![HELOA North West & Northern Ireland logo]

HELOA North West & Northern Ireland, May 2024 Session Notes – **Tuesday 21st May 2024**

Institutions in attendance

Edge Hill University (2)	University of Bolton (1)
Future U (5)	University of Central Lancashire (2)
Greater Manchester Higher (3)	University of Chester (4)
Lancaster University (1)	University of Cumbria (4)
Liverpool John Moores University (1)	University of Liverpool (4)
Manchester Metropolitan University (4)	University of Salford (10)
Myerscough College (1)	**Total attendees : 42**

The session notes below were written and compiled by a variety of reporters, therefore some formatting differences may be present.

1 - Introduction to Higher Education Project Management

2 - Introduction to Gender Diversity

3 - **Break Out Discussions**

    a) UCAS

    b) On Campus Events e.g. open days/applicant days

    c) Stakeholder Engagement

1 - Introduction to Higher Education Project Management

By Dr Amy Manktelow, Planning and Projects Manager Nottingham Trent University

"We are not necessarily project managers, but we are professionals who manage projects"

Session Objectives:
- To recognise project management techniques and relate them to your own work.
- To provide you with a common language and approach to project management.
- To develop your professional practice in regard to project management and apply to your own work.
- To modify your day to day professional practices that will improve your projects outcomes.

What project management training do you already have?
Here are some answers from the chat:
- o "No formal training was the general."
- o "Prince 2 foundation."
- o *"Learning on the job."*

What makes a project a project?
Here are some answers from the chat:
- o "Collection of activities that intend to reach an intended shared objective, may be within a wider organisational strategy".
- o "Something that happens over a longer period of time than day to day work?"
- o "Achieve a Goal"
- o "Task that has set time frames and objectives".
- o "Can include multiple stakeholders/activities/objectives".
- o "Time-bound with clear outcomes/measurables"

Portfolio manager = who oversees a series of programmes – larger scale
Programme managers = has oversight of all projects -they should be designed to understand how all projects are intertwined within the wider team
Project managers = manager to the dependencies within the project.
Business as usual = Our day-to-day work

Programmes are a collection of projects, strategically important, long term and a programme manager will have oversight of all projects.

Projects are unique and timebound, with shorter time frames (timeframe is completed during an academic year) with the focus on delivering outputs. They are strategically important and should be feeding into a direct goal to a restricted group of stakeholders.

Business as usual (BAU) has looser objectives and is repetitive and ongoing-Example given of continuing to do a project with BAU and then deciding to stop

delivering it to turn it into a project to make the changes to then go back to business as usual.
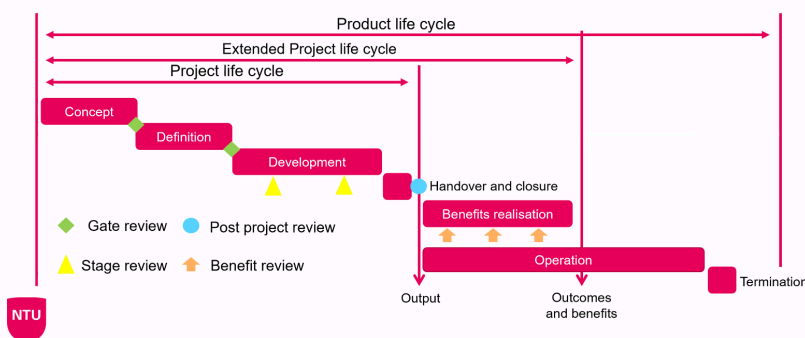
Activity was set to think of our own work to categorise our own programmes, projects, and business as usual.

Pre project and getting the groundwork right:
- For example, scoping (to see what other departments are doing e.g. different schools in the University to work together not against each other.)
- Use PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, technical, legal, environmental)
- Use MoSCoW (Must, Should and Could and Will not) . We want the best from our project, but they are not. This helps decipher what level our projects will be. Still delivering the projects and creating a bottom line. *"Always under promise and over deliver".*
- Select who is on the project team – It is important governance (just in case you couldn't take on the project who will it fall back on) people normally want to have similar personalities however you should have a range of them on a project.
- Evaluate the project.
- Make sure the language you use across the project is understood by all involved – do not assume that everyone can understand the lingo used.
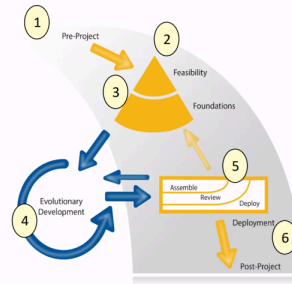
Linear project life cycle:

(Screenshot of the Linear Project life cycle)

- It is important to always question if the project is working throughout the project's life cycle.
- Example was given of wanting to create the world's best loaf of bread. It is important to conceptualise the world's best loaf of bread. Define how it will be the best and then you find out everyone loves the idea. However no one tastes it and it turns out it is horrible.
- Don't wait until it's too late to realise the project does not work. HE does not work like this as senior leadership will pass down projects that are already started.

