain field or to become a certain type of professional. As a generalisation, this tendency is most evident in undergraduate students in their third or fourth year of study who might combine voluntary work, internships or placements or fill their spare time with involvement in communities, groups and informal activities complementary to their disciplinary field which they could relate to their intended career goal. Overseas students often display this career orientation, as illustrated at interview by this postgraduate:

I think as an international student, when I go back I have to take all the opportunities that are thrown at me. ... I am here for learning and training ... simple as that. Even PhD, as a training period is three years training. It's nothing much. So when I go back I have to be good in knowledge and experience.

A final year dance student filled her portfolio with the dance, arts and cultural experiences she was involved in beyond her studies, including a placement year, several summer internships, travelling to different countries in which she located and attended networking meetings with other artists, and working for an online dance magazine.

My experiences between June 2009 and June 2010 were remarkably rich ... from planned activities such as internship and voluntary work which contributed to my professional development, to more general life experiences such as travelling to foreign countries and living in a multicultural environment. All of these have contributed so much to the expectations for my future – a career in arts management and a life-long and live-wide process in character building

These types of portfolio often demonstrate a real sense of determination and drive to succeed. In some cases there was evidence of a strategically planned course of action. The following excerpt from a final year music student epitomises this attitude. To strive toward achieving his goals he undertook two internships, was a member of a band, took part in charity gigs and when

travelling created sound recordings which he published to his CV-style portfolio website:

Essentially once I realised I wanted to pursue a career within the music industry in some form, I thought about the processes involved in making something like this become a reality, working out the necessary steps in order to make it happen.

For some there were moments of realisation that connected to their desire to become a professional and represented a transition in their comprehension of what professionalism meant. In some cases this was directly related to a work-based situation while others' comprehension was through becoming aware of the learning occurring in one context of their lives being transferred to another. The statement below captures one student's altered perspective on interviewing following her involvement in a recruitment process while on a work placement.

Having seen how short listing is done I can now sympathise with those who have to do it and can see how it is very easy to have yourself written off immediately by not addressing the points I have learnt here! For future applications I will definitely think how what I am writing comes across to the person that will be reading it. I will make sure I keep it succinct, to the point and relevant. I will only address the points being asked for. I will ensure I [am] clear about what I am trying to get across.

Vocational focus does not imply only technical knowledge and experience. Students are increasingly aware of the importance to employers of workers' dispositions and transferable skills as expressed by this interviewee:

Now, when the employer wants to see people with different skills, not just technical skills, that technical skill is developed through education and academics. So I think you develop your social skills ... Social skills are very important ... or soft skills. And you develop by doing different kinds of activities, events, meeting with people, communicating with people, networking, socialising and the best way to do that, especially in the university is involvement in events.

Level 1 and 2 students may still have a strong career orientation but their purpose might be related to building their CV in preparation for applying for a work placement in their third year. A good example of an enhanced CV is

offered by student E who both adds and explains the significance of new experiences like coaching.

But the CV loses its importance for some participants. A young dietician admitted at interview that her original objective in undertaking the award was to learn how to condense her frenetic range of extra-curricular activities into a coherent CV, and to be able to add another qualification to it. By the time of completing the award process, she mocked her naivety, confessing, 'My whole focus and aim has completely changed.' Demonstrating the real value she now perceives, she went on: 'Until you start it, until you start doing the reflective process and realise that it does affect you, you don't know what you will get from it.'

### *Entrepreneurial orientation*

A subset of this category is an orientation towards creating or running a business. Students who have this orientation commit considerable amounts of time and energy to activities that are directly or indirectly linked to their business interests. Student D is typical. His list of activities includes being a student ambassador for the university (meeting and greeting visitors, then escorting them around campus); training, working and qualifying as a Special Constable for the police; and undertaking a full-time work placement year setting up his own business – he is now managing director of a not-for-profit technology company. His reflective narrative is packed with evidence of his development, but to quote just one brief extract, he concludes:

There have been many problems in the business ranging from employee issues to tax issues to banking issues. Through problem solving, persistence and dedication I have been able to overcome many difficult situations, with minor effect on customer relations. There have also been many opportunities, which I have seized and have often resulted in further work and publicity, such as applying and being shortlisted for the Toast of Surrey 2011 Business Awards.

