Enabling Lecturers to Learn from Business

PROJECT REPORT

ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

PROTEUS
EU Programme
for Peace and Reconciliation

Department for
Employment and Learning
Northern Ireland

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEACE AND RECONCILIATION</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENTERPRISE EDUCATION</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLACEMENT LEARNING</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASE STUDIES</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The European Union Peace and Reconciliation Programme Project facilitated by Proteus NI Ltd and managed by St Mary’s University College, Belfast, was entitled ‘Enabling Lecturers to Learn from Business’. This Project ran from October 2004 until June 2006 on the assigned budget of £191,061, with the core aim of providing opportunities for lecturers to enhance their skills and understanding in the area of business and entrepreneurship through placement learning. Placements were planned in a range of businesses and organisations from the private, public and social sectors within the Northern Ireland economy. Participating lecturers had the opportunity for skills development and to involve themselves in a mutual exchange of expertise and ‘know how’ with partner businesses or organisations.

The need for such a project arose from the introduction of the BA (Hons) Liberal Arts programme at the College since September 2000. This degree course represents academic diversification after 100 years of engagement in the education and training of teachers. The project also aimed to enhance entrepreneurship education in the college Faculty of Education BEd pathway.

The BA (Hons) Liberal Arts programme does not aim to prepare students for a specific career or profession but was designed as a three-year, multi-disciplinary programme which offered both the opportunity to focus on a specialist subject, and the opportunity to engage in multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary studies in areas of relevance to today’s society.

Because the degree programme includes a Work-based Learning component that assists students in developing appropriate skills for employability a project that affords lecturers the opportunity to engage in a placement experience was extremely relevant. Lecturers’ learning should serve to directly enhance the core themes of the degree and ought to contribute indirectly to students acquiring the required leadership qualities to secure high value-added jobs available within the current market environment in Northern Ireland and beyond.

Responsibility for running the Project was assigned to the appointed Project Officer, Miss Joan Campbell supported by the Administrative Assistant, Mr Leonard O’Regan. Progress was monitored by the College Proteus Management Team. Membership of this Team included the Acting Principal, Director of Finance and Administration, the Coordinator of the Faculty of Liberal Arts and, a member of the college lecturing staff. Seven meetings of this Management Team took place during the term of the Project with the Project Officer and Administrative Assistant in attendance. Progress Reports and Action Plans for each period were presented for approval. A summary of the Financial Monitoring Reports submitted to Proteus NI Ltd each quarter, were presented along with a budget forecast for the next financial quarter.

A quarterly financial monitoring return to Proteus NI Ltd was prepared by the Project Officer with salaries, and cleared requisition invoices being verified by the college Bursar’s Office prior to submission. At the end of each quarter, a Proteus Case Officer visited the College to conduct a review of progress. These visits involved a verification of financial transactions at source as recorded in a college based Proteus Project Cost Centre. An extensive examination of all weekly work logs and other documentation relevant to the Project Officer, Administrative Assistant, Director input, and placement lecturers was also conducted. Stamped approval of these documents secured a quarterly transfer of funds to the college.
METHODOLOGY

Lecturers interested in the project were invited to respond to a ‘trawl of interest’. Initially, five application forms were returned to the Project Officer resulting in informal interviews being arranged to establish the nature of preferred business or organisation placements. The Project Officer matched the requests made by three of the applicants and these lecturer placements were secured and completed by May 2005. In general, feedback from all parties was very positive and with some suggested changes to support documentation and the additional requirement for lecturers to create a ‘portfolio’ of placement experiences, the project was set to continue in the next academic year.

The Project Officer considered this first phase of the project to be a ‘pilot’ run and apart from refining the support documentation, contact with the link employers confirmed the best format of placement to be ‘shadowing’ the work of senior level managers and/or the completion of an agreed ‘project’. This approach was found suited to achieving an ‘exchange of know how’ between all parties involved.

The second ‘trawl of interest’ was followed by a series of interviews with applicants and contacts being made with approximately 25 businesses or organisations resulting in placements being secured for ten lecturers. All placements would take place during March/April 2006 being the period during which student teachers at the College are placed in schools. The decision by the Education Faculty Director to release seven lecturers from School Experience work was crucial to the success of the Project and should be commended.

PLACEMENT LECTURERS WERE REQUIRED TO:

1. Complete an application form.

2. Comply with the agreed duration of the placement in line with the terms of the Project ‘Letter of Offer’. The term of formal involvement with the placement business or organisation was 30 days ie preparation: 5 days, placement at business or organisation: 20 days, professional and personal reflection: 5 days.

3. View training materials on business theory and practice (provided in DVD format with support booklets). These resources presented business theory and practice relating to organisational design, business planning, Entrepreneurial Leaders in Northern Ireland, leadership styles, human resource management, market research and product and service marketing strategy.

4. Complete weekly placement work logs using the forms provided.

5. Prepare a portfolio during the term of placement to include the weekly work logs and the following information.
   a. Brief profile of the placement business or organisation.
   b. Summary the key learning points on business.
   c. Reflection on placement experiences.
   d. Detail initiatives which the placement business or organisation are or have been involved in to support peace and reconciliation or other diversity policies. Consider what the business or organisation has learned from their involvement in such initiatives.

6. Complete the placement Evaluation Questionnaire provided and return it to the Project Officer. Complete the Monitoring Form (Section 75) provided by Proteus NI Ltd and return by post using the envelope provided.

7. Participate in a College Seminar event which shall be coordinated by the Project Officer. This event has been arranged to take place on 27 September 2006.

Information gathered from participating lecturers and employers contributed to this report focusing on the following aspects of placement lecturer experiences:

- key learning points on business;
- potential contribution to the BA (Hons) Liberal Arts degree programme or the university;
- intended future links with the placement organisation or business;
- business or organisation peace and reconciliation initiatives;
- professional and personal learning.
PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

THIRTEEN LECTURERS – placements to learn from business

The most significant achievement of the project was the placement of thirteen lecturers in a wide variety of businesses or organizations detailed in the table below.

The experiences of these lecturers are reported as case studies in this report.

