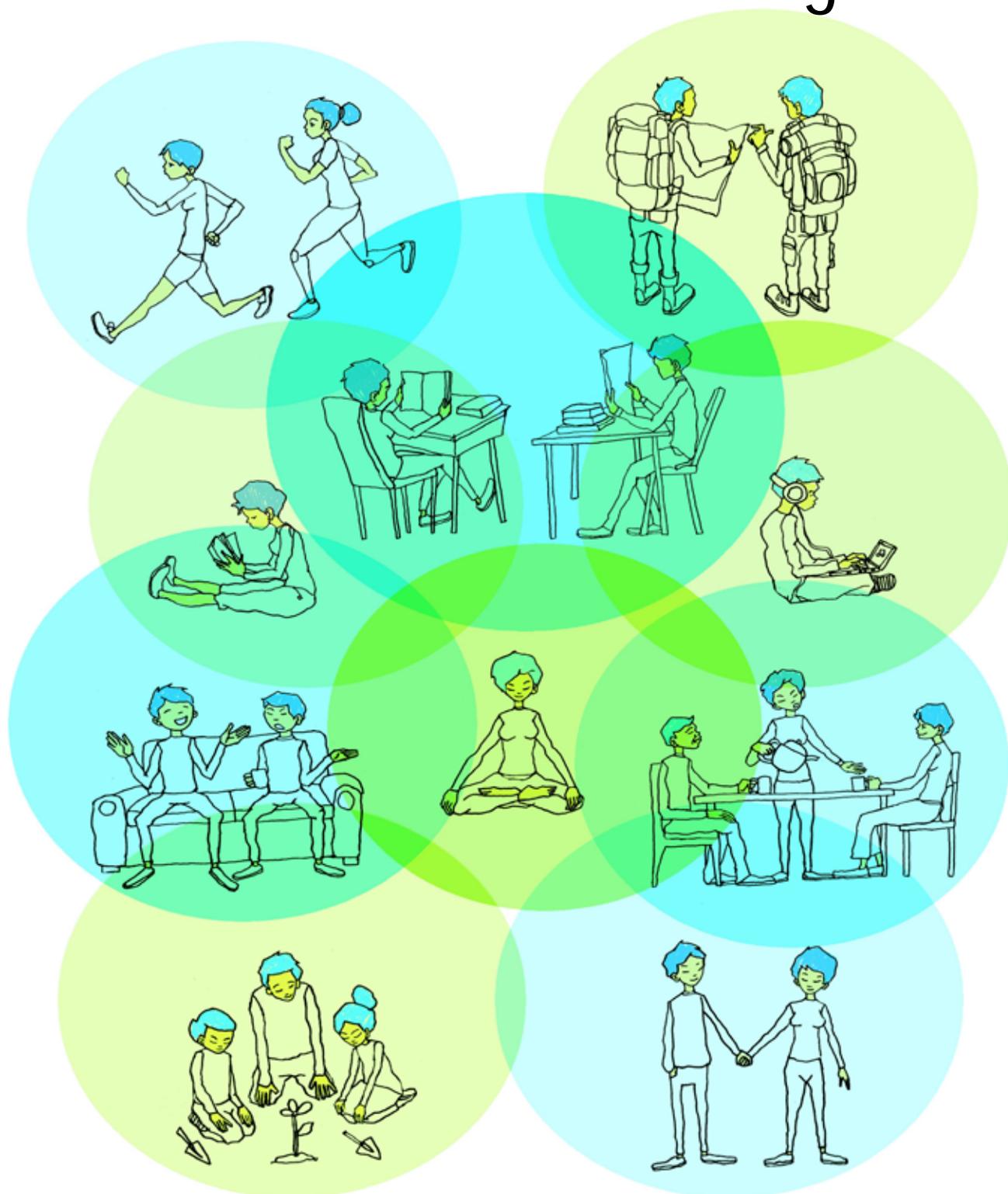


Lifewide Learning & Education in Universities and Colleges



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CHAPTER B5

LeedsforLife: Preparation for Lifewide Learning in the Research-Intensive Context

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SUMMARY

LeedsforLife (<http://leedsforlife.leeds.ac.uk>) is both a way of life and a preparation for a lifetime of success, learning, and seizing opportunities. It's both an ethos and a practical, web-based tool, available for every Leeds student and customisable to their needs and interests. The convenient alliteration reminds students of the way in which their Leeds education will shape the rest of their lives; it also speaks of the help available to them throughout their course as they prepare for life after graduation. In this chapter we describe the origins, development and underpinning principles of LeedsforLife, and reflect on this flagship project as a statement of educational values at a moment of profound change in higher education.

