



CILASS - Centre for Inquiry-based Learning in the Arts and Social Sciences

Overview

1. The primary aim of CILASS is to achieve a step-change in the nature and quality of student learning, by:
 - embedding discipline-sensitive, inquiry-based learning at the heart of the learning experience, and
 - exploiting the synergies between collaborative inquiry, information literacy development and networked learning in new and innovative ways.
2. CILASS is committed to transforming the learning experience for over 10,000 students across the University over a period of 5 years. Significant impact will extend beyond the initial focus in the Arts and Social Sciences to other areas of the University and beyond that to other HEIs.
3. CILASS aims are underpinned by a vision of the distinctive qualities and capabilities of 'the Sheffield graduate'. Through their learning experience at Sheffield, we envisage that our students will:
 - develop understanding of the processes of knowledge creation in their discipline and of the fluidity and contested nature of knowledge;
 - engage critically with the intellectual and creative works that constitute the focus or evidence base of their discipline, and with its questions and problems;
 - become confident and skilled in applying research methodologies and techniques, and in interacting with diverse sources and formats of information, including primary and secondary digital information sources, archives and datasets;
 - learn to communicate effectively through a variety of media, participating actively in rich, inquiry-related interactions with tutors, peers and researchers;
 - become enthusiastic about working collaboratively as well as independently, and equipped to engage flexibly with real-life issues and problems in practice contexts;
 - become critically reflective learners, identifying and developing capabilities that are essential to scholarship, employability and lifelong learning in a world characterised by 'supercomplexity'.
4. CILASS will achieve step-change in the student experience by stimulating wide dissemination of pedagogical strategies that facilitate the integration of inquiry-based learning throughout the undergraduate and postgraduate curricula. It will promote collaborative, inquiry-based learning/teaching strategies that integrate a discipline-sensitive focus on information literacy development (with a particular focus on higher-order information literacy capabilities) with imaginative approaches to ICT-enhanced learning.

5. CILASS has released an extensive, structured programme of curriculum development and innovation projects across the University. These projects:
 - model the scholarly research process in the classroom and develop innovative case- and problem-based inquiry scenarios;
 - support new modes of interaction with digital resources, datasets and archives, including through discipline-based inquiry portals;
 - incorporate information literacy objectives, tasks and assessments into situated problem- and inquiry-based projects;
 - create new, inter-disciplinary interactions between students, for example in areas related to transferable skills development;
 - develop innovative approaches to e-learning and inquiry in vocational areas;
 - develop critical reflection as a key student capability, through the use of online journals, weblogs, development portfolios and the process of Personal Development Planning.

13. The principal focus of the CILASS programme is at departmental level. This maximises impact, encourages strategic thinking and supports diverse disciplinary practice and priorities. Departments are invited to plan, undertake and evaluate educational change within the CILASS framework, prioritising developments most appropriate to their discipline. These may range from a series of small module-based projects to the application of a framework across the whole curriculum. This work is supported by the CILASS Learning Development and Research Associates (LDRAs).

14. Over 5 years, a 'rolling core' model of engagement will be employed involving phased groups of 6/7 core departments. All departments in the Faculties of Arts, Social Sciences and Law will form the core of CILASS twice during the 5 years. All are offered the opportunity to engage with CILASS within the first 2 years. Further engagement with CILASS in years 3-5 enables departments to review and critically reflect upon their earlier projects and develop these further in light of their own, and other departments', experiences.

15. Departments from outside the 3 core CILASS Faculties will be invited to explore inquiry-based learning within their own context and bring new perspectives into CILASS. During the final phase, a further opportunity for engagement will be offered to all departments within the three Faculties and beyond, for those who can demonstrate how engagement with CILASS at this stage will have significant impact on student learning in their disciplines.

16. CILASS recognises the importance of harnessing the enthusiasm of innovators that might otherwise be stifled by the phased engagement of departments. Therefore, we have introduced the CILASS IBL Grant Scheme funding strand to support inquiry-focused development projects. From Year 2, this funding stream has been made available to all staff across the University.