### *Personal growth and self-actualisation orientation*

Portfolios, integrating accounts and interviews of students with this lifewide learning orientation are focused on experiences and personal enhancement that can be related to interests, passions and personal growth or adapting to significant new situations. A number of portfolios submitted were underpinned by an element of personal well-being, a sense of journeying through a challenging situation and the development of new confidence and self-awareness.

Every day I have to remind myself what I've learned from all the therapy sessions I've had. This is the box that links together all the other boxes, because everything I do to improve myself and get better leads to me being a happier person who loves to be alive more and more every day. Most importantly I'm trying to get my will to live back, and discover things that I love to do, that inspire me, fascinate me and captivate me.

Student F had a sense of writing to someone or an audience even though it was obviously a very personal and sensitive subject matter. Beginning with 'A little bit about me' she offers the reader some background to how she has got to where she is now and concludes this page with the purpose of creating the portfolio:

It is due to this phobia ... that you will notice that experiences I class as development, you may class as small such as going on a train. But it is doing this that contributes highly towards helping me develop into the person I am trying to get back from before.

This student talks about the sense of achievement she felt in coping with a number of challenging situations and demonstrates how her anxieties have impacted upon many parts of her life but how she is managing these by getting a job over the summer:

This would normally have caused me high amounts of anxiety ... However, I went for my first day, I was nervous but no more than I feel anyone else would be, and had a good first day. ... Having a ... job such as that had made me come back to university with even more determination to do well ... I am now working twice as hard as I would have been had I not got that job. The job also showed me that I can cope in employment situations without getting anxious like I did the previous year. This is evidence to me that I have progressed.

[And becoming a mentor] Because I lack confidence, I never had the ability to join any societies and therefore had a limited amount of friends that were either people on my course, or people I live with. I now have friends all over the Campus and I really love walking down the road, or looking out my window and seeing someone I know and who says 'hello' back.

As her confidence grew she tried to help herself more: 'as I have been feeling well I have decided that I am fed up waiting for people to help me and have

decided to help myself'. By researching and challenging her own boundaries and comfort zones she is gradually taking on new experiences that are challenging one by one – and seeing the value in confronting them.

Similar growth is recounted by a student who organised a group of volunteers to work in a rural village in Uganda. Referencing her development to all eleven elements of the capability and values statement she concludes:

This was also a huge challenge to me as I am not naturally outgoing, and I had to really pull myself out of my shell in order to achieve the results I needed. Being the organiser and perceived leader of a group was new to me and extremely daunting; this proved to be one of the most marked times of my life, during which I grew immensely as a person, and developed my confidence through a comforting sense of achievement.

*Travelling* to new places and being immersed in a different culture is another context with the potential for a great deal of learning and personal growth. Research shows that students who have significant travel experiences (Hansel 1998:87) are more adaptable because they have coped with the surprises and the inevitable problems that arise when travelling. Because they have had to be self-reliant, they are more independent in their thinking, decisions and actions. They become more aware of their home country and culture and are better able to communicate with others and see the world from perspectives other than their own cultural perspective. Much of the personal benefit of travel comes not from what the students learn about the places or cultures they visit, but from the need to continuously make decisions and deal with the demands of daily life in new and unfamiliar settings.

The responsibilities, planning, organisation and self-reliance that travelling can require can provide challenging contexts and new learning situations for any individual. A particularly striking account is found in the narrative of a law student (J) who left school at the age of 17 and returned to full-time education as a mature student. Although experienced in many aspects of life, she had had limited opportunity to travel. Through her own initiative and some chance encounters, she secured a work placement in Australia. The impact this has had on her has been truly transformative, as captured in this extract from her account of visiting Vietnam:

This past 12 months also saw me conquer some fears that I've had for a while. (...)

It was while we were on a boat trip in Ha Long Bay, exploring the caves and the gorgeous surroundings, that I conquered my fear of water. Something inside me knew that this was a once in a lifetime opportunity and so I stepped into the Kayak and did something I'd not done since I was about 9. It was AMAZING. I felt like I was discovering land for the very first time and I was proud of myself that I let myself do it. I also realised that fears are irrational and I have held myself back through lack of confidence for too long. I hope I will face many more events like this, and challenge myself even further as the exhilaration afterwards can keep your motivation going for months afterwards.

