



What is Develop Me!?

(transcript for text used in audio powerpoint file)

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This podcast has been recorded as part of the session led by the University of Bradford at the JISC online conference in November 2009. The aim of this podcast is to inform people about the Develop Me! initiative which has been implemented as part of the student experience strategy at the University of Bradford.

Develop Me!

The Develop Me! model was first piloted in 2006. Since then it has grown considerably in response to feedback from staff and students. Develop Me! currently consists of five different strands. These are:

1. A social network hosted in ning and found online at <http://developme.ning.com>
2. SaPRA: our in-house Skills and Personal Development Activity. SaPRA focuses on helping students to identify their levels of confidence in different skill areas such as academic reading, academic writing, communication skills and so on. SaPRA utilises PebblePad. More information about SaPRA can be found on our website.
3. Online skills development resources. These resources provide 24/7 help and support to students who have identified that they need to develop a particular skill area. Students interact with the resources in a number of different ways for example as a result of a 121 intervention with an LDU adviser, after completing SaPRA or after attending an LDU workshop.
4. Mobile Guides. The mobile guides are available at www.braduni.mobi and provide students with information about the University in an easy to access format. We are currently pursuing the idea of creating a iPhone app that users can download onto their iPhones or iPod touches. This will be followed up with versions for windows based devices in the near future.
5. Research into the Student Experience. We have been actively researching the student experience at Bradford since 2005. This research has been fundamental to the implementation and refinement of the Develop Me! approach. Without regular feedback from the student body I would feel less confident that our approach was meeting the needs of students. However because we have such an open dialogue with the student body I am confident that what we are doing is meeting their needs and doing so in a way that they want it to be done. Many Universities have developed social networks in the last few years, but I am especially proud of the way in which we have done this at Bradford as it's been truly student led.

A Brief History of Develop Me!

Develop Me! has grown out of a number of different projects (highlighted in pink) which have all focused on increasing student engagement and providing the support learners need, at the time they want it and in a format they can access effectively.

These projects have included:

- Developing a model of the extended student from pre-entry to post graduation. This approach now forms the backbone of our student success strategy which has re-invented the student lifecycle model originally developed by HEFCE into 4 different lifecycles of applicant, transition, support and guidance and moving on.
- E-induction where we aim to provide a seamless transition into University through joining together enrolment, induction and transition activities into one place.
- Integrated online support where we provide 24/7 support to students via our web based materials offering interactive re-useable learning objects for students to engage with when they need to.
- We have also tried to respond to diverse students by developing a digital typology, the SaPRA tool and engaging with other JISC projects such as LLiDA (Learning Literacies in a Digital Age).

E-Induction

Our development of e-induction has responded to literature in student retention and engagement which shows that students need to engage with either the academic or social spheres of University in order to be retained (Longden and Yorke, Tinto, Currant and Blaney, Currant and Keenan, Cook et al). The primary objective has been to enable students to manage process of transition in social *and* academic terms. This is achieved at Bradford by the following areas. Areas highlighted in pink are key Develop Me! strands.

Social:

Students are able to start the process of making friends through engaging with the social network. Here they can share their hopes, fears and concerns about starting their course. They can also have their burning questions answered by responding to our expectations questionnaire before they come. This helps to make them 'feel at home'.

Examples of posts are:

- Hi all getting excited about starting uni, feels strange after not being in a school enviroments for syuch a looooong time. Hope to see you all soon.
- Hi everyone! I'm starting the foundation degree in Community Regeneration & Development in 26 sleeps and starting to get nervous! Can't wait to meet everyone! I noticed that we are supposed to meet in the atrium on the 21st - anyone know what time?
- Is everybody as shell shocked and tired as I am, gosh hope next week isn't so tiring.

Academic:

Providing students with early access to academic materials helps them to engage with their course and feel more confident about starting. Completing SaPRA helps them to identify levels of confidence and develop an action plan to reflect on with their personal tutor. They can also start to record evidence in PebblePad and interact with the online materials to develop their skills.

Students have said:

- “Most of the things that related to the serious aspect of University I found on the University of Bradford website.”
- “It was good to be able to find out about things any time of day.”

Feedback About Develop Me!

These are some quotes that we have received from students about interacting with Develop Me!:

- “The forums are great as you can meet other people before beginning University. It makes you feel less nervous.”
- “[I like] being able to meet and talk to people before starting”
- “You’ve got this huge edifice which is a University, but what you need is a human face on it.”
- “Thanks for the warm welcome note, it gave me a great first impression about the university of Bradford”

Staff have also been very positive about Develop Me!:

- “This [Develop Me!] is great. I am so pleased that you have set this up and it’s an easy way for me to talk to the new students and get to know them better”
- “They did seem a lot more self reliant with getting themselves registered and getting going with things.”
- “I thought I was too old to do all this [social networking] but it’s not as hard as you think and the students obviously seem to benefit from it”

The Future

So. What happens next?

We have done a lot of work with Develop Me! over the last few years, but as with any idea it’s constantly being refined and updated.

Our online community has been extremely successful and I am extremely pleased with the uptake for 2009. Many more staff led groups have been populated and encouraged. We are running an internal training session on using social networks to enhance the student experience on the 23 November so it will be interesting to see what discussion points emerge from this.

The site has remained busy well in to November, whereas previously it had died by early October.

Our focus has now moved to producing some mobile apps, using CampusM to help move our current braduni.mobi web content into downloadable apps for iPhones and Windows devices. We hope to launch these for the new year.

The student experience has been identified as the most important aspect the uni will focus on in the new corporate strategy from 2009-2014 (click on the link if you're interested in seeing the whole document!). This builds on the Student success strategic assessment we submitted to HEFCE earlier this year as part of their monitoring of Widening Participation work. We're now focusing on embedding the activities identified to enhance the student experience. U-SED is helping to provide a crucial insight into the student experience which is feeding up to high level policy making. The future is exciting!