LECTURER PLACEMENT BUSINESSES OR ORGANISATIONS

Miss Rose Devlin Invest Northern Ireland, Belfast
BT Northern Ireland, Belfast
Rocwell Irish Mineral Water, Pomeroy, Co Tyrone

Dr Matthew Martin Mitchell Kane Associates, Belfast

Dr Tracey McKay Newry and Mourne District Council

Mrs Deirdre Robson Kensington Interiors Ltd, Belfast

Mr Paddy Tally Ulster Rugby, Administration Headquarters, Belfast

Mr Jonathan Worley First Trust Bank, First Trust Centre Belfast

Mrs Marian Curran Veritas Publishing, Dublin

Dr Fionntán De Brún Zoogon Productions Ltd, Belfast
Clean Slate Television Ltd, Belfast
MGTV, Belfast

Mrs Sharon Haughey Southern Area Hospice Service, Newry

Mr Frank Hennessey W D Irwin & Sons Ltd, Portadown
FOLD Housing Association, Holywood

Rev Feidhlimidh Magennis St Agnes Choral Society in association with the Grand Opera House, Belfast

Dr Gerard McCann West Belfast Economic Forum, Belfast

Dr Angela Vaupel Riverside Theatre, University of Ulster, Coleraine

PUBLICITY FOR THE PROJECT, ‘Enabling Lecturers to Learn from Business’

- All project communication (paper and electronic) show regulation logos.
- Project summary and details have been included in the 2004/05 and 2005/06 St Mary’s University College Prospectus.
- St Mary’s University College has hosted two Proteus NI Ltd events. Firstly, the CEDEFOP Conference, 15th March 2005 attended by Proteus NI Ltd Board Members and representatives from European Education Institutions. Secondly, the Proteus Annual Board Meeting, 10 June 2005 attended by the Proteus NI Ltd Management Team. On each occasion a 30 minute Powerpoint supported presentation detailing the progress of the St Mary’s Proteus Project was delivered by the Project Officer.
- Preparation of an article to be featured in the Proteus NI Ltd published Project Review Bulletin.
- Preparation of an article to be featured in the October 2006 issue of the St Mary’s University College ‘Inside/Out’ Newspaper.
- Various articles in local newspapers and internal organisation or business news journals featuring lecturer placement experiences.
- Opportunity for the Project Officer to present at the 2006 International Lecture Series at City University, Seattle, Washington, USA and City University, Vancouver, Canada. This series was facilitated by Dr Tom Dukes, City University Dean of the School of Management and gave an opportunity to showcase the St Mary’s Proteus Project, ‘Enabling Lecturers to Learn from Business’. The audience included Faculty lecturers and students from the School of Management, members of the local business community including members of the British Columbia Human Resources Management Association. It is intended that relations with Dr Dukes will continue in order to exchange and extend on Work-based Learning and Placement Learning methodologies.

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Lecturers becoming involved in the project had the opportunity to engage in training to facilitate the exploration of issues relating to Peace and Reconciliation with the aim that support resources might be integrated into their own teaching. In December 2005, the placement lecturers attended a workshop entitled ‘Exploring Controversial Issues’ facilitated by the Nerve Centre, Derry.
The purpose of the workshop was to demonstrate the cross-community learning potential of multimedia resources ie animation, video, DVD, interactive CD-Roms available in the area of culture, history and identity in Northern Ireland today. Led by Director, Mr Martin McLarkey and Project Leader, Mr John Peto, placement lecturers enjoyed an extremely professional presentation on some of the challenging issues faced within Northern Ireland and viewed a selection of support resources available to facilitate learning and an understanding of issues raised. Following the workshop, the group found their way to the 'The Exchange Restaurant' in Derry and over an excellent meal certainly did 'exchange' on the theme of the workshop and shared thoughts on the potential use of the education resources featured in the training session.

Further to this, while on placement, lecturers were encouraged to focus on initiatives or policies followed by their placement business or organisation to promote peace and reconciliation within the community. Observations are detailed in the relevant section of placement lecturer case studies in this report.

ENTERPRISE EDUCATION

During the term of the Project the Project Officer attended a number of conferences featuring Enterprise, Entrepreneurship and Placement Learning. These are listed below:

Conferences attended by the Project Officer 2004-2006

- SDLP Conference "North South Makes Sense" October 7th 2005 – Derry
- MBA 2005 Conference 'The Entrepreneurial Leader' October 25th, 2005 - University of Dublin
- 10th Annual Northern Ireland Economic Conference 2005, October 26th – Templepatrick
- Enterprising Britain Summit '05 'Making Ideas Happen' Monday 14th November 2005 – London
- Northern Ireland Business Conference - Culloden Hotel, Belfast, December 1st 2005

In general, the conference programmes included inspirational entrepreneurial guest speakers, work shops and special interest presentations, such as, social enterprise initiatives and academic entrepreneurship schemes. The opportunity to network and discover sources of support resources in the area of Enterprise was significant.
PLACEMENT LEARNING

The Project Officer considers that collaboration with the network of universities named below will help further the development of Work-based Learning currently offered as part of the undergraduate BA (Hons) Liberal Arts degree programme at St Mary’s University College.

Work-based Learning - University Network

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<tr>
<th>UNIVERSITY</th>
<th>POSITION HELD</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Huddersfield</td>
<td>Work-based Learning Coordinator and Year Tutor for Foundation Degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Westminster</td>
<td>Co-author of the book ‘The Handbook of Work-based Learning’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middlesex University</td>
<td>Convenor of WBL network - Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UK)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Head of Work-based Learning Research Centre, Cyprus Link Tutor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middlesex University</td>
<td>Co-ordinator of Work-based Learning</td>
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<td>Middlesex University</td>
<td>Work Based Studies – Postgraduate Curriculum Leader</td>
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<td>Middlesex University</td>
<td>Director, National Centre for Work-based Learning Partnerships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open University</td>
<td>Coordinator - Centre for Outcomes-Based Education (COBE)</td>
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<td>Open University</td>
<td>Work-based Learning Programme Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birkbeck College, University of London</td>
<td>Director of the College’s Centre for Learning and Professional Development</td>
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Miss Rose Devlin, Senior Lecturer in the Business Studies Department

**THE PLACEMENT**

On Miss Rose Devlin’s application to become involved in the EU Peace II, Proteus project, ‘Enabling Lecturers to Learn from Business’, she stated:

“As a lecturer in business studies I would welcome an opportunity to experience the practical application of the theory in areas of business, such as, market research, International marketing, development of management information systems. Placement with companies involved in European affairs or operating in International markets would be very beneficial and enrich my teaching.”