Another student recognises that his love of travel has been a motivator to earn a living, and a source of increased practical skills and of greater self-confidence:

Something I mentioned in both my life map and personal development plan was my love for travelling, which first started during my gap year. I worked for six months in order to travel for two months around South-East Asia, and have travelled to somewhere different every year since then (this year was Morocco, next year over Easter I plan to take a ten-day trip from Rome to Paris via Pisa, Florence, Venice, Milan, Basel, Brussels, Berlin and Amsterdam). Sorting out these trips has helped me to be more organised and responsible, as usually I travel with a group of friends and have to ensure everything is accounted for and sorted out. Similarly, I have found that being in a foreign environment forces me to be more outgoing, whether it involves striking up a conversation with fellow travellers or attempting to ask directions from a local resident.

On a more local, but no less personally significant scale, another student (E) admits: '[I] was a little apprehensive to travel in the underground on my own (it's just too complicated), I had no time to waste.'

International students who come to study at Surrey engage in a transformative experience as they make the transition into a culture that is often very different to their own (see Chapter 13). A Chinese student (U) displays similar insatiability for new experiences and challenging herself. Not content with having made the cultural leap to England, she reveals:

I have a dream that seems it cannot be achieved, it is that I want to work at Swedish Bank and live in Sweden. For an international student, especially

who comes from China, this sounds ridiculous. I am a Chinese student, my foreign language is English, which will make me special in China but this is not applicable in the UK or Europe. I realized deeply that learning the third language is necessary and useful for me to achieve my dream. That is exactly the reason why I choose French and Italian classes. My friends told me that I cannot handle three languages at the same time finally I will drop or give up one. I feel confused and almost convinced at the beginning, however, I keep asking myself, what is my dream? I cannot abandon any one of them when I am starting to draw the picture in my head.

Incredibly, she has been just one semester in England when she writes this. Her reflective account ends with the challenges she has now set herself in order to achieve her dream:

Half year in the UK is considerably unbelievable and incredible. A wide range of my ability has improved, as well as my personality, which I did not expect before. However, there are still some aspects I was missing. The rest of my time living in the UK, is adequate for me to change as much as possible. I should start to strengthen my volunteering work and find opportunities to enhance my ethical approach. What I am doing during the first six months is a step closer to my dream, everything is meaningful to some extent. Although now I am working at McDonalds, but I firmly believe that it is only temporary, and in some day, I will find another better job which can get me closer to my dream. I will not stop my pace before my dream comes true; I will keep walking until my dream comes true.

*Student societies and clubs* on or off campus provide another context for personal development. Here personal growth might be reflected in a sense of responsibility, learning and mastery of new skills, and learning to work with or lead others. Values that are based on good relationships often shine through. Student (B) set up and led a Gospel choir.

Being in a place of leadership is an absolute honour we are given the opportunity to draw out the gifts in people, get rid of those unnecessary insecurities that hold them back, and bring them to do more than they ever thought they could!

I was to teach [the choir] some new harmonies that me and a few of the others had only just written – so they weren't fixed in my mind. The way I saw it though, was that the choir would have an opportunity to trial and error

with me, and it'd be a good experience for them. Hopefully it would allow them to really feel part of the making and building of a song.

Another student, drawing on his experience of leading a society, gives a vivid account of how he has developed leadership skills and qualities:

SIFE had provided me with team leadership skills and taught me how to work as part of a team through various workshops and presentations. I now feel confident in my abilities as a leader. I have attended ... leadership training provided by companies such as HSBC and KMPG, where I learned how to communicate effectively, what it means to be a leader, how to connect your team and effectively manage yourself. Through the year I have helped organize and chaired over 60 meetings this year. Whilst leading I have also involved myself as a team member of every one of our six team projects. By going through the same problems and facing the same challenges as each member, and working together all of which have contributed in developing me as a strong team player. I have learned the importance of planning, of delegation of duties, listening and helping colleagues, and the importance of maintaining a close professional relationship with those you work with. I would now say I am pretty competent in all of the above.