BIOGRAPHIES



As Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Student Education at the University of Leeds, a position she has held since 2006, Vivien Jones has responsibility for the academic and co-curricular experience of all taught students. Working closely with colleagues in schools, faculties and services, and with Leeds University Union, she is concerned to ensure that the University's research excellence translates into exciting learning opportunities for students, and that students are fully supported in making the most of their Leeds experience. Vivien is also Professor of Eighteenth-Century Gender and Culture in the School of English.



Chris Warrington is Student Opportunity Manager (Academic). He has worked at the University of Leeds since 1998. Moving from a role in Quality Assurance in 2008 Chris has worked on a number of institutional projects, including the development of LeedsforLife from its inception, the Partnership and the development of the Leeds Curriculum. Chris took on a new role in 2013 to manage academic student opportunity. This includes working closely with a range of stakeholders across the University, through strategic development of



the academic infrastructure and through specific projects, to create and enhance student opportunity.



David Gardner is Head of Student Opportunity and Enhancement. A graduate of the School of Geography, David returned to the University in 1992 to work on 'Enterprise in Higher Education', a government initiative to encourage universities to embed skills development in the curriculum. This was the start of a career working with academic and service colleagues to formulate and implement a wide range of university-wide initiatives in student education, including the introduction of our virtual learning environment, the provision of social learning spaces and establishing our very successful Student Education Conference. David has been involved in Leeds*for*Life from the outset, with particular responsibility for leading the development of the website, which is now moving into Phase 5 focussing on meeting the needs of our Medical School and taught postgraduate community.

BACKGROUND

First conceived in embryonic form in 2006, Leeds*for*Life has developed in parallel with the discussions about the function of higher education first prompted in 2006 by the Leitch Report on high-level skills, University UK's (UUK) response to that report, and the then Labour government's subsequent Strategy for Higher Level Skills (2008). It's a debate which has been intensified more recently by the radical changes to the HE funding model which followed the Browne Review (2010) and by a challenging economic and political context for UK (and particularly English) higher education since those changes were introduced. But whilst Leeds*for*Life has been fully cognisant of what became known as 'the skills agenda', it importantly represents resistance to the more reductively utilitarian assumptions that have sometimes too readily followed those key moments from the last decade. Its aim is to strike a balance between, on the one hand, our responsibility to prepare our students to succeed in a fiercely competitive global job market and, on the other, our responsibility as educators to an ethics which measures cultural value in more than simply economic terms. In doing so, we echo the influential view of Craig McInnes: 'It is (...) foolish to eschew the leadership role that universities should be playing in ensuring that the undergraduate years provide an experience that is more than the narrow acquisition of vocational knowledge and technical skills' (McInnes 2003). And not just the undergraduate years: Leeds*for*Life is for all taught students.

From extra-curricular to co-curricular

A quick overview of how it developed should help contextualise and further define these principles, and begin to give a clearer sense of the Leeds*for*Life concept, how it was translated into practice, and the ways in which, in encouraging students into the habit of



adaptive, compositional learning, it illustrates and enacts some of the key characteristics of lifewide learning.

Leeds*for*Life had its official launch at the beginning of the 2008-09 academic year, but the story goes back at least two years before that when we became increasingly convinced that we needed to provide more guidance and support for students in developing what we at that time referred to as their 'non-academic CV'. During the 2006-07 academic year these aspirations were crystallised in a position paper, discussed by pro-deans for learning and teaching (the academic leaders with overall responsibility for student education in each faculty) and our learning and teaching support (LTS) staff, and further developed in a workshop session which brought together LTS staff with colleagues from our Careers Service. The result was a successful proposal to the University's senior team for investment in a project with the working title 'Leeds+'. Previously, the expectation - particularly among academic colleagues - had been that students were responsible for how they chose to spend their time outside their studies. Our priority as an institution, according to this view, was delivering and nurturing academic excellence, and our descriptors of 'graduateness', developed in the post-Dearing period, worked on the assumption that these would be achieved through the students' engagement with their programme and that this, together with institutional reputation and a little help from the Careers Service, would guarantee them employment. Indeed Leeds students were, and continue to be, very successful in the graduate jobs market - particularly when measured on a timescale beyond the premature six-month census imposed by the DLHE survey [Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education].