17. In addition, CILASS actively supports interdisciplinary and collaborative inquiry by funding development projects that address overarching strategic themes, and are either collaborative in nature or can demonstrate clear impact across a number of departments. Twice within the 5-year period, departments and teams of champions will be invited to submit collaborative bids. These may include collaborations between academic and professional services staff, and be across disciplinary and/or institutional boundaries.

18. Dissemination will be pervasive in all CILASS activities and at all stages of the CILASS lifecycle, based upon participation, involvement and interaction. Dissemination methods targeting academic staff in the institution will include:
 - use of existing channels of communication in the University; website ('virtual' CILASS, which established a vibrant, dynamic hub in advance of the purpose-built physical accommodation available in 2007); presence at external events including conferences, workshops, seminars; development of a wide range of digital outputs (case studies, learning materials, good practice resources, research outputs).
 - departmental academic champions, who will act as a conduit between the CILASS 'core' and the wider academic community, encouraging and facilitating engagement of individual staff, the development of project proposals and

bids for funds, and adoption of/experimentation with CILASS teaching methodologies. They will also participate in the CILASS Advisory Group.

- funding to attend conferences, invite guest speakers into their departments or undertake study tours. This will encourage a wide range of staff (academic and professional services) to engage with learning and teaching networks: formally and informally, nationally and internationally.
13. Other key stakeholder groups for CILASS involvement and dissemination are: **students**, including student ambassadors who will be involved as members of the Student Ambassador Network – a group of 25+ representing CILASS and IBL in their subject areas, as a student voice on the CILASS Advisory Group, student participation in presentations and seminars about inquiry-based learning at Sheffield; **librarians**, who will engage with CILASS through specialist secondments and provide specific expertise on the development of information literacy in the context of inquiry-based learning; **other HEIs**, which will become involved through staff participation in CILASS activities; **HEA, Subject Centres and similarly themed CETLs**, with involvement through dissemination of CILASS outcomes, participation in cross-institutional and cross-disciplinary exchange; **professional bodies**, such as ALT, SEDA, SCONUL. As a member of the Learning Through Enquiry Alliance (LTEA), CILASS shares ideas, explores key themes and collaborates with the cognate CETLs in Manchester (CEEBLE), Gloucestershire (CeAL), Reading (AURS), Surrey (ScEPTRE) and Warwick (the Reinvention Centre).
 14. CILASS has created two inspirational, student-facing 'collaboratories' within the University's flagship new Information Commons (at a cost of £1.83M). These flexible learning and teaching spaces are purpose-built to support collaborative, inquiry-based learning in an information- and technology-rich environment, that will stimulate further innovation in the use of ICT as an integral feature of students' learning experiences. The collaboratories combine access to high-specification ICT and digital learning/teaching tools (including copy cam/huddle boards, digital cameras and video, wireless networking and mobile learning) with spatial flexibility for easy flow between different activities such as small group discussion, collaborative, ICT-based project work and larger-scale group presentations. Instead of individual PC-based workstations, spacious desktop furniture feature large screens around which students can cluster for groupwork with shared PCs, wireless keyboards and mice, and space for other resources including books, artefacts, students' personal laptops. An adjoining suite of small break-out rooms supports private groupwork and interaction with tutors. A soft seating area is included in recognition of the role of informal learning spaces within the student experience.
 15. An additional collaboratory was launched in advance of the opening of the Information Commons in October 2006 after a successful bid for additional funding from HEFCE. This gave the team an opportunity to try out ideas and influence the design of planned teaching spaces in the Centre.
 16. CILASS based activities also take place within existing learning and teaching facilities in academic departments. A proportion of the capital funding (170K) has been used to upgrade local space in line with CILASS objectives, bringing the digital information environment into more classrooms and encouraging its use as a natural part of learning.
 17. CILASS develops good practice informed by research as part of its broader strategy of cultural and pedagogical change. The aim is to inspire and support the scholarship of teaching in its different forms, with a demonstrable increase in this activity by the end of the CILASS lifecycle. CILASS will also carry out pedagogic research to explore the environment for inquiry-based learning at Sheffield through an in-depth, institutional case study, examining both staff and student perspectives and experiences. Beyond the institution, CILASS participation in the LTEA and HEA network will further enrich its scholarly activity.
 18. CILASS will draw upon existing expertise within the Learning and Teaching Services (LeTS) formally LDMU and TLSU, and the University's Learning and Teaching Evaluation Strategy to adopt a collaborative and participatory approach to evaluation, with a particular emphasis on the impact upon the student learning experience. The success of CILASS will be measured by the extent to which:

- student learning is transformed to embrace inquiry-based learning and the development of students' inquiry-related capabilities;
 - academic and learning support professionals actively participate in development projects;
 - shareable resources, case studies, good practice guides and research outcomes produced are valued and used;
 - the profile of learning and teaching excellence, development and innovation is raised within the University, with excellent practice rewarded and recognised through existing and emerging methods;
 - engagement in high quality scholarly dialogue contributes to pedagogical understanding of inquiry within and beyond the University;
 - the networks and communities within and beyond the University arising from the work of CILASS are valued and sustained;
 - there is increased use of, and demand for, new or upgraded physical space, designed to support inquiry-based learning;
 - the development of institutional learning and teaching, information services, human resources and estates strategies is informed by CILASS activity.
19. The CILASS core team will comprise: the *Academic Director*, who will have overall responsibility for the academic leadership of CILASS, including the research programme; the *Programme Manager*, who will oversee day-to-day activities in implementing and monitoring CILASS's strategic direction and will work closely with LeTS; up to 3 *Learning Development and Research Fellows*, who will provide specialist support to academic staff undertaking developmental projects; 2 *specialist secondments* per session (Academic Fellows), offering specialist expertise at a strategic level, e.g. in networked learning and information literacy; *clerical officer*.
20. The core team are complemented by a range of commissioned support from existing central services within the University, in particular LeTS, thereby establishing firm links with existing Learning and Teaching support structures and their sustainable delivery. This model will offer CILASS flexibility and value for money, and ensure that CILASS activities align with existing University activity, avoiding potential duplication, offering opportunities to identify synergies and enabling CILASS to draw upon existing expertise within the University in the areas of learning technology, instructional design, educational development, evaluation, dissemination, project and strategic management.
21. The CILASS Steering Group/Project Board reports to the University's Learning and Teaching Development Group (LTDG). The close link to LTDG complements its existing role in steering the implementation of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy, and this will ensure that both developmental agendas progress in harmony and that monitoring and reporting for CILASS will be integrated into existing processes.
22. The CILASS Advisory Group supports the Academic Director in implementing the operational agenda of CILASS, advising on developmental priorities and activities. It will include a number of members external to the University, but will largely reflect, and build upon, the established bid development team, including academic departmental champions, student ambassadors, academic fellows and representatives from central services.
23. CILASS will increase the opportunities for staff to demonstrate the qualities and achievements needed to qualify for promotion or gain other University rewards for excellence in teaching. CILASS will also offer a range of its own rewards, in the form of small awards and prizes which complement the University's Senate Awards for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, but focusing specifically on excellence in embedding inquiry into the curriculum.
24. CILASS tries to ensure that students are at the heart of its developments and the CILASS Student Ambassador Network (SAN) plays a significant role in all aspects of CILASS core activity. SAN working groups have already produced a short film on student perceptions of IBL, launched a student journal, contributed to evaluation activities by acting as training facilitators in focus groups and jointly co-ordinated the first Staff/Student Symposium in April 2007.

25. From its new home in the Information Commons, opened Easter 2007, CILASS offers students and teaching colleagues both a range of technology rich facilities and IBL expertise aimed at modelling the process of research within the student learning experience.

For more information see www.sheffield.ac.uk/cilass or contact:

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