A first year student (L) conveys the exuberance found in many accounts, telling her interviewer:

The first two weeks of university, I went round and did every society thing going. I did badminton, I did scuba diving, I did rugby, I did fencing again (..) trampolining, and I've kept that one on. I tried some other things as well, but I didn't stick to those. And I work and I volunteer ...

*Sporting activities* are important areas for personal development for many students:

I feel that the depth of your relationship off the pitch, is really reflected in how you play on the pitch; you understand each other better, you read one-another's games more easily, and the whole team benefits. Sport is not just the playing of a game. There's so much more to it.

In some instances, sport is undertaken not for pleasure but because it offers a challenge. This is well illustrated by this doctoral student, who had overcome

illness and adversity and now found herself on holiday in Cuba with a large group of peers. She explains:

I'm not really a physical person; I don't really do that much physical activity and ... so I did probably four weeks training, I think, and kind of turned up thinking I don't do heat, and it was 35 degrees here. I don't really do people and there was 15 people in the group and they were really keen cyclists. And I kind of had been training on some old bike which didn't have enough gears and was kind of odd, but on this particular holiday there was one day where we were given the option to either do the 26 kilometres in the morning and at lunchtime get the bus in the next town. Or we could carry on and do the full 84 kilometre cycle. And, as I said, embracing the unknown and challenges I decided that I'd join the other five people who were doing the big one. And so off we went, and we got to kind of the end and there was one kilometre left and it was uphill. And I was like, are you serious? But you know, everyone else was doing it and so I pushed myself and that day I pushed myself in a way that I didn't know was possible. And the sense of satisfaction from getting up that hill and seeing the gates into the town was just ... God, it was like overwhelming and I thought, you know what, I can do this.

This student goes on to attribute her sense of achievement and her new-found confidence to her developing sense of identity.

*Volunteering, caring and mentoring* create a sense of social responsibility as summarised by this participant:

I cannot fully explain the feeling of wholeness that accompanies helping someone in a significant way. Every new experience adds to my person, and expands or alters my perspectives. I feel that it has helped me to grow in so many ways, especially in terms of confidence and my capabilities for dealing with unfamiliar situations and to create new opportunities for myself and others.

But it also brings to many volunteers an awareness of reciprocal benefits. Despite previous experience as a Brownies and Girl Guide<sup>4</sup> leader, this language student was fearful of teaching in school and her role as an authority figure. After a few weeks, she had come to the realisation that:

I saw educational volunteering as me coming into a school and help changing children's lives. I never knew how much we could change each

other's. I saw it as me teaching them, however they ended up teaching me as well. And last but not least, I saw my own development through the teaching, but I never imagined we would develop together.

Similarly, she has learnt from her voluntary work with disabled young people, acknowledging what she did and how her transformation has come about: 'I have learnt through doing, and I did find it quite scary sometimes. Looking back I can see how I turned from clueless to very confident in my volunteer position.'

Volunteering often results in assuming responsibility for others. A final year overseas student holding several voluntary positions recalled one experience she dealt with as a mentor:

A particular case I had to handle was in the first week of university where a girl kept getting anxiety attacks. She refused to go back to her student accommodation and she wanted to go back home. I spent two hours in Senate House, convincing her on how great university life is. I shared with her my personal encounters and experiences. I remained rational, neutral and [tried] to be not overly emotional. I was nervous as well because I have never handled such a case before. But I pulled myself together and had to choose the right words when communicating with her.

Her personal development is well understood and clearly expressed. She is keen to illustrate it further, with hindsight scorning her previous self:

I would like to highlight my experience in India. It was always a dream and a personal choice to go to India and see for myself what it is like. All my impressions and misconceptions about India were cleared when I actually met the people on the streets and [spent] days staying with children from the slums. And no, Daravi is nothing like what you see in *SlumDog Millionaire*. I learned to work as a team with 99 other people, we shared rooms, attended lectures, went on visits and volunteered together. We had to be creative when we had to teach English songs and games to the children in the slums. There were times when I felt like giving up, when I could not take the hygiene or the weather, but my love for the kids and the poor made me stay. This summer, I am going back to visit them. I also had to learn a bit of Hindi to communicate, I had to learn to try their cuisines and dance their traditional dancers. This trip taught me to try, adapt and adjust. I am now more culturally aware and I do not form perceptions or make judgemental statements quickly.