But by 2006 student expectations, public rhetoric, and a new strategic commitment to provide 'an education that creates excellent career opportunities' pushed us increasingly towards more self-conscious reflection on the definition and purposes of education in an institution like the University of Leeds. What emerged went far beyond an employability strategy to a redefinition of our educative purpose and an acknowledgement of our responsibility to provide integrated and creative support for a much wider range of student activity.

Figure 1 Leeds University values



Values-driven approach to education

The challenge was how best to do this, and, particularly, how best to do it in the context of a research-intensive institution and, more specifically, with a particularity that made it distinctively Leeds. Several formative elements came together as we began to think this

through. First, the new Leeds strategy was underpinned by a very clear statement of our institutional values (Figure 1) which had been agreed across the institution through an extensive process of consultation. An important objective, then, was to make these values come alive for our students, not only by giving them meaningful visibility within any scheme designed to help them reflect purposefully on their Leeds experience, but also, more fundamentally, by encouraging a values-driven approach to education and, ultimately, to life.

Secondly, what should be included within that Leeds experience also required clearer definition. One of my absolute priorities as Pro Vice-Chancellor, in helping steer the design of what was to become *LeedsforLife*, was to challenge the growing misapprehension that the *only* thing that mattered in self-development and in the minds of employers was what you did outside your course and to do so by breaking down the binary divide between the academic and the 'extra'-curricular. So our concern was to establish a conceptual framework, as well as a practical framework of support, within which students saw their academic and other activities as complementary elements within a more broadly-defined overall education. In support of that complementarity, we always refer to those 'other' activities not as 'extra-' but as 'co-curricular'.

Because - and this is the third driver - it was and remains crucial that both we and, even more importantly, our students are able confidently to explain the value of a research-led education against a more instrumental, functionalist discourse of skills acquisition. The translation of excellence in research into learning opportunities for students was, and remains, at the heart of our strategic goals at Leeds, and under the Leeds Curriculum (<http://curriculum.leeds.ac.uk/>) every programme has to be able to demonstrate how it supports students on a path from research-led teaching to research-based learning (see Healey, 2005). As part of that commitment, we need to be able to provide precise evidence not just of the ways in which such an education fulfils the needs of top employers, but also of how its transformational effect on individuals translates in turn into transformational social and cultural effects: the distinction, as has often been pointed out, between training for a particular role, and education for life.

These, then, were the principles behind the admittedly rather wordy and at that stage still rather woolly project proposal, with its commitment to 'empower students to draw on the University values and reflect upon them in their own context, in order that they can become outstanding graduates who have the opportunity to reach their full potential'. But there were some fundamental principles we were already very clear about. In line with our commitment to inclusiveness, this had to be an entitlement, not a certificate; it had to be for all students, rather than an optional scheme that benefitted only a minority. It also had to be attractive to students, recognisably different from the well-intentioned but largely neglected PDP.

Creating *LeedsforLife*

With financial help from the University's Strategic Development Fund (most often reserved for research proposals), we were able to make significant progress in successfully translating aspirations and principles into something tangible. Investment - and the institutional support this implied - not only gave the project much greater visibility, it also bought us some of that



most precious commodity, dedicated time, in the shape of an imaginative and rigorous project manager. With this invaluable resource in place, and through an important process of discussion with students, the idea that was still to become Leeds*for*Life began to take coherent shape.

First, as we sharpened up the concept, we also clarified the distribution of responsibility between students and their tutors. In the final project plan the objective was described as the integration of students' academic and wider university experience and an entitlement for all students. It will be owned by the students and will help them to recognise the distinctiveness of a Leeds education, while tailoring it to fit in with their individual achievements, interests and ambitions. It is intended to help students describe clearly the qualities and skills derived from their total University of Leeds experience.