In order to provide the breadth of experience requested it was arranged that Rose would spend a period of placement with three different organisations, namely, Invest Northern Ireland, British Telecom plc, and Rocwell Irish Mineral Water. Each of these organisations, in recognition of Rose’s background in business theory, facilitated an opportunity for her to shadow the work of a relevant team/department or senior manager.

Invest NI is Northern Ireland’s main economic development organisation. Working in partnership with public and private sector organisations their main focus is on helping build a more vibrant private economy. Rose was placed with the Invest NI Enterprise Development Team which is managed by Mr Paul Brush. The intensive schedule prepared by Paul involved Rose meeting with each of the team members and becoming familiar with their roles and responsibilities. Thereafter, Rose became a guest at a series of senior level meetings and conferences which facilitated extensive learning and opportunities to network.

Rose was invited to attend and contribute to a meeting of the Education/Youth group which included representatives from the main youth enterprise initiatives currently operating in Northern Ireland.

Invest NI facilitated many other opportunities for Rose including first hand contact with key departments and personnel, such as, Invest NI Press Office, the new business ‘Go for It’ initiative, Business Information Centre, Global Enterprise Monitor Group (GEM) etc.

Rose was also placed in the Corporate Relations Department of BT Northern Ireland (BTNI), Riverside Tower, Belfast, with her programme being coordinated by Ms Marnie O’Neill, Head of Corporate Relations. The nature and level of work carried out by this department was found to be extremely interesting and involved meeting with senior department managers and an observation of activities related to the management of Media, Graphic Design, issues involving Corporate Social Responsibility, Event Management and Commercial Sponsorship.

Rocwell Irish Mineral Water Company was established in 1989 and was the first company in Northern Ireland to achieve Natural Mineral Water Statue in 1992. The production plant is located in Pomeroy, Co Tyrone. Distribution depots include Pomeroy, Belfast, Derry, Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick.

Rose spent her term of placement with Ms Caomh O’Neill, General Manager at Rocwell. Apart from the valuable overview of the company, the current attention to ‘product development’ and efforts to penetrate the American market were of particular interest.

On returning to college Rose stated: “The three organisations, I was with, could not have been more helpful. Though very busy people, they went out of their way to give me the maximum amount of support to ensure that I could gain as much from
the experience as possible. Nothing was too much trouble. I have the highest regard for them all.”

KEY LEARNING POINTS ON BUSINESS

• A wealth of examples of business theory in practice relevant to future teaching in areas such as, business planning, production, human resource management, marketing and corporate social responsibility.

• New learning about aspects of engineering, science, technology and design, public relations, the media and the graphics industry.

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE BA (Hons) LIBERAL ARTS DEGREE PROGRAMME OF THE UNIVERSITY

Most potential is in the area of ‘Enterprise’. Invest NI personnel would welcome the opportunity to speak to students about all aspects of business and enterprise. Other contacts include key personnel from Queen’s University, Belfast and Ulster University, Coleraine. BTNI have a superb educational website and many educational resources which they are more than happy to make available to support student learning. The company is also willing to provide speakers on any aspect of their business.

Rocwell Irish Mineral Water, Pomeroy, Co Tyrone

www.rocwell.u-net.com

Contact: Mr Brian Quinn, Managing Director and Ms Caoimhe O’Neill, General Manager

Rocwell Irish Mineral Water are willing to accommodate student visits, send speakers to the college and accept BA (Hons) Liberal Arts students for a period of work placement in the future.

FUTURE LINKS WITH BUSINESS

Contact with each of the organisations will be maintained to follow-up on the offer of support to relevant aspects of college degree programmes.

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Each of the three organisations had a very strong sense of Corporate and Social Responsibility and follow initiatives to reach out to all sections of the community.

Invest NI offer programmes such as, ‘Women in Enterprise’, and directly encourage developments in social enterprise, enterprise in education, the regeneration of disadvantaged areas and the growth of North/South enterprise and intertrade initiatives.

BTNI support ‘Young Enterprise NI’, SENITUS and the ‘Prince’s Trust’ initiatives, all of which actively bring young people from all sections of the community together.

Further contact with Ms Marnie O’Neill, having secured a one year secondment from BTNI to work with Co-operation Ireland as Communications Director and also her elected Presidency of the Linenhall Library will become a priority. The college has secured student placements with Co-operation Ireland and the Linenhall Library in the past and will seek a renewed association with these organisations during Marnie’s term of secondment.

Rocwell Irish Mineral Water sponsor many sporting events and support a number of charities and educational initiatives in their local community.

PERSONAL LEARNING

Rose stated: “Placement was a superb experience. It will bring a new life to my lecturing. It gave me the opportunity to get out there and see what is really happening in the business world. I feel confident now that I am very up-to-date with the World of Work and this will help me to understand what we are preparing our students for. I now feel I have a wealth of new information, knowledge and skills to pass on. I feel a new energy, impetus and enthusiasm for my work. It has also given me a great comfort to know that most of my courses are very relevant and suitable to what is required in the business world.”
THE PLACEMENT

An approach to Mitchell, Kane Associates (MKA) was made on the strength of an already established business relationship. The company currently handles the design and printing of the University Prospectus and the ‘Inside/Out’ quarterly newspaper. With an already comfortable working relationship existing between Dr Matthew Martin and Mr Seán Mitchell, Partner with MKA, coupled with Matthew’s declared interest in the area of marketing, it was considered appropriate to negotiate a period of placement allowing Matthew to experience the full range of work carried out by MKA.

On Matthew’s application to become involved in the EU Peace II, Proteus project, ‘Enabling Lecturers to Learn from Business’, he stated:

“I specialise in the teaching of writing and in helping people to develop their own written communication skills. I look forward to sharing my knowledge of a range of writing pedagogies with those people working at the front line of business communications and marketing in order to see what synergies may be produced by our different approaches to the medium of written communications.”

It had been agreed with Seán Mitchell that Matthew would be given an introduction to the breadth of activities associated with MKA commissions, such as, advertising, marketing, public relations and event management. This involved viewing a number of client files on existing contracts at different stages of completion. Matthew was therefore in a position to grasp the sequence of tasks involved in securing and delivering on a contract.

Matthew then focused on two particular contracts by shadowing Seán’s involvement with the associated clients.

The first contract was commissioned by Investment Belfast and involved the marketing of Full Circle. As part of the contract, an event devoted to recycling issues, environmentally sound products and sustainable development was to take place in the centre of Belfast in autumn 2005.