Iterative project life cycle:

Iterative Project life cycle

1. Pre-project phase
2. Feasibility phase
3. Foundations phase
4. Evolutionary development phase
5. Deployment phase
6. Post-project phase

(Screenshot of the Iterative Project life cycle)

- Far more adaptable and is an easier match into HE.
- Everybody can be everywhere all at once and it takes strong project management to keep control of the project.

You can cherry pick bits from which life cycle works best for you.

Project planning documents:
There are lots of documents that can help plan and progress your project.
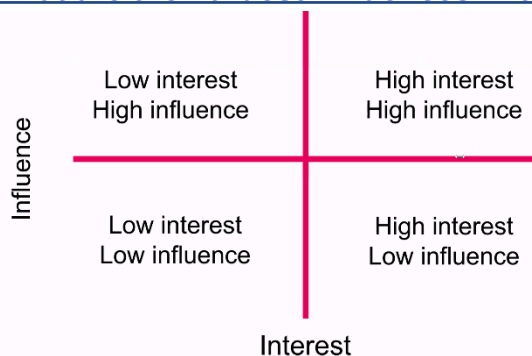- PIDs = Project Initiation Documents
- Briefing documents
- Communications plan
- Stakeholders' engagement plan – ask them what they think of the project.
- Evaluation plan
- Spend

All the above come under the umbrella of a 'Project Plan' (*Top tip; keep clear teams and SharePoint, archiving stuff you are no longer using*)

Stakeholder management:
It is important to understand the internal/external stakeholders within your project and to define them stakeholders for your project.

What are the hardest influences/ interest things to manage?

	Low interest High influence	High interest High influence
Influence	Low interest Low influence	High interest Low influence
		Interest

(Screenshot of the interest Vs Influence matrix)

Here are some answers from the chat:
- o "High influence low interest - if they have a preconceived notion it may be

hard to swing them. Low interest, high influence!"
- o "Both of these groups I think - Low interest, High influence and high interest, low influence".
- o "I can see them all having their challenges, but I wonder if the high interest low influence might be particularly challenging as they are time consuming?"
- o "High interest, high influence- can interfere..."
- o "I feel high interest, low influence, you could end up in a too many cooks situation like you mentioned with lots of people really interested and wanting to be involved but in the grand scheme of things do little"
- It is also important to create a business risk matrix for your project.
- Keep people interested informed but in different ways e.g. for High interest and Low influence create a monthly newsletter.

Prioritise your projects:
- Use different software to prioritise your projects e.g. Soft Trello boards, Microsoft planner, Monday boards, spreadsheets, notebooks, brain.
- Projects vs Business as Usual (BAU) and what's more important – both are! (with a slight lean towards BAU.)
- It's okay to let your projects burn to the ground. From that comes something stronger and a more refined project.

Post project:
The project doesn't stop when the project has "finished" Stop Start Continue and review quickly.

- **End** -

2 - Introduction to Gender Diversity

Sam Hope

Sam is an accredited therapist, supervisor and EDI trainer.

Disabled, neurodivergent, bi, ace, trans, non-binary (they/them)

Author of Person-Centred Counselling for Trans and Gender Diverse People

Consultancy work within healthcare and education

(intermission)

Learning outcomes

- Culturally competent language and approaches to gender diversity

• Debunking myths and stereotypes

• Mental health, trans people and the minority stress model

• Understanding the diversity of trans experiences

Sam-hope.co.uk

Website for more information and resources, plus the option to join the mailing list. Resources can be shared with Sam's name on.

Think about gender and sex

Picture shared with two new baby cards, links to assumptions of colour, use of different adjectives (brilliant vs beautiful) and items (stars, flowers, bows) from boys vs girls.

Newly born babies who we haven't got to know, but already we are sharing assumptions about them. Cards are stating social expectations for babies based on their bodily configurations.