Ownership, importantly, lies with the student. A key aim of the project was to 'ensure that Leeds graduates can articulate their competitive advantage as a result of their University of Leeds experience', in line with a principle established from the beginning: 'Leeds+ is an expression of the rights of the students (to take the opportunities provided by the University) and responsibilities of the student (to engage with the opportunities) when they come to Leeds'. But they would be helped in shaping their Leeds career, and thus their Leeds identity, through a personalised programme of support. So also enshrined in the project aims was another crucial statement of intent: that it should '*engage all staff* in supporting the integration of students' academic and wider university experience' (emphasis added). In its language of rights, but also of shared responsibility, Leeds*for*Life echoed and complemented the University's Partnership between students and staff (<http://partnership.leeds.ac.uk/>).

The magnitude of the attitudinal change implied in this requirement that (academic) staff be involved in supporting a holistic, integrated model of education should not be underestimated. In the first instance, this translated into much-needed collective attention to the responsibilities of the personal tutor. It had long been a principle at Leeds that all academic staff should act as personal tutors but beyond that the role was variously defined, and unevenly fulfilled, across the University's nine faculties and thirty-two schools. Reaching an agreed cross-institutional definition of a Leeds Model of Personal Tutoring which lays out the timing and frequency of meetings between student and tutor across all year groups was one of Leeds*for*Life's most important enablers.

Secondly, we set about describing the skills and attributes students might expect to gain from their Leeds education. We were helped here not just by structured conversations with graduate recruiters, but by the timely publication of the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR) 2006 summer survey which itemised and prioritised the qualities and attributes being sought. We drew, too, on the continuum of enhancement, from 'adding' to 'transforming', used by Harvey and Knight (1996) to describe the effect of new graduates on the organisation they join.

But our aim was to define and develop the transformative potential of Leeds students specifically. This took us back to the University values and, after a process of extensive



Figure 2 Leeds *for*Life values, skills and attributes

Leeds *for*Life values, skills and attributes

The University's values of Academic Excellence, Community, Integrity, Inclusiveness and Professionalism provide the framework which defines the experience of every University of Leeds graduate. Within this framework, individual Leeds graduates are distinguished by their confident ability to articulate their attributes (the way they behave) and skills (the things they can do), and the ways in which these have been derived from their academic education in a particular discipline, together with their participation in other chosen activities.

Academic Excellence

Attributes

- Critical intelligence and the ability to questions received ideas.
- The ability to work autonomously, take the initiative and to be self-directed in undertaking tasks.
- The ability to identify and define problems and evaluate the merits of particular solutions.
- Understanding and experience of the research methods used to investigate and establish knowledge, and its boundaries, in a particular discipline.

Skills

- To be critically aware of, and informed by, current knowledge, and its possible applications, in a discipline or professional specialism.
- To analyse information, synthesise views, make connections and, where appropriate, propose creative solutions.
- The ability to think flexibly and independently.

Community

Attributes

- Responsible awareness of and respect for other perspectives and sensitivities, whether local, national or international and the implications for individual behaviour.
- Engagement with knowledge which is not restricted to traditional boundaries.

Skills

- The ability to build rapport with others.
- The ability to work in a collegial way towards a common goal.

Integrity

Attributes

- Honesty and openness and with a sense of academic and social responsibility.
- Awareness of ethical considerations and consequences of different approaches.

Skills

- The ability to make unbiased judgements.

Inclusiveness

Attributes

- Engagement with society and individuals, acknowledging and managing preconceptions or prejudice.

Skills

- To read, present and communicate complex knowledge in a way which is comprehensible and relevant to the needs of others.
- To respond sensitively and appropriately to the needs of different stakeholders and circumstances.

Professionalism

Attributes

- Awareness of one's own skills and abilities and confidence in articulating them.
- Self belief and confidence in one's own ability to influence decisions and outcomes.
- Open mindedness when dealing with change.
- The ability to take responsibility and/or provide direction for a team.
- Readiness to take responsibility for one's own academic and professional development and learning.
- Awareness and understanding of business, commercial and/or social issues and opportunities and the expectations of prospective employers.
- Motivation, drive and enthusiasm.