*Being creative/enterprising* makes a significant contribution to personal wellbeing. For this student, the rewards were both intrinsic and practical:

The cake bake sale was a great success. I made over 50 cup cakes, and between 5–6 of us, we produced over 150 cakes and cookies for sale, making a profit of over £100 towards subsidizing future events for economics students. I was invited to sell cakes half way through a lecture, where I did a short speech to the class to invite them to take a look and buy our cakes, which was very successful and significantly contributed towards us selling all cakes made.

Another narrative describes how a placement year student manages to sustain his extra-curricular interest in the theatre.

The pantomime enabled me to be more creative, and be myself. As a team we all had to come together to ensure it was as successful as it could be, and help each other out at all times. Without supporting each other at every step of the way it would have failed, and communication, friendliness and willingness to learn were key.

One discovery we made in piloting the award was the new opportunity afforded by the building of a portfolio for creative self-expression. For some students being given permission to create a handmade journal, and knowing that their representations of learning and development in this journal would be appreciated, seem to liberate and energise them. They felt a sense of pride in doing something creative that they could keep or show to people and they spoke of how they looked forward to returning to it. Several said that they would continue with the creative process beyond the award as it helped them see their life in a more meaningful and purposeful way. One person named her portfolio 'Taste the Future'. She told her interviewer that it was just a snapshot, but 'I want to continue it forever. This is just the beginning and I want to continue it.'

For the assessors, it was a privilege to witness beautifully presented scrapbooks full of photographic and hand-drawn images, decorations, mementos, supporting artefacts and explanatory and reflective writing.<sup>5</sup> These mediating artefacts alone demonstrated that considerable time, care, attention, effort and resources had been invested in their production. Implicitly and explicitly, they revealed the significant meaning making process that the student had engaged in. Interviewees described this variously as giving 'permission to dwell on things (...) to think deeper', helping 'me to see what value I get out of life' and making

'you realise what is import to you'. In these cases the portfolio itself was a manifestation of the identity, and the role played by creativity in that identity, of the individual. From the patterns of lifewide learning we can infer that participation in the creation of a scrapbook is characteristic of students who are seeking personal growth and the creation of identity in through their lifewide learning. The way these students inhabit the space in which they create their portfolio seemed to us to embody the notion of 'indwelling' which Polanyi (1967, 1974) describes as the process by which we begin to comprehend and understand something by connecting to it and, literally, living and dwelling in it.

### *Explorative orientation*

Another type of lifewide learning that can be discerned in learners' portfolios is a pattern where the motivation is to explore new experiences which may be only loosely connected and where the *post hoc* meaning making may not be particularly coherent or strong. This explorative disposition (Law 2008) is still motivated by a commitment to self-development, but there is less strategic decision making in the choice of experiences for particular forms of development. What is apparent is that students are open to new possibilities and willing to take risks to try things out for themselves and to learn through the experience. There is a suggestion in the evidence discussed in Chapter 9 that this pattern is more prevalent during the early stages of a student's university career.

One student reeled off an extensive list of co- and extra-curricular activities she engaged in during her undergraduate time. She concluded:

Each and every one of them taught me something different and I believe they taught me. They also helped me become more rounded and develop my views and see things differently and meet new people and learn how to be more tolerant.

She recognises that although her diverse experiences and interests may appear overwhelming, in reflecting on them she is able to appreciate their collective value:

And I would do it all over again. I am not saying that everyone should do all of the things I did, but I truly believe that some of these experiences are of paramount importance for a complete education. It's not just about lectures or a perfect academic record; it is about you, about how you develop as a student, as an individual and also as a professional. These things helped me

develop my confidence, use my creativity, develop my English and communication skills and gave me lots of opportunities to work with other students. For me, it all worked perfectly, as to every single one of my three interviews with [company name] it gave me something else to talk about and it got me rid of the tense situation starting with ... 'Wow, so you had 81 for your first year, what else did you do???' And after all these, I know who I am now ... and what's more important, I know who I want to become!

As a postscript, this student went on to secure a work placement with a prestigious company attributing her success to the very fact that she could discuss, with confidence and awareness, the learning and development she had gained from participating in the award.