The second contract was commissioned by Perfecseal, a medical packaging company wishing to launch new product innovations. Introducing this to the market was to prove very challenging as the physical properties and scientific advances which these innovations represented were difficult to understand let alone market. The stunning reality of the product and the associated specifications might appeal to technicians but a ‘marketing splash’ would be difficult to achieve. Matthew was party to the whole process which settled on the web of the ‘Orb Weaver Spider’ as one image for capturing the complexities of these innovations- a web that requires greater relative tension for breaking than steel and one which is produced in a most complex, non-linear shape. A fascinating and
powerfully complex metaphor – and one, based totally in nature, where all the best packages are found (bananas, amniotic sacs, skin etc). The extensive research and lasting debates resulted in this successful and powerful step forward in confirming a direction for this particular marketing campaign.

During this placement, Matthew was plunged into the ‘world of marketing’. Expecting to feel very much a burden in the organisation, Matthew was instead made to feel very much at home with contributions being acknowledged as meaningful. Seán Mitchell, when interviewed was asked to comment on Matthew’s contribution, he commented: “During the period of Matthew’s placement the ‘skills set’ changed which had a positive effect on completing tasks involving problem solving”. Sean explained how, “graphic designers approach problem solving in a similar way drawing mainly on visual impetus. By having Matthew on board, his expertise in the field of literature changed the problem solving dynamic, raised the level of creativity and thereby added breadth to ideas generated”.

KEY LEARNING POINTS ON BUSINESS
The energy and level of research involved in generating ‘marketing ideas’ and thereafter gaining approval from the client. A client will have a grasp on the detail of their product specification, particularly in the case of highly technical products. It is difficult therefore to convince a client of the priority for the ‘broad sweep’ approach required to create market impact.

An appreciation of how a raft of details needing to be communicated leads to a tension between visual communication and verbal communication. It is that ability to convert the complexity of the verbal detail into the elegant simplicity of visual design that is the ‘gold standard’ of effective marketing.

Knowledge of cost and management techniques in converting a negotiated contact into a realistic budget and thereafter managing that budget.

FUTURE LINKS WITH BUSINESS
Matthew’s working links with Seán Mitchell will continue through work related to future issues of the college ‘Inside/Out’ newspaper. Matthew considers Seán Mitchell would be a fabulous person to speak at BA (Hon) Liberal Arts seminars to demonstrate his ability to “present complex, challenging ideas in an accessible way”.

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION
Matthew expressed particular interest in the work done by MKA on a number of projects which involved re-positioning companies which had either protestant or nationalist image associations. In each case this was in contrast to the truly cross-community reality of their present work. Looking into the materials produced as part of each re-branding scheme revealed the degree to which these companies are actually cross-community and despite legacy image problems have remarkable records in terms of training and supporting staff. Examination of these materials is evidence that some companies are prepared to place emphasis on breaking down barriers and openly follow peace and reconciliation initiatives.

PERSONAL LEARNING
Matthew stated, “...an appreciation that so much learning can take place while being part of a different work environment, particularly when the matching up of the lecturer with the right placement is precise. In my case, the match was perfect.”
Dr Tracey McKay, Senior Lecturer in the Geography Department

HOST ORGANISATION: Newry and Mourne District Council

www.newryandmourne.gov.uk

Contact: Mr Seamus Crossey, Assistant Enterprise Development Officer

THE PLACEMENT

Newry and Mourne District Council is one of Northern Ireland’s twenty six local district councils that were formed in the early 1970s under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland).

On Dr Tracey McKay’s application to become involved in the EU Peace II, Proteus project, ‘Enabling Lecturers to Learn from Business’, she stated:

“I would like to develop my knowledge and understanding of the Council’s statutory remit with respect to tourism, most especially how it ‘fits’ into broader strategic policies and spatial frameworks.”

In order to deliver on this request and resulting from meetings with Mr Seamus Crossey, Assistant Enterprise Development Officer for the Newry and Mourne District Council, shadowing the work of senior managers within the council was considered to be the best format of placement for Tracey. Seamus stated: “BA (Hons) Liberal Arts students placed with us in the past have been set a project within a particular section of the Council. Although this approach might be the easier option, in order to maximize learning at the strategic and policy making level, attendance at meetings and the opportunity to shadow the work of senior managers would be best option for Tracey given her subject area of expertise.”

Tracey’s placement began with an overview of the Newry and Mourne District Council Economic Action Plan. Experiences included familiarisation with the work of the Economic Development Unit and the role of the District Development Committee. Attendance at a meeting with the Council’s Cross Border INTERREG Coordinator allowed Tracey to learn more about the Council’s involvement in economic development projects. The opportunity to visit the various regeneration initiatives within the Newry and Mourne area accompanied by personnel who had been actively involved in overseeing the projects provided a fascinating insight into the nature of local participation in regeneration. Tracey indicated that this was one of the most valuable learning opportunities of the entire placement as it allowed her to observe the processes of change which hitherto had only been ‘known’ from scholarly texts.

Direct involvement with the Council’s Eco-Week included working closely with the Environmental Liaison Officer and the Environmental Awareness Officer allowed Tracey to become familiar with the Council’s Waste Management Strategy and its impact on the local area.

Tracey even left herself open to spending a day with the Council’s Dog Warden which brought home the scale of the problem caused by stray and dangerous dogs. Tracey considered that the role of a local Dog Warden was not for the faint hearted. She observed the many challenges, particularly when dealing with the public who were, on occasion, hostile and aggressive to the interventions of the Dog Warden.
It is not possible in this report to represent all of the Council functions with which Tracey became familiar. Mr Seamus Crossey commented, “Tracey’s enthusiastic approach and easy personality allowed us to secure contact with a range of council departments and personnel. Potential learning was enhanced by a high level of preparation on Tracey’s part and her attention to support documentation provided. Partnership with St Mary’s College has, again, resulted in a meaningful exchange for all parties.”

KEY LEARNING POINTS ON BUSINESS
Although aware that the function of local council extended beyond ‘emptying the bin and burying the dead’, knowledge of the sheer diversity of work done was invaluable, particularly in the area of economic/district development. Direct knowledge was also acquired on the Council’s Development Strategy, its Economic Action Plan (2001-2007) and the impact of the Peace Dividend in promoting peace and reconciliation by enhancing economic and social prosperity.

