

Implementation of the CPD Framework case study

Name of Institution:	University of Sheffield (Student Services Department)
Title of Project:	Team Leader Development
Level:	Departmental
Date of Project:	September 2010

1. The Project Brief

Senior management in the department became aware of a lack of central development support for team leaders, who were seen as a critical layer of management in the delivery of services. Team leaders themselves were not satisfied with existing provision and identified leadership and management development as a gap in CPD opportunities. The objectives of the project were:

- ◆ To build leadership capacity amongst senior Team Leaders
- ◆ To foster a learning culture in the Student Services Department

The desired outcomes of the project were an increase in confidence and performance of the team leaders in their management role, a department better equipped to develop its staff and an improved sense of team cohesion following restructuring.

2. Project Participants

All members of Student Services senior management team, i.e. Section Heads and senior Team Leaders. (Team leaders, for the purposes of the project, were defined as managers reporting to Section Heads and with significant people management responsibilities). Andrew West, Director of Student Services and Alan championed the project.

3. Project Context

The Vice-Chancellor had been in post for two years and the University was moving towards a more explicitly managed structure with a University Executive Board, Faculties and a new Registrar and Secretary. The restructuring of Professional Services was in progress and Student Services had been a part of this with several functions merging and being subsumed within the department. When the project began there were around 320 staff in the department, 50 of whom were Section Heads and senior Team Leaders (now about 400 and 60 respectively). The project was seen as timely in the sense of enhancing cross-Department working and understanding following the restructuring.

The Student Services department worked autonomously on the project and there were no specific links to institutional organisational development initiatives (though other departments had expressed an interest in the project). The project had the support of the Registrar and Secretary. The University had a pre-existing management competency framework, but this was not well embedded at local level. The AUA framework did not conflict in any way with the institutional one.

4. Outline of approach taken

The initial stages involved a workshop attended by team leaders facilitated by Alan Phillips to generate ideas about development needs. Lots of ideas were generated and some workshops were organised as a result. However, these did not appear to meet their objectives and, with the Director's support, Alan put a proposal to the Departmental Strategy Group. The paper received the Group's support and at this stage the link was made to the AUA CPD framework and Alison Robinson was approached. A Project Steering Group was established initially comprising Alan, the Department Project Officer, a Section Head and three Team Leaders. The membership was later extended to include more Team Leaders representing incoming functions.

The three strands of the project were identified as:

- Introduction of regular conferences for Team Leaders and Section Heads to meet together
- development of a series of workshops open to all Directorate staff
- a programme of mentoring (the senior management team acting as mentors and team leaders as mentees).

Conferences

Two management conferences were held, June 2010 and March 2011, with more planned for January and June 2012.

Workshops

The following workshops were held throughout the course of the project:

Section Heads Mentoring Workshop October 2010

CPD Framework Workshop, November 2010

Developing Leadership Capability, March 2011

Taking a Mentoring Approach to People Management, June 2011

There was a gap in the flow of workshops due to staff absence for several months over the winter of 2010/11 but we have further workshops planned for the period autumn to spring 11/12 – these will include a repeat of the 'Mentoring Approach' workshop, plus a follow-up, a Myers-Briggs session and a new venture looking at the challenge for Team Leaders of working on the boundary between strategy and operations.

Mentoring

A Mentoring Workshop for Section Heads was held on 19 October 2010 and the mentoring scheme for team leaders was launched in April 2011. All mentors produced 'mentor profiles' which were put online for potential mentees to choose from. Mentees took responsibility for approaching mentors of their choice. The scheme got off to a steady start and 7 pairs were working together at the time of writing, expected to grow over the course of the next year.

Self-generated activity

Other activities included a self-generated and self-facilitated action learning set attended by six Team Leaders. They found this extremely helpful and the approach they had taken was made known to other Team Leaders. Nevertheless, no further action learning sets have yet been set up.

5. Materials used

The AUA CPD framework has been used as a helpful backdrop to the project. We have also used the AUA mentoring materials to structure and support the work of mentoring partnerships.

6. Observations, learning points

At the time of writing (October 2011) we are very happy with progress and of late the project has taken on a broader form – with the addition of other development activities not aimed specifically at Team Leaders it is now becoming a Student Services Management Development project rather than simply a Team Leader project. We see this as a very positive development.

The main learning point so far has been the need to maintain engagement from the target group and from other senior managers, ensuring that what is offered truly meets the needs and expectations of participants. The steering group has now bedded in and is making a very mature and thoughtful contribution to project development.

Having one senior manager to lead the project has been helpful in some senses but in his enforced absence for a few months the project lost some momentum, which had to be regained on his return. This reinforces the point about engagement.

AUA involvement in the project has been very valuable, for example:

- creative contribution to scoping and developing the project in its very early stages
- workshop facilitation, particularly perhaps in the mentoring area
- The use of AUA materials and CPD framework has at times provided a very useful structure to work with.

(to be expanded at the end of the project)

7. Evaluation

In truth we have not done a great deal of formal evaluation to date, though we know that the workshops have been generally well-received. The mentoring partnerships are (anecdotally) proceeding well and we intend to survey mentors and mentees when their first six sessions are complete. We may also conduct a broader survey concerning the success of the project as a whole.