### **Facilitating self-authorship**

Our educational design for the lifewide learning award was predicated on the desire to recognise and value forms of learning and development that we believe are necessary for being effective and self-fulfilled in a complex, ever changing world. In Chapter 5 Baxter Magolda drew attention to the importance in personal development of 'the growth of epistemological, intrapersonal and interpersonal complexity' (Baxter Magolda 2004a:41). We believe that students embedded in their own ecology of lifewide learning while studying at university are naturally and intuitively developing along trajectories of 'epistemological, intrapersonal and interpersonal complexity'. We sought evidence of this in students' portfolios using the three assumptions relating to the nature, development and use of knowledge (see below). Interviews conducted with students who completed the award reveal how individual students' perceptions of themselves in the world relate to the assumptions that underlie the growth of self-authoring capability and dispositions. A few extracts of interview transcripts or personal accounts are given below to illustrate participants' journeys towards self-authorship.

*Assumption 1: lifewide learning exposes learners to epistemological, intrapersonal and interpersonal complexity*

It is self-evident from the accounts of participants that they are involved in experiences and situations that expose them to complexity in all these aspects of being. But without help they may find it difficult to create new and enduring understanding.

Student K hadn't appreciated the complexity she was involved in because she had not recorded her experiences or reflected upon them. I did do a

whole bit of extracurricular activities in terms of volunteering, and I think throughout the four years, I look back and it's not that I can't see where I've developed or what I've learnt, it's just really difficult to sort of find concrete things to discuss, because I never documented it. I think ... I wanted something that recognised all the effort that I did put into my extracurricular activities.

Once a facilitative structure for recording and reflecting was available student K began to make more sense of the complexity she was engaged in and the development that has resulted.

I think more of a positive impact, because I think it just encourages me to keep my extracurricular activities going, etc. You know, it helps me see the learning and those skills then transferred over to my academic practice, which I think I'll find quite useful. You know, the networking, speaking to different people [for example].

And her mother also noticed that she had changed.

[My mother] She's just so thrilled that, I think ... she's seen the change, like I mentioned, in the last few months, you know, since coming to Surrey, and just the fact that I haven't just been sitting back and doing nothing, or you know, everything that I should have been doing, because she's always moaned about my extracurricular activities.

An example of an epistemological change is illustrated by a Swedish student (O) who revealed how her self-awareness has grown from her interaction with members of the Christian Union. Her parents are atheists, but she has developed a deep religious faith. She sees fellow students who are extreme in their religion, for instance rejecting alcohol or sexual contact. On the one hand she admits, 'They really inspire me because their faith is so strong'; on the other, she feels inadequate for not sharing its depth. Eventually, she has come to compare the extremes typified by them and her parents, and understands that 'I don't have to be one of them'.

*Assumption 2: self is central to knowledge construction. Learners define themselves and bring this to their way of learning, work and relationships*  
Greater self-awareness and a clearer sense of identity (as illustrated by the examples above) leads to greater confidence, which feeds into further activity and self-definition.

A PhD student from Pakistan (HJ) felt he must experience as much as he could during his time in the UK. 'I have to take all the opportunities that are thrown at me.' He demonstrates a keen sense of self, partly borne of his cultural background and perhaps related to his greater maturity:

I think when I came here and my father told me at the very beginning that knowledge is everything ... And when you're coming in a different culture and I'm the only one from my family coming here, I actually took that, not just academic knowledge, knowledge of the whole thing. So being a researcher, I actually go deep down as well while doing things and I think this is ... this will compliment, basically this will compliment you professional life and your social life even.

Nevertheless, he attributes his growing self-confidence to communication with others, such as through his Student Union activities, as a result of which 'the confidence then came up'. This in turn allows him to take risks and seize opportunities when they come along:

It's, as I said, you never know about the future ... Like when you do something you have to move on and you have to give another person the place to experience what you have experienced and you move on. And then I think so it's a luck or it's by chance you come across something unique that you don't know about and you want to do it. Maybe because of your previous experiences and ... Like I never imagined in my life, before coming here that I would be taking courses now at Oxford, on a scholarship. I'm doing that right now. So as I said, I am very positive.

This student is fully conscious of the sources of his personal development, explaining that it depends on:

whether he or she is a risk taker or they actually accept challenges or not. Some people don't accept challenges. They don't take risks. They are very much factual and I think so, I do both. I am factual, but I also take risks and when I find that I think I can do this.