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE BA (Hons) LIBERAL ARTS DEGREE PROGRAMME OF THE UNIVERSITY
In the case of BA (Hons) Liberal Arts students completing modules in geography the relevance of their discipline for future employability can be represented. The skills and qualities developed through studying geography are highly transferable into a variety of roles within local government.

Tracey stated: “I look forward to helping our BA (Hons) Liberal Arts geography students appreciate the highly desirable knowledge base and suite of skills they have to offer potential employers.”

FUTURE LINKS WITH BUSINESS
Particular links with the Newry Museum have continued beyond the term of placement. A ‘focus-group’ meeting took place on 19 June 2006 at the Newry Museum and facilitated an exchange between members of the Museum staff and representatives from the college geography, history and science departments.

Ms Noreen Cunningham, Curator at the Newry Museum stated: “Work done by BA (Hons) Liberal Arts students on placement in the past has been extremely valuable. I am very grateful for this opportunity to extend our relationship with the college, as contact with Tracey and her colleagues provided essential information to support drawing up the Job Description for the new museum role of Education and Community Outreach Officer.”

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION
The European Union Programme of Building Sustainable Prosperity has provided the Newry and Mourne Council with a budget of £1.3 million to assist with the development of a range of economic initiatives and ‘partnerships’ in key areas, such as, tourism, indigenous business development and business infrastructure, trade development and inter-regional activities. Time spent with the Newry Museum featured detail of the joint project with the Dundalk Museum which aimed to encourage cultural exchange, mutual understanding and respect between people on a cross-border and cross-community and cross-generational basis.

PERSONAL LEARNING
Tracey stated: “As a result of my placement I enhanced my knowledge and understanding of Newry and Mourne Council as an agent of change, both within the council administrative boundary and at an inter-regional scale, where it works closely with other District Council ‘partners’ to benefit from economies of scale. This placement has given me a more nuanced understanding of the nature of partnerships and business synergy operating between stakeholders with an interest in local economic development and change. From my privileged vantage point as participant observer, it was fascinating to watch business being transacted by ‘partners’ and I have no doubt that my teaching (and the students learning) will be enriched by the knowledge I have acquired.”
THE PLACEMENT
Kensington Interiors Ltd operates as interior design specialists and has grown steadily since its inception in 1999. Over this period, Director, Mr Tyrone Winter, has expanded its depth and breadth of expertise by forging a close partnership with leading specialists in cutting edge product, fabric design and furniture manufacture. The business is located in an affluent area of Belfast providing an interior design service to a range of commercial and residential clients.

On Mrs Deirdre Robson's application to become involved in the EU Peace II, Proteus project, 'Enabling Lecturers to Learn from Business', she stated:

"As someone who has been cocooned for 19 years in the teaching profession I wish to take up the challenge in the application of my knowledge, skills and creativity in a business environment."

Before becoming involved in the design side of the business, Deirdre was introduced to the routine of administration tasks and was allowed to view the client and company accounts. This experience led to a grasp of the nature of contract most likely to result in a profit.

During the second week of placement Deirdre returned to more familiar territory and was set the task to become familiar with the huge range of fabrics, paints, flooring and wall coverings available and currently in fashion. A true insight to the 'real world of business' was experienced when this task extended to checking out competitors' products and prices which confirmed that Kensington Interiors know their market very well and generally set contract terms which result in repeat custom or 'word-of-mouth' recommendation leading to new business.

Meeting with clients was described by Deirdre as being "daunting" and very "fast moving" experience with item prices and contract estimates having to be prepared and confirmed at speed. This process was carried out without the luxury of being able to spend time double checking details, as is generally the case in the public sector.

Feedback from the company Director paid tribute to Deirdre's knowledge of design resulting in her opinion at trade or client level being valued. He also mentioned, "Deirdre's strength is her ability to talk to anyone and to get stuck in and carry out any task set." As a point of humour, Tyrone also remarked how Deirdre was "too cheery first thing in the morning!" Direct praise was also given for how Deirdre had revolutionised the business in terms of using IT efficiently to support administration tasks. This was set apart from her knowledge of art and design which made a significant contribution to ongoing contracts.

KEY LEARNING POINTS ON BUSINESS

• An appreciation of the importance of credit control and the realisation that no small business is more than three months away from bankruptcy if contracts are not time managed and accounts kept up-to-date.

• An appreciation of the high level of dependency on confident communication skills by the owner when dealing with suppliers and customers. Deirdre admired the level of patience evident when dealing with customer demands and realised this virtue was core to a successful business.
Work on the ‘Eco House’ resulted in Deirdre’s services being requested by another company with which she had had some level of contact with during her placement. Due to this new working environment involving a number of companies working together on a common project, the realism of how ‘ruthless’ the world of business can become was revealed. Learning was beyond any textbook theory on team dynamics!

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE BA (Hons) LIBERAL ARTS DEGREE PROGRAMME OF THE UNIVERSITY
This placement experience raises questions regarding the methods of teaching and assessment used in our BA (Hons) Liberal Arts degree. Deirdre stated: “A substantial proportion of the BA (Hons) Liberal Arts degree is lecture based learning which is ideal for those who learn best through listening, reading books and writing assignments/exams. A high proportion of students entering the BA programme have not shown a predisposition to this style of learning in their earlier schooling, as reflected in examination entry grades. They may be more predisposed to visual, kinesthetic or interpersonal learning and are likely to possess a much wider range of intelligences than the literary intelligence which is the focus of academic teaching and learning. We should attempt a better match with the demands of the workplace and endeavour to encourage entrepreneurial qualities within both degree programmes offered at the college.”

FUTURE LINKS WITH BUSINESS
Ideas presented by Deirdre to generate new business for the company were well received and contact has been maintained to follow-up on the agreed action.

During the term of placement Deirdre was included in a visit to Dublin to source design ideas. This was a very productive alliance and has resulted in Deirdre being invited to accompany the company staff to the Paris Trade Show in January 2007.

PERSONAL LEARNING
Deirdre stated: “Release from School Experience made involvement in this project possible. I am grateful to college Senior Management who had the vision to realise that this opportunity would be a dynamic and valuable experience.”

Deirdre paid tribute to Tyrone as the working Director and David, now employee, but previously the owner of an antiques business, for creating a relaxing learning environment charged with motivation and ‘fun’. Having embarked on the placement wondering if she had much to contribute Deirdre has indicated surprise in the fact that businesses can learn from lecturers and considers that potential public/private sector alliances should be further explored.