Skills

- To reflect on and benefit from one's own learning and that of others.
- To manage time and workload effectively.
- To articulate one's own skills and abilities confidently and convincingly, tailored to the target audience as appropriate.

consultation, the Senate approved a designation of graduate attributes and skills which connected with the vocabulary of employers, but used the University's values of academic excellence, community, integrity, inclusiveness and professionalism as a categorising framework (Figure 2). Our students would thus be encouraged to see their development in distinctively Leeds terms - and to see it as essentially values-driven.

Together with the Leeds Model of Personal Tutoring, the Leeds articulation of attributes and skills was given institutional endorsement by Senate at the very beginning of 2008, an endorsement that also, by implication, required further involvement from academic staff. In addition to the supportive role played by personal tutors and in order to enable students to better recognise and reflect on the contribution their academic work was making to their development, all programme and module leaders were asked to supplement learning outcomes by identifying the key (Leeds) attributes and skills they expected students to acquire.

Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly, these concepts of shared responsibility and Leeds 'graduateness' found conceptual expression when we finally decided on the alliterative Leeds*for*Life as the name for our idea. And they found real practical expression when we recognised that a web-based resource was the best solution to the challenge we had set ourselves. Indeed, it was through the design of the website that Leeds*for*Life really came to life.

Not so much a website, more a way of life

Figure 3 Screenshot of the original Leeds*for*Life homepage

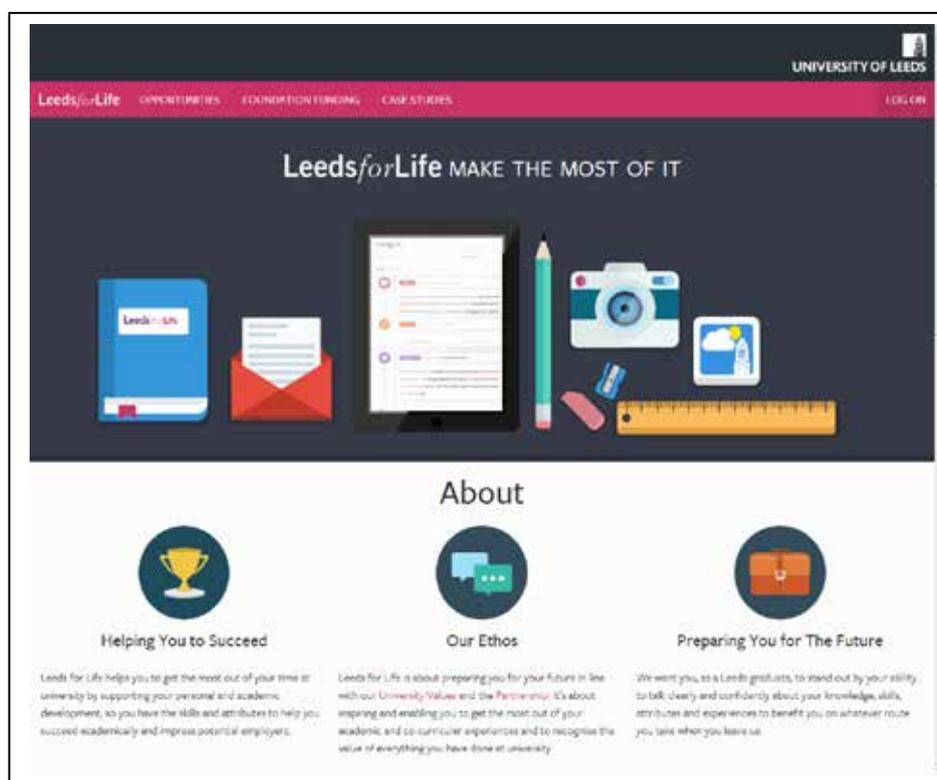


Leeds*for*Life - both the concept and its realisation in the website - continues to be a living idea, constantly developing in response to the feedback of both students and staff. Since its



launch just over five years ago in September 2008, the website has gone through four versions, with numerous small modifications in between.

Figure 4 Screenshot of the current Leeds *for*Life homepage



The most recent version, launched in September 2013, included a major style revamp with students taking a key role in designing a new, cleaner interface more suitable for access on a variety of mobile devices, including smartphones, and allowing integration with the UniLeeds mobile app.

Throughout all of these modifications, our aim has been to improve and extend the ways in which the web resource embodies and supports our original principles.

An entitlement

In itself, the web resource represents and enables the fundamental principle that Leeds *for*Life is for all our students. Students can access its full range of resources, including their own personal space on the site, simply by signing in with their University username. From Phase I, the website has provided a comprehensive database of opportunities provided by academic schools, by Student Education Service colleagues, and by Leeds University Union - from subject societies to sports team membership; from volunteering in the local community to undergraduate research scholarships; from work placements to roles as a student rep. Those opportunities are searchable by the Leeds *for*Life skills and the opportunity provider as well as by type of activity, helping every student to find or discover the kinds of things in which they might like to get involved, or the kinds of skills they feel they need to develop further. The website provides information on the linkages between the

University values and graduate attributes and the skills employers are looking for; and in their personal space, students are encouraged to develop what we call a 'living CV', an informal record of activities and reflections which can be drawn on, refined, and shaped when preparing formal CVs and letters of application.

In phase 2, the living CV was further developed, bringing together advice about formal CV writing with a single point of access to information collected by the individual student: annotated personal tutorial forms, annotated opportunity forms, their academic transcript, and a page to record links to any relevant web-based information such as job adverts or work-placement opportunities. And since 2009, students have been able to access and update their personal Leeds*for*Life space for five years beyond graduation.

In its most recent version the living CV has undergone further refinement. It's now presented as a timeline which integrates the student's record of the opportunities they have taken with key events and information automatically generated by University systems - the dates of personal tutorials, but also the student's self-assessment of their level of career readiness which they record each year as part of the registration process.

An integrated education

The Leeds*for*Life model is based on the principle that Leeds students should be helped to '*integrate* the skills developed through academic programmes with those gained through co-curricular opportunities' (emphasis added). This principle, in turn, is a response to the particularity of a research-intensive environment, where the boundaries between high-level generic academic and co-curricular skills are not particularly clear-cut - a fluidity reinforced in consultation with students during the early development of Leeds*for*Life where it was clear that they saw no clear distinction between the activities they undertook as part of their academic programme and those they undertook more generally during their time at university.

But it's a principle which also responds to the recognition that some 70% of graduate jobs are subject-neutral. As the former Director General of the CBI, Richard Lambert, put it in a keynote speech at the time of the Browne Report, 'Most employers are less interested in the precise details of what graduates have studied than in what the experience has taught them. ... What matters is that graduates have the framework which allows them to keep on learning' (Lambert 2010). Or, as the Leeds*for*Life skills put it, 'the ability to think flexibly and independently', to 'analyse information', and to 'propose creative solutions'. Furthermore, many of the roles our current graduates will fulfil during their working lifetimes aren't even invented yet - a recognition which is built in to the more enlightened education policies and broad-based curriculum design of emerging world economies such as Singapore.

In the context of Leeds*for*Life, by aligning academic learning outcomes with the skills and attributes gained from co-curricular activities we help students clarify and put to use what they described to us as a blurred boundary between their academic and their non-academic university experience. In very practical terms, by drawing on the University's programme catalogue, which stores the learning outcomes identified by academic colleagues, the



website identifies for students the skills and attributes associated with their academic programme and encourages them to shape their overall development through their complementary choice of co-curricular activities, the outcomes of which are articulated using the same categories.

Shared responsibility

The searchable database and the living CV remain core features. Since Phase 2 of Leeds*for*Life (2009), a third fundamental element has been the provision of online web-forms for use by students and staff in support of personal tutoring. By including prompts appropriate to the stage the student has reached in their academic programme, these forms encourage them to prepare for their personal tutorial by noting and submitting to their tutor in advance the issues they want to discuss. The tutor's comments can then also be recorded and shared. In later versions, staff have individualised spaces which list their personal tutees and give access to the student's academic record as context for their discussion, while integration with our attendance monitoring system enables the tutor to record attendance at personal tutorials, removing the need for a separate administrative process. More recently, an automatic email function has been added to notify the tutor when a student has submitted their form and the relationship is made as easy as possible through a booking service for personal tutorials which is integrated with tutors' Outlook calendars.

Leeds, for life

Inspiring role models are a vital ingredient in nurturing ambition and confidence. Under the badge of Leeds*for*Life, students are encouraged to see themselves as part of an aspirational narrative that connects them with former and, in some cases, prospective Leeds students, and helps develop their sense of their Leeds identity. Having had the advantages of a Leeds education, they are encouraged to give something back to those whose life chances and aspirational horizons are much more limited. One of the records of which we are most proud is our commitment to volunteering of all kinds. Leeds students offer more volunteering hours - both in the local community and internationally - than any other university. Access to volunteering opportunities is provided via the Leeds*for*Life website, and these importantly include mentoring and role-modelling in local schools as part of our outreach programme.

This is just one area of activity where the power of the Leeds*for*Life 'brand' goes far beyond website functionalities. Through the generosity of Leeds alumni who make regular donations to our 'Footsteps Fund', we have established the Leeds*for*Life Foundation, which provides modest sums of money each year for students who compete for funding for projects which will benefit not just themselves but others. And each summer, jointly with Leeds University Union, we hold our Leeds*for*Life Citizenship Awards, which celebrate the best of our volunteering activities - from sports for children with disabilities to building schools in Cambodia.

At the same time, Leeds*for*Life provides the conduit through which current students can themselves find aspirational role models among our alumni. The site includes a number of stories from former students explaining the connection between their Leeds experience and



their current role. Importantly, though not unexpectedly, many of these exemplify the lack of any predictable connection between their area of study at Leeds and their career path, offering personalised evidence of the value of the high-level skills gained from education in a research-intensive environment. Others among our alumni offer one-to-one mentoring, and the latest version of the website includes a searchable database where current students can look for the right individual to support them in realising their aspirations.

Leeds*for*Life: the student perspective

Leeds*for*Life is not an award. It is a resource for all students, a supporting framework for the myriad, personalised routes which they might take through their time at University. Common to all, however, is the key relationship between student and personal tutor. Personal tutorial meetings punctuate the timeline which students also populate with the opportunities through which they shape their University career and prepare for their future. Students prepare for their tutorial meetings using the web-forms provided on the Leeds*for*Life website and as they do so, pop-up prompts invite them to reflect holistically on their experience.

Take a student beginning the second semester of their second year, for example. They have had their marks and feedback from their first semester assessments and the 'Your Studies' prompt encourages them to think about their performance: what went well? Where did they hope to do better? What do they think were the key factors affecting their achievement? 'Developing your employability' reminds them that, if they haven't already done so, they might want to start exploring study abroad or work placements opportunities, or planning to use the summer vacation to gain valuable skills. Similar sets of prompts are attached to every personal tutorial throughout the student's programme, their content geared to the student's stage of development.

Many students will have little need for such prompts, of course. Their tutorial notes and personal timeline will already record (to take just a few examples) their activities as a course representative, the work they do with local children with disabilities, the skills they are gaining as an intern in the University library. It might record, too, the way in which their work with children spurred them to use the Leeds Network resource on the Leeds*for*Life website to make contact with an alumna who now works for a national children's charity. Though the term wouldn't be familiar to them, they are engaging in the compositional learning which is fundamental to the lifewide concept and has been instilled by their engagement with Leeds*for*Life.

DISCUSSION

Leeds*for*Life ceased to be a project and became part of 'business as usual', part of the Leeds way of life, some time ago. But it continues to be a living, evolving idea, overseen by a management board of students and academic and professional staff where proposed developments are still scrutinised against the original values and principles. In this final section we briefly revisit the principles laid out in the previous section, reflecting on our achievements and some of the challenges posed, in the current rapidly-changing HE



environment, by the continuing effort to realise our original commitment to Leeds *for* Life as a values-driven framework for self-development based on responsibility and entitlement.

An entitlement?

There is an inherent, but productive, tension in any educational context between personalisation and equity. Leeds *for* Life works at the cusp of that tension in its concern to give recognisably equitable support to every Leeds student as they shape their individual engagement with the opportunities available.

On a very practical level, feedback from both students and staff made it quickly apparent that the standardised personal tutoring forms were simply not suited to some subjects and some student cohorts and groups. Some of these issues were fairly easily resolved, with customised forms developed, for example, for students in Dentistry to reflect the particularities of their programme, and for part-time adult students in our Lifelong Learning Centre whose lives and modes of learning demanded a rather different tone and approach.

But some of the issues affecting equity of opportunity are less easily resolved. Students bring very different levels of cultural capital and different levels of need with them into HE. Financial or social disadvantage or disability issues can inhibit student take-up of, say, volunteering or opportunities for international mobility as well as performance in the job market. The wider remit of Leeds *for* Life must therefore be a constant effort to understand and minimise the effects of those inequalities, whether through financial support, specialist mentoring, or investment in appropriate support services.

A shared responsibility

We don't have all the answers to these deep-rooted issues, but the multi-disciplinary nature of the teams that created and now oversee Leeds *for* Life ensures not only that the right questions are asked but that any proposed solutions are based on an holistic approach to the student. And it's worth reflecting briefly on those teams as in themselves one of Leeds *for* Life's unexpected achievements.

As this account of the genesis, the web-based provision, and the broader ethos of Leeds *for* Life has suggested, its creation and continuation depend on multi-disciplinary and multi-skilled partnership working involving students and staff, academic and professional service colleagues. Since 2009, our Leeds *for* Life Student Ambassadors have played a key role within this team and across the University more widely. Each year, three students take on these paid internships. They are among Leeds *for* Life's most powerful champions, encouraging student take-up through peer-to-peer engagement, and demonstrating its functions to staff from a student perspective; and they play a crucial role in bringing a creative and informed student view to bear on further developments.

At its inception, the project brought together for the first time as a team staff from learning and teaching support, from volunteering and outreach support, the careers service, the disability support team, and the alumni and development office. In that respect it has created opportunity not just for students but also for colleagues, an excellent example of the



emergence of 'third space' professionals as described by Whitchurch and Law (2010). Not only that, but the experience instigated far-reaching thinking about the most appropriate ways of configuring student services in support of the holistic approach to education which Leeds *for*Life embodies - thinking which has underpinned a major programme of institutional change to establish a fully integrated student education service.

An integrated education

The creation of Leeds *for*Life parallels, of course, a more general shift in attitudes towards the experience of students and the purpose of higher education. The introduction of the National Student Survey in 2005 instigated a new level of attention to student satisfaction; the introduction of differential fees and now the lifting of the cap on student numbers has intensified that scrutiny; and a precarious economy has further sharpened the focus of government, parents, and students themselves on what constitutes 'value for money' in the higher education context.

One of the more positive effects of that shift in attitudes has been the recognition, enshrined in Leeds *for*Life, that 'learning and teaching' is no longer an adequate label for the breadth of opportunity and experience which it is our responsibility to provide and support - particularly, though not exclusively, in the interests of helping students become employable. At Leeds, as elsewhere, there has been a consequent shift of vocabulary to the more capacious term, 'student education'.

At a national level, this change finds expression in the requirement to provide graduates not just with a transcript of marks, but with a Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR). The HEAR is right-minded in its acknowledgement of the importance of co-curricular and extra-curricular experience in student development, and it has been dutifully integrated into the latest version of Leeds *for*Life, but its currency with employers is limited and, like other similar initiatives, it has unintended consequences. In the context of Leeds *for*Life, one of the most immediate is the threat it poses to students' willingness to take up activities which, however effective they might be in developing skills for life, cannot be institutionally certified and are therefore not recorded in the HEAR. There are many conversations to be had in response to this new challenge to the Leeds *for*Life ethos: within the University about what could and should be certified; with employers to understand their use or otherwise of the HEAR; and, most importantly, to convince students that skills and attributes are most effectively demonstrated through active involvement and effective reflection and not simply through superficial certification.

Leeds, for life

This is just one of the new challenges which in a constantly-changing environment help ensure that Leeds *for*Life continues to grow and develop. It remains a live concept, available to all and encapsulated in the website which, like all effective examples of blended education, enables individual activities and relationships: between students and students, as they work in teams as volunteers or ambassadors, in student societies or sporting activities; between students and staff in personal tutorials; and between students and alumni through mentoring and work placements. Most importantly, it helps students identify themselves as part of a



Leeds educational community committed to equitable access to opportunity, responsibility and aspiration.

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