Another interviewee (B) acknowledges that some people find her 'different', and on the surface she appears self-confident in the face of this:

I'm quite a thinker and I am all about developing as a whole person and I recognise things like that and try and express them to people and they're like,

oh, that's a bit stupid. Like little things, like I'm lodging with an older couple this year and people find that strange ...

But as she talks on, she begins to reveal her frustration that her self-fulfilment is being impeded:

I can pass exams, I can do stuff like that, almost without learning anything and it's something I get frustrated about that I'll go to a teacher or, like when I was younger and even now, and say I'm really struggling with this and they look at my grades and they say, no you're not, and they don't help me. Because I want to learn, I don't just want to pass exams.

For her, the award has given her permission to engage in her passions and see that self-realisation transcends domains, bringing success to her personally and academically:

I can't really express to him how much all of that stuff is allowing me to enjoy my studies more. A bit like last year, I think I was getting a 2:1 [good degree] quite happily and I was working hard, but I think in my head I was like, I don't really want a first, because to get a first you can't really have a social life and you can't really get involved in other things. So it was in my head, I thought, okay, I'll settle for a 2:1 so that I can do Frisbee, I can do gospel choir, I can compose and I can write for bands and do all these things. But from doing those things and from doing the award, it's actually, it's upped my academic, so this year I'm just getting firsts and I'm doing more than I was doing last year with all my extra things. But it's because I'm finally realising that all of those things allow me, give me a purpose and a reason and a passion for doing my work that they all fit perfectly together. So now I'm working at a first, you know.

This sense of permission is a recurrent theme in interviews and narratives alike.

*Assumption 3: authority and expertise are shared in the mutual construction of knowledge among peers*

A second year engineering student from Spain has learnt the importance of mutually constructing knowledge through his experience with the United World Colleges. Under a scheme which began in the 1960s, scholarships bring together students from around the globe: 'basically they're looking for that sort of person who gets involved, who cares about what's going on around and is sort

of like willing to put in effort to sort of like help make things better.’ Of his experience there, he recalls:

And so I got involved in different stuff, for instance, I ran a society ... well, the equivalent would be a society here, like it’s called newsflash, where we sort of like collected news from around the world and organised little sort of kind of meetings every week where we would invite all the people to come around. And we would try to get some money from the place where the news was happening to sort of like explain to everyone else, because we got some quite heated debates sometimes.

Continuing his thirst for knowledge, he used the university’s reading week to explore the country and meet old friends, only to find that he was inspired beyond his expectations:

we had a reading week and I spent half of that going to visit a few friends in the North, sort of first I went to Edinburgh and then I went down to York. And there were people I hadn’t seen in a couple of years. And it was really inspiring; they were old sort of ex colleagues of mine from college. And so, for instance, I had this brilliant conversation really like I meant with one of the people I stayed with in York, and my friend is studying politics and philosophy which is – I find it a fascinating subject. Like if I hadn’t done engineering that’s probably what I would’ve done.

Unfortunately, this student’s exuberance for learning makes such demands on his time that he had to withdraw from the award. He expressed real regret and not a little sense of failure, as demonstrated in these two extracts from his interview:

For someone like me who’s really into sort of like the humanistic approach to everything, it was a great opportunity to sort of like take that back, because academically I can’t really do that at the moment, it’s all sort of like very kind of like technical and theoretical. [...]

I myself, I am somebody who hates committing to something and not sticking to it, and that’s why I failed. I feel really sorry about not being able to complete ...

A very different experience of peer learning is offered by student Q, not at interview but in his narrative:

The mandate of the project was ... primarily to use an open source platform no one in the team had ever built a site of this calibre and complexity. Where to begin? We decided to break off into sub teams to understand what type platform would be suitable. This process was essentially hours of googling and then presenting back to the whole team. It became apparent from the team research that one team member had more of an understanding of the various platforms we could use, and he then inadvertently had become an instructor to us. He would talk us through in depth (and for some time!) how the platform, Drupal works and teach us how build modules on it. Once we had knowledge, we got cracking and completed the first phase of the site on time and no problem that we couldn't solve with the aid of google!