Deirdre stated: “As an individual who came through the education system and then subsequently went to work in it, I had little sense of reality of life beyond the classroom. Now I am acutely aware of the risk the private sector takes to create wealth without the security of sick pay, a pension etc. They pay huge taxes which the public sector spends on a level of administration which is no longer sustainable by our economy.”
THE PLACEMENT

The Irish Rugby Football Union, Ulster Branch (also known as Ulster Rugby) is one of four branches of the IRFU, and is responsible for rugby union in Ulster. Since rugby union became a professional sport in 1995, the Ulster team now plays as a professional club. The branch is also responsible for the Ulster team, which plays in national and international competitions.

In the BA (Hons) Liberal Arts Physical Education modules, coaching techniques and styles play a major role in the practical and theoretical elements of the course. During his placement with Ulster Rugby, Mr Paddy Tally was able to introduce new skills as well as enhance his own skills in this field through the process of coaching demonstration and application.

Paddy spent a period of time working with the Ulster Academy squad by travelling around the various schools, colleges and clubs visiting the players. Each season approximately 20 players, having met the strict selection criteria, are selected to take part in the academy. Paddy, within this professional environment, became informed on the aim of the academy to produce holistically better rugby players. His involvement in the following on-field and off-field aspects of being an elite rugby player were invaluable: fitness (aerobic and anaerobic); strength; nutrition and hydration; awareness of drugs, alcohol and steroids; life as a professional rugby player; mental preparation and goal setting; general ball skills and body position; individual positional coaching; video analysis and understanding and awareness of all rugby rules.

During his term of placement Paddy was linked with Mr Mark McCall, Director of Coaching who facilitated a full range of experiences through his network of contact within Ulster Rugby.

KEY LEARNING POINTS ON BUSINESS

During his term of placement Paddy also had the opportunity to become familiar with a range of management and administration operations at Ulster Rugby. Techniques in raising revenue through advertising and the management of relationships with corporate sponsors including public relations and media related issues were explained in detail. An observation of the work carried out by the Marketing Team revealed the intricate process of aligning merchandising and ticketing with the match programme.

Paddy indicated many discussions allowed for a comparison between the running of a professional sports organisation as compared to the approach taken to the management and administration structures common to the network of amateur Gaelic football clubs.

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE BA (Hons) LIBERAL ARTS DEGREE PROGRAMME OF THE UNIVERSITY

An observation of the way coaching and player development is undertaken in a professional environment will contribute very significantly to related elements of BA (Hons) Liberal Arts Physical Education modules. Paddy has indicated that a number of BA (Hons) Liberal Arts graduates have moved into coaching and sports development as a career. Paddy stated: “I feel that the knowledge and experience gained in the area of player development will enable me to highlight the advantages of the approach adopted by Ulster Rugby to elite player development.”

Shadowing the work of ‘strength and conditioning’ coaches has given an
in-depth knowledge and understanding of how a series of tests are designed to identify the underlying cause of a skill deficiency. This experience will be directly relevant to guiding BA (Hons) Liberal Arts students who may consider post-graduate qualifications in this field of expertise.

Contact with the network of rugby Development Officers will hopefully facilitate the introduction of rugby to the 'games course' currently followed by students following Physical Education modules at the college.

FUTURE LINKS WITH BUSINESS
Direct contact with the Ulster Squad is unlikely due to the professional team environment only being suited to the nature of contact made possible through the terms of the 'Enabling Lecturers to Learn from Business' project. However, the opportunity to maintain relations with the Development Officers operating at school and college level will be explored.

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION
Paddy’s term of placement at Ulster Rugby provided an opportunity for an exchange of expertise associated with two sports from different traditions in Northern Ireland. When Mr Neil Doak: Ulster Rugby Elite Player Development Manager was asked to comment on the benefits of having Paddy on placement he commented:

“There are a number of areas where I feel the crossover from the sports has a mutual benefit. The one area in particular in a playing point of view is the way in which the Gaelic players move the ball in play provides lots of opportunities to attack through spaces and then support in numbers, we could learn a lot from this. The anticipatory skills developed by the Gaelic players are another area where I feel we could learn from. Gaelic football has developed a very strong system within the schools in Ulster. The way the development programmes have been designed to work, supported by teachers, is of a very high standard and something we have not had the same level of success with. The marketing of schools Gaelic football is excellent with close links to local as well as national press, television and radio. The top players in Gaelic spend a lot of time promoting and supporting the schools’ competitions and this is of great benefit to the future development of the sport.”

As a direct result of Paddy’s association with Neil, an event to promote Gaelic/Rugby Transferable Skills took place at the Mid Ulster Sports Arena, Cookstown. The event was a marked success and was merited in the local press.

PERSONAL LEARNING
Paddy stated: “The placement gave me an opportunity to experience an environment with which I have had a long held fascination. I became informed on the day-to-day running of the organisation as well as the impact it has on the wider public. I worked alongside a very committed and motivated bunch of people. Overall, I would recommend this project to any lecturer.”
Mr Jonathan Worley – Senior Lecturer in Written Communications

HOST COMPANY: First Trust Bank, First Trust Centre Belfast
www.firsttrustbank.co.uk

Placement Contacts: Mr Sean McArdle, Business Development Executive and Head of Branded Business Ms Sara O’Sullivan, Manager Personal Banking Division
Ms Roisin Hackett, Manager Marketing Services

THE PLACEMENT
Contact with Mr Sean McArdle, Business Development Executive and Head of Branded Business at the First Trust Banking Centre, Belfast, resulted in securing a placement for Mr Jonathan Worley. The Centre is the First Trust Headquarters for Northern Ireland Banking and also operates the International Offices for First Trust Marketing Services including communications with their banking operations in Poland.

On Jonathan’s application to become involved in the EU Peace II, Proteus project ‘Enabling Lecturers to Learn from Business’, he stated:

“I teach all modules on written communication, provide individualised tutorials on written communication skills and administer the Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (NI): (which includes the Writing Centre and Peer Tutoring Project). The opportunity during my placement to mix with managers at the front line of business will inform me on the realistic demands placed upon managers in the workplace”.

Jonathan was placed at the First Trust Centre in two key divisions, the Personal Banking Division with Ms Sara O’Sullivan, Manager Personal Banking Division followed by the Marketing Services Department with Ms Roisin Hackett, Manager Marketing Services.