Therefore, we project meaning onto biological sex.

Sex and gender are "mutually constructed" - social construction.

As we observe the shape of external genitalia of a new baby, we then assign legal sex, pronouns, gendered labels, gender, gendered name, social role. We assume gametes, chromosomes, reproduction, gender identity. Some of this is biology, some is constructed socially (we made them up).

There are intersex people, who do not fit the biological binary (1 in 20-200, as common as redheads).

Therefore, for trans people, this binary and assignment/assumption at birth doesn't work.

Gender Identity (has a biology element)

Our internal sense of who we are

How our brains map onto our bodies

Which genders we do and do not emulate (unconsciously or otherwise). Sam shared their experience of emulating and looking up to male role models.

How others experience our gender and interact with us.

Varies in intensity from person to person, different trans people will have different experiences, and we must believe them.

Trans

Any person who experiences incongruence with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Not about the process of transition.

Not everybody who falls into this umbrella will want to call themselves trans.

The only way to understand a trans person's experience is to ask them (where appropriate) and listen.

A little trans history

Not a fad/trend!

The number of trans people is stable, from historic and archaeological records. Becoming more visible now.

European colonial history, very anti-trans, project of erasure of any gender diversity, often seen as a sign of savagery.

Celebrated in many cultures, especially Indigenous America and India.

Example shared of a tribe in Ethiopia, where members could apply to chief to change gender.

Nazi history – book burning. Magnus Hirschfeld a Jewish man who was an activist and wrote about issues relating to homosexuality, pioneer of trans healthcare. Represents the backlash to LGBT community in Nazi Germany, destroyed the institute and erasure of the movement.

(Intermission)

Trans in the media

Lots of misinformation and anti-trans propaganda in the media.

Study looked at media portrayal of trans people, showed a negative picture, use of words like 'militant, criminal, threat' relating to conflict.

This results in the wider public stopping to think about trans people as human, showing fear of the trans community.

Example of Ian Huntley claiming to be transgender – falsely. But reiterates the idea that trans women pretend to be women to benefit, which is a complete myth.

Declassified as mental illness

Only declassified by WHO in 2019, compared to homosexuality in 1990. Moved to sexual health, as opposed to mental health.

It's beginning to be understood that trans people just exist, they aren't mentally ill.

Minority Stress Model

Mental health problems within marginalised groups can be attributed to prejudice, rejection, assault etc.

Research

Mental health issues correlate to transphobia.

Misgendering negatively impacts mental health.

Legal and social recognition improves mental health.

Access to medical transition (not everybody wants it) improves mental health, but doesn't cure. As negative media and societal reactions still exist.

Conversion therapy is harmful and ineffective. Doubles the risk of suicide.

Suicide rates lower when nearer transition goals (still x10 compared to rest of society). *See slide which shows stats.*

Regrets are rare. Often portrayed as a big problem. But you are more likely to regret hip replacement, or life-saving cancer therapy, than transition. Under 1% regret.

Students Experience

Fear of violence and harassment.

Computer systems throwing old name up, no matter how many times it gets changed

Getting 'outed' by people or systems. Some young people move on to their next educational phase with their new identity.

Lack of gender neutral toilets/facilities.

Lack of trans representation within LGBT+ groups.

Lack of protocols and policy e.g. to change name, reissue certificates (this is a matter of data protection and is a legal requirement), tackle transphobia

We need to practise getting things right for these young people, but also take on a person by person basis.

Students may also be experiencing issues with family/peers, could lead to housing or financial issues

Long wait (e.g. half a decade) from treatment

May be struggling with mental health and trauma. May have physical issues.

You may not know they are trans – accommodations need to be made by default e.g. sharing pronouns.

Myths

Sam shared a number of myths surrounding trans people, each depending on the individual. Underpinned by the idea that trans people aren't real, and therefore we don't have to accommodate them.

These myths can all be debunked.

Cluster phenomenon – there is a phenomenon in society where physiological diversity, neurodivergence and LGBTQA+ experiences cluster together, it does not imply causality. This is a genuine experience for people, they are not just attention seeking!

"I recognise it's hard on you when I get it wrong"

Any small areas of support, opportunities for check in, disseminating positive ideas, checking policies. Can save a life.

- End -

3 - Breakout sessions

a) UCAS

Introduction to all members in the breakout room.

Update on the changes to UCAS:

UCAS events happening in Scotland have changed to running in September (some Uni's might not attend)

They have recently gotten rid of UCAS Edinburgh and UCAS Glasgow as well as getting rid of shell schemes- it has caused some upset as things for universities are non-refundable (travel, hotels) – reason is UCAS made a £50,000 loss over both of the events. – This could lead to more cost cuts.

UCAS have brought out Autumn events (claimed to be added due to cold spots) - general feeling is that they've landed it on people who have limited budgets.

UCAS Manchester, London and Birmingham dates have been confirmed and dates have been booked in.

New data dash software for UCAS. People are welcome to do a demonstration of the dashboard (Justine and Ryan from UCAS). It is a lot easier to track data and can help uni's who might not have or used data filter.

UCAS are trying to encourage Pre 16's (year 11 might have an increase in attending UCAS events)

More budget being put into Spring pod for students to investigate different professions and HE options.

On the 10th May 2024 there was an update from UCAS saying they are going to waive the fee for the application for anyone on the free school meals. – Currently no way to officially verify it! But it would work by Teachers/Advisers confirming this on the student's application form and UCAS would cover the cost.

Putting trust in the teachers and advisers. *(Positive testimonials from students about the new scheme)*

UK Uni vs UCAS?

A lot of events are happening in Yorkshire and is quite saturated. Will they be overpopulated?

UCAS sent out the wrong dates and TBC locations.

UK Uni using Uni campuses – are they using this as a possible recruitment strategy?

You never know who is going to turn up to the UCAS as no school lists are sent out.

Not a bad thing that year 10's and 11's want to attend, however the collateral is not appropriate for that audience.

It's not just about the exhibition anymore – UCAS are adding new products and adding new prompt cards for pre-16's.

A thanks was given to HELOA about giving out and sharing this knowledge on what UCAS are doing as it helps keeping up to date but also can help keep all the students informed when we go out to other events.

UCAS events should be about IAG. They have started having more employers at the events and that is pulling students away from going to speak to Universities at stands – a little bit of commercialisation coming from UCAS.

UCAS have not mentioned anything about recent updates to student finance.

No stand at UCAS currently for student finance which could be super beneficial.

- **End** -

b) On Campus events

Discussions focused on:

- Subject Specific days
- PG events
- UG & PG events
- Ambassador's engagement
- How do people disseminate different timings for events?

Subject specific days

- Struggling with bookings and may need to cancel some days. Is anyone else on the same boat?
  - o *Common agreement that attendance is varying across institutions with some struggling and a few trialling new programmes/event timings to tackle engagement.*

- What time of day are people holding events?
  - o *University of Salford* tried 2-6pm & 1-6pm – finding more attendance for 1-6pm
    - ▪ High attendance at the start of the day but dripped off later in the evening.
  - o *Man Met University (MMU)* are Wednesday's 2-6pm usually but ran a PG open day 10-2 on a Saturday.
    - ▪ Equal numbers Saturday to Wednesday so were really happy.
  - o *Bolton* - new to covering PG events in their team.
    - ▪ Run 4-7pm and found it quieter from 4 but later saw an influx in attendance due to people finishing work and arriving.
- Bolton also starting to include PG with UG open days.
- This led to being asked; how have you handled academics for PG at UG?
  - o If at an UG open day, there are PG knowledgeable staff there and with the PG specific events being shorter they have good involvement as it's just a longer work day.
  - o *MMU* added they welcome PG attending UG open days but clarify that there isn't a guarantee there'll be PG specific staff – people are fine with this as they know in advance.

Visit Days (applicant/offer holder)

- Numbers: Cumbria doing better with numbers – they've changed their programme so it's now 10am-1pm with set programme of attending a welcome talk then 1.5 hr interactive session then free to do their own thing

Ambassador engagement with events

- *Uni of Cumbria* asked about getting ambassadors to engage more
  - o Struggling with them being proactive with supporting events.

- *University of Liverpool* shared their scheme:
  - ▪ Bare minimum expectation is campus tours so if they aren't willing to deliver a campus tour then don't be applying for the job.

