Introduction from Head of OCSLD

In this report we are pleased to present the activities and achievements of the Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development (OCSLD) for the academic year 2010-11. This was an even busier year than usual for OCSLD as we supported two major university initiatives: the University restructure project and the launch of the Strategy for Enhancing the Student Experience. This report shows the extent of our contribution to these initiatives in addition to the wide range of activities which OCSLD undertakes.

As staff and educational developers we are used to dealing with staff at times of change. Our role in supporting the restructure project demonstrated our understanding of what is needed during challenging times, from careful project management, through advice for managers overseeing the changes, to support for employees preparing for interview. We made available resource to support the restructure such that we were able to run workshops for over 200 staff in a few months. Much of our work continues to be determined by the restructure as staff take up new roles and form new teams. We are now working to ensure that our staff development offers are tailored for the situations and roles that staff find themselves in. We have started a review of our portfolio and in the future you will find that OCSLD’s offer is more targeted towards staff at particular points in their career or to help them respond to challenges in a timely way.

Our response to the Strategy for Enhancing the Student Experience (SESE) is similarly carefully thought out and underpinned by what we know about educational development. Having supported a number of curriculum development initiatives both for Brookes and nationally, OCSLD was able to put together a response to embedding the graduate attributes which provided evidence-informed conceptual frameworks and opportunities for staff to discuss them, tools for learning design, discipline-based examples, and opportunities for working with extended programme teams. We are also planning to offer more flexible, customisable resources and environments for staff as they work through how best to develop each graduate attribute within their programmes of study.

This report shows how we continue to combine our staff and educational development and research skills to gather evidence and make recommendations to inform institutional decision-making. This year our national work led us to publish 12 briefing papers on institutional innovation, run a series of workshops on developing learners for a digital age, organise a symposium on students as change agents and publish a book on internationalizing the curriculum. These resources and events maintain our reputation in the sector and we are pleased to see these externally funded projects leading to actionable recommendations. Within Oxford Brookes we are continuing research projects started last year assessing the impact of the revised structures for faculty-based student support and the implementation of the assessment compact.

As we move into 2011-12, with a full agenda in front of us, we are starting to think creatively about how we could work differently. We are generating ideas for making our activities more client-centred, whilst balancing that with the need for our interventions to be efficient and scalable. We will be actively seeking your input and welcome all suggestions. You can keep up with this conversation on our new OCSLD Blog (ocsld.brookesblogs.net).

I hope that this report helps you to see the range of work that OCSLD undertakes, and that, whether you are a manager, academic, or support staff, you can find something in here for you. This report is not just an ‘offer’, it is an opening of a conversation – so that you are able to ask us what we can do for you, with a better idea of the services and support we offer and confidence in the ways that we work.

Dr Rhona Sharpe
Head of OCSLD, October 2011

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