Placement allowed Jonathan to involve himself directly in current projects, such as, a survey to establish impact of First Trust draft promotional pamphlets and contribute to the resulting re-profiling of this essential customer information. Issues of style, clarity and patterns of grammatical error allowed Jonathan to produce the ‘First Trust Style Sheet’, which delineated the kinds of styles used in pamphlets and the patterns of grammatical errors discovered.

Jonathan was also afforded the opportunity to carry out some personal research on ‘essential skills’ initiatives and to explore the ‘written communications’ demands placed on managers at each level of operation within the First Trust banking group. As Jonathan heads up the Writing School at the college, he intends to use his research findings to enhance written communication skills module content in line with the demands of standard management tasks relating to the workplace.

Further to this, Jonathan would like to use his research findings to create a ‘Writing for Business’ Conference (1-2 days) in the hope of attracting business managers or aspiring managers as participants. Having examined a sample of writing courses currently on offer to the business community, Jonathan has identified the potential to creating a course more relevant to the real demands of managers in the workplace. As Co-Director of the current university CETL (Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning NI), Jonathan’s participation in the ‘Enabling Lecturers to Learn from Business’ project has indirectly supported progress with one of the core objectives of the CETL programme: Critical Thinking and Analytical Writing.

KEY LEARNING POINTS ON BUSINESS

• Knowledge on ‘above the line’ marketing techniques used by the bank and the particular focus on capturing the student and graduate market.

• Knowledge of a Corporate Responsibility Strategy (CRS) in operation which is described by Mr Dennis Licence, Senior Management Team at First Trust,
"putting back into the community what it has given to us".

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE BA (Hons) LIBERAL ARTS DEGREE PROGRAMME OF THE UNIVERSITY

Arising from research findings on ‘writing for business’ a substantive and significant contribution to the Written Communications and Work-based Learning taught units is likely. Jonathan has indicated that one possible avenue for developing a better understanding of business writing skills would be to work more closely with our own students while on placement and perhaps being allowed to shadow or help them with their writing demands as set by their business/organisation mentors.

Direct contact with Morrow Communications, Holywood, who manage First Trust’s public relations needs, prompted Jonathan to express a particular interest in services relating to ‘crisis management’. As a member of the University Outreach Committee, Jonathan intends to represent the need for this type of professional service at a college level.

FUTURE LINKS WITH BUSINESS

Within the term of his placement, Jonathan interviewed senior managers from a wide range of business/organisations on the kinds of writing demands placed upon members of the business community. These included representatives from the NI Housing Executive, CCEA, Laganside Trust, and the Department of Health and Social Services, all of which offered significant information and advice. In conclusion, Jonathan’s research indicates a need for business writing training in several areas, such as, elimination of business jargon both in sales material and internal reports, clarity of expression in writing and a review of some fundamental grammar rules as a way of establishing in-house style sheets.

Feedback from employers, apart from valuing Jonathan’s input during his placement, expressed particular interest in any ‘business writing course’ that might arise from Jonathan’s research.

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

During his placement, Jonathan also explored initiatives followed by the First Trust Bank to promote peace and reconciliation. He indicated a particular interest in the impact of the First Trust membership of ‘Business in the Community’ and the ‘2% Club’. These projects allow members of staff to be released from work to become involved with charity and not-for-profit organisations in the local community to help with the completion of business plans, funding applications and marketing policies etc. The extent of this meaningful involvement was confirmed when Jonathan met with a member of the First Trust Senior Management Team, Mr Dennis Licence, who, at that time, also served as Chairman of the ‘Business in the Community’ Board of Directors. Jonathan stated: “While the work of First Trust related to these initiatives was not particularly directed at sectarianism in the community, it was directed at the community as a whole in ways that might help to end discrimination”.

PERSONAL LEARNING

Jonathan considered his placement worthwhile for the general insights it provided into the Belfast based business community and for the specific insights it gave into the nature of business writing. On a personal level, he stated, “I now feel connected to the Belfast community as a whole and intend to follow-up and extend the network of contacts made during my term of placement”.
Mrs Marian Curran, Senior Lecturer in the Religious Studies Department

HOST COMPANY:
Veritas Publishing, Dublin
www.veritas.ie
Contact: Ms Maura Hyland, Director

THE PLACEMENT
Veritas Publications are best known for their publication of catechetical books for use in Catholic schools. However, the company is also responsible for books about liturgy and prayer; parenting; counselling; self-help and psychology books as well as theology and social issues and spirituality.

Mrs Marian Curran's placement was based at the Veritas Headquarters, Dublin, shadowing the work of Ms Maura Hyland, Director of Veritas.

As Director, Maura is responsible for running the company. Her extensive knowledge of the process of writing, publishing, distribution, marketing and public relations, finance and human resource management was found to be an inspiration. Marian’s opportunity to shadow the role of key managers gave an informative representation of both publishing and business aspects of company functions.

Marian commented: “I loved my placement experience. Having been a university lecturer for 12 years this has been my first opportunity to go outside the academic world to experience something entirely different. It was energising to become a ‘learner’ in this new and exciting environment – experiences were so interesting and varied.”

KEY LEARNING POINTS ON BUSINESS
• An awareness of the publishing industry and the importance of carrying out market research as a vital part of the publishing process.
• Knowledge and understanding of ‘creative merchandising’ procedures. This included use of ‘Aztec Gold’, a ‘live’ computer support system to track stock at the retail and wholesale levels of distribution via 'point of sale' and website generated ordering.

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE BA (Hons) LIBERAL ARTS DEGREE PROGRAMME OF THE UNIVERSITY
To explore the possibility of developing a chaplaincy course for BA (Hons) Liberal Arts Religious Studies students who may wish to pursue a career as a school chaplain.

FUTURE LINKS WITH BUSINESS
Veritas are always searching for writers, editors, managers etc. Students can now be informed on the realistic demands of a career in publishing.

Maura Hyland, Director of Veritas, has suggested that Marian should consider attending the World Conference in Religious Education (Los Angeles 2007) to explore the potential of publishing college based work.

Placement of Mrs Sharon Haughey with the Southern Area Hospice Services included a request that she might source suitable publishers for a children's story intended to support the trauma of child bereavement. Sharon made direct representation to Marian resulting in the draft story being currently assessed by the Veritas Commissioning Editor. This opportunity to network between placement organisations represents a significant outcome of the ‘Enabling Lecturers to Learn from Business’ project.

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION
Veritas has established strong links with Dr Ruth Patterson, Director of Restoration Ministries in Belfast, a non-denominational charitable trust at the forefront of promoting peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. There would be an interest in extending this association to include links with the college.

PERSONAL LEARNING
The opportunity to spend time with Orla Walsh, a catechetical writer, to become familiar with her children’s books and how she works as an author prompted Marian to comment: “This aspect of my placement has inspired me to start writing, and as a result, I am now actively working with an editor to assist with my own writing.”
Dr Fionntán De Brún, Senior Lecturer in the Irish Department

HOST COMPANIES: Zoogon Productions Ltd, Belfast  Contact: Fiona Ni Chleirigh, Studio Manager
Clean Slate Television Ltd, Belfast  Contact: Mr Mairtin Campbell, Producer
MGTV  Contact: Ms Claire Rodgers, Production Assistant

THE PLACEMENT
Dr Fionntán De Brún currently serves as one of the two independent members of the Irish Language Broadcast Fund Investment Committee (ILBF), responsible for allocating the £12 million to support Irish language film and television production in Northern Ireland. This committee is managed by the Northern Ireland Film and Television Commission (NIFTC) established in 2004 as part of the Good Friday Agreement. Association with the NIFTC provided Fionntán with the opportunity to link with a variety of companies from the independent television production sector:

Zoogon Production Ltd is an independent Irish language television company established in 2005 to make television programmes and re-version programmes for Irish language television audiences.

Clean Slate Television Ltd is an independent television company established in 2005 involved in documentary commissions for both English language and Irish language television audiences.

On placement Fionntán gained an insight into the development of programme ideas and the work that goes into preparing for a commission including detail on financial costing, insurance and contractual clauses. One of the essays from the recently published, ‘Belfast and the Irish language’, edited by Fionntán, which explores Belfast’s relationship with the Irish language from its earliest roots became the focus for this process.

Fionntán shadowed the work of Mr Mairtin Campbell, Producer at Clean Slate, who commented: “Apart from Fionntán’s general level of interest in the business side of documentary production his expertise in the Irish language and more importantly, his knowledge of the history of the Irish language has made a significant contribution.”

KEY LEARNING POINTS ON BUSINESS

- Applications to the ILBF are assessed against criteria set out in the guidelines available on the NIFTC’s website (www.niftc.co.uk). Although Fionntán is very familiar with this process the experience of becoming attached to the media companies who action the funded projects has enhanced his standing as an independent member of the ILBF Committee.

FUTURE LINKS WITH BUSINESS
The NIFTC has established a training scheme for people interested in working in Irish language TV production. The NIFTC has indicated that BA graduates with Irish are particularly welcome to avail of this opportunity.

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION
Existing links with the work of the NIFTC and ILBF Investment Committee to promote the Irish language raises awareness of how media can encourage peace and reconciliation within Northern Ireland. Potential follow-up work with Clean Slate Television Ltd regarding the development of ideas for the suggested documentary series on ‘hidden history’ will focus on issues of identity, difference, assimilation, alienation and rights.

PERSONAL LEARNING
Fionntán commented: “In the light of the NIFTC training scheme opportunity for students my time on placement has greatly enriched my understanding of the Irish language TV sector and its needs. I now feel much better qualified to prepare students at St Mary’s to consider media as a possible professional pathway.”
THE PLACEMENT
Southern Area Hospice Services, previously the Newry Hospice, opened in June 1989 and provides a specialist care service, without charge, for terminally ill patients from the local area.

It was a privilege for Mrs Sharon Haughey to be granted a term of placement in an organisation with the responsibility to patients and their families of ensuring confidentiality and trust. Sharon, having a particular interest in issues related to the management of bereavement valued her direct contact with the Hospice Senior Social Worker.

During her term of placement, Sharon was invited to attend and assist in the preparation for a 4-day bereavement facilitator course, 'Beyond Horizons'. The opportunity to discuss experiences related to children faced with bereavement was candid and informative.

Sharon also observed operations in the Hospice Fund Raising and Public Relations Department. The methods used to generate funds from projects and the measured spread of fund raising events throughout each calendar year was shown to be a demanding and fascinating process.

In general, Sharon’s placement was arranged with sufficient flexibility to facilitate the opportunity to meet with people involved in community organisations and in Health Trusts who support and develop bereavement and care programmes in Northern Ireland.

KEY LEARNING POINTS ON BUSINESS
An appreciation of how voluntary organisations link with external organisations by shadowing the work of the Southern Area Bereavement Coordinator at the Craigavon Area Hospital (SHSSB). This role ensures all organisations operating across the Board Area observe policies and procedures in bereavement care for patients and their families which comply with set national and regional standards.

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE BA (Hons) LIBERAL ARTS DEGREE PROGRAMME OF THE UNIVERSITY
Sharon stated: “Participation in the 4-day, ‘Beyond Horizons’ course will enhance my ability to relate student personal experiences of bereavement to improve how they might, in the future, help children deal with the different feelings and emotions connected with grief.”

FUTURE LINKS WITH BUSINESS
Direct encouragement will be given to students to become involved as volunteers in the hospice operating in their locality.

Sharon stated: “The BA (Hons) Liberal Arts degree programme has a strong business element. Involvement in the Proteus project will obviously have an impact on teaching, allowing placement lecturers to represent new and exciting career opportunities offered by the range of new contact businesses and organisations.”

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION
The Southern Area Hospice supports diversity through the many services offered to patients and their families. The work of the Chaplaincy Service is sensitive to the belief, cultures and faith of all who attend the Hospice.

PERSONAL LEARNING
Sharon stated: “I thoroughly enjoyed my placement with the Hospice. It challenged me to open up to a more positive outlook on life. I now realise that the Hospice offers life, the highest level of palliative care and is not primarily focused on death and dying. The loyal dedicated staff and volunteers create a warm and peace filled environment for patients and their families.”
Mr Frank Hennessey, Principal Lecturer and Head of the Business Studies Department

HOST COMPANY AND ORGANISATION: W D Irwin & Sons Ltd, Portadown  www.irwinsbakery.com
Contact: Ms Sheree Totton, Human Resources Manager
FOLD Housing Association, Holywood  www.foldgroup.co.uk
Contacts: Mr John McLean