- ▪ They get training, shadowing opportunities, pairs then solo.
- ▪ Highlighted that although we may tell the students to go engage with visitors either walking past or within a space…do students actually know what we mean by that instruction?
- To tackle this, they've created a document with suggestions and sentences for them to use to engage with visitors and they've found it to help boost confidence and them approaching visitors more to help
  - *Lancaster* has put in place a form they put out with shifts asking guides what they want to do on a shift.
    - o They can also request long/short shifts or a double shift.
    - o Find engagement good with matching the students to what they're after
    - o They also pay for travel and accommodation for them to be on site if they need to be for an event.
  - *MMU* also put job adverts out asking what students want to work.
    - o They know what to expect beforehand from training.
    - o They don't tend to have any issues with allocating students to jobs because they want to do the jobs.
    - o Check in with how it went and if they didn't enjoy it, be changed onto something different for next time.
  - *Edge Hill* mentioned expectations are set in training for them to work so many events, so we find they are signing up more to ensure they meet that quota.
    - o They also mentioned how we use returning guides to help with training the new guides on training day – they go through delivery sessions, campus tour etc.
    - o They also have a buddy scheme which matches new/returning guides and also a mentor scheme where they have a staff member assigned to them, so they have someone specific to reach out and ask guidance off.

Running senior ambassador schemes

- Emma at *Uni of Salford* outlined their scheme in regard to differing levels.
  - o Marshall - guides
  - o Ambassadors – work across teams at variety of events/shifts
  - o Senior ambassadors – leadership roles on event days and also help Emma out with supporting event days.
    - ▪ Idea is that they progress through each role from Marshall to Senior Ambassador if they wanted to
    - ▪ Each role has different job expectations and pay too.

They also run a reward scheme of monthly awards and Amazon vouchers/certificates to celebrate them. Any positive feedback received is also forwarded to personal tutors.
- o Idea is that showing them that we appreciate them helps with attitude and engagement and they've found they're buying into the scheme more and taking it more seriously than previously.

- *Bolton* – not a set senior role as a given but have it where it's done on a per-event basis to reward those who show up with the opportunity to lead on an area. They've found it entices them to get involved more as they know if

they engage more, they'll have more opportunities to be in a leadership role for events.

How do people disseminate different timings for events? e.g. faculty's running off different times on one day?

Lancaster- wanting to streamline more so next year but have currently just been giving staff an event overview which covers what and when everything is happening in one document.

This includes a minute- by-minute timetable included with who is facilitating each session and when things are finishing at the end of the day e.g. last campus visit/last accommodation tour so people are aware of the bigger picture.

- **End** -

c) Stakeholder engagement

Challenges

1. **Sustained programmes trying to get these booked in with contacts in schools and colleges.**
Specific dates might work rather than flexibility.
Suggestions:
- Diarise time in advance to plan multiple engagements where possible, as early as possible when the careers lead is planning for next academic year and have impact evaluation to show value for SLT approval.

2. **Opportunities to engage students differently. (Not just generic presentations)**
Suggestions:
- Think about what you can offer that's different- e.g. Man Met degree apprenticeships (one of the largest providers) and then offer that we can also do this (generic)
- Try to include student voice more as part of presentations/ or to deliver them themselves (graduates working in your team or maybe student ambassadors)
- show them the data to direct what activity might be needed- e.g. we've had an uptick in interest in x courses from your students.

3. **Internal working with colleagues developing new relationships and strengthening existing ones.**
Suggestions:
- Just be super friendly if you already met them/know of them. Get them on board, they remember me etc. Kill with kindness.
- Building new relationships- depends on what it's for. Specific project- a bit of a working group. Bit of groundwork. Personal- one-one relationships. More likely to respond. Be clear with request/communication. Expectations management e.g. where, when, what.

- Use the time early in your new role as a reason to get in touch- tailor communication method to the person. Have some key people in mind. Introduce yourself to new people clearly/what you think would be useful to discuss/work together on.

4. Managing expectations.
Staff for 4 of 5 faculties, managing expectations for the faculty with no officer support. Also events that might not have enough bookings where they may need to be cancelled, managing expectations of students booked on and staff.
Suggestions:
- Example where events needed to be adjusted- be honest the whole way through. Clear about limitations. Also call rather than email/personal. Bookings spreadsheet- updated each week, can download and share with academics to keep them seeing numbers of booking.
- Cut off dates clear for when they would be cancelled. Clear about why you are doing it.
- Alternative format that the information can be delivered if the event can't run. On demand e.g.

Top tips for stakeholder engagement:
- Make sure the stakeholder is clear what they are getting out of the relationship. Conversation about data and targeting- how they can support recruitment and outreach efforts together.
- Clear why/what we're doing- tracker (project plan) initiation document template- what, who etc. Central stored document helps with handovers.
- Be honest about what you want out of the relationship/ also purpose.

- End -