Through a series of chance encounters student L secured a work placement in Melbourne, where she was one of a group of twenty overseas students. In addition to the learning she gained through interacting with them, she describes how she shared her experiences through photographs. By publishing them on Facebook, she was able to involve others in the enjoyment she has derived from the event she recorded, e.g. the exhilaration of climbing Sydney Harbour Bridge, while in return learning from their responses. Reflecting upon her experiences and finding in them an uncanny coincidence of significant encounters, she says:

I will never ever dismiss anyone who works in a shop or who has retail experience or bar work or anything, because you just don't know what contacts you can make from it. And I do think those sorts of jobs are important, and that's why I've enjoyed them for so long, because of the contacts and the people I've met through them.

Student N gives a vivid account of how she wanted to be 'more proactive' after coming to Surrey to study for a Master's degree. She secured a position as a support worker providing academic and practical support (e.g. as an amanuensis) for students with a disability. Her first student required note-taking, and N's first session with him was an early morning lecture. Because of the early start, she offered him coffee and chatted with him during the break. She describes his reaction as one of shock: he was taken aback that she treated him as a person. He subsequently asked for her to be his supporter, rewarding her with the pleasure of having done her job well. She feels she has learnt much about herself and how alike we all are, whatever our cultural and other differences.

Student N recounts a second vivid experience of learning from her work with disabled students: she was surprised to receive emails during the Christmas break from her tutees, telling her of the grades they had received in their exams. She was touched that they wanted to involve her in their success and recognises in this learning that: 'It's not going to be on your CV or your mark but it says I contributed, I did something, I achieved something.'

## **Our sense of integration**

In the first eight chapters of this book we set out the building blocks for a new lifewide concept of higher education. In Chapter 6 the principles for a lifewide curriculum were elaborated: a curriculum that would embrace in an inclusive way the experiences and situations learners need to encounter and deal with if they are to prepare themselves for their future world: a world that they will help create.

The lifewide learning award framework described in this chapter is our solution to the challenge of supporting these forms of learning and development. In Chapter 3 it was argued that lifewide learning must embrace a comprehensive and holistic notion of learning and personal development and in Chapter 4, drawing on the seminal thinking of John Dewey and Eduard Lindeman, we embraced the idea that situations and the capability to deal effectively and creatively with situations should provide the focus for an individual's learning and holistic development. In Chapter 5 Baxter Magolda elaborated the concept of self-authorship and her beliefs that personal development in higher education must provide opportunity for the growth of epistemological, intrapersonal and interpersonal complexity. We believe that our lifewide concept of education honours, in a pragmatic and practical way, the idea that self-authorship can be a central goal of a higher education that embraces the holistic development of people. The award framework and educational support system we created to promote learning and personal development has the characteristics of a learning partnership (Baxter Magolda 2004a). In judging the outcomes of learning and self-development we believe that students who honoured and engaged deeply with the process gained significant self-knowledge and affirmed who they are and who they would like to become. In the words of one participant:

Probably one of the greatest benefits of the award was the fact that I had to regularly reflect on whatever I did and how it improved my capabilities, both professional and personal. It is through this reflection that I learnt most about myself, I discovered intricacies of my learning (both explicit and implicit) and how I have developed as a 'whole person'. I can understand now that many

skills gained in one field are transferable and [can be] applied to other spheres of life. I also think that taking part in the award proved to be a very personal journey and in a way helped me to discover who I am, what are my strengths and weaknesses.

### **Endnotes**

1 Between 1996 and 2007, Surrey had an average employment rate six months after graduation of 97.8 per cent, compared with the national average of 93.8 per cent: the highest of any English university. In 2009 Surrey had the highest graduate employment performance indicator (96.9) of any UK university.

2 An example of a completed portfolio containing a life map, personal development plan and personal account can be found in the resources for this book at <http://lifewideeducation.co.uk>.

3 We are indebted to Professor John Cowan who, in his role as a collegial critical friend, acted as an External Auditor for the Award, and helped the assessors appreciate more deeply the judgements they were making.

4 The Girl Guides Association was set up 1910, and the junior section, called the Brownies, in 1914 to give girls a voice. See [www.girlguiding.org.uk](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk).

5 Some examples of students talking about their portfolios can be found at <http://lifewideeducation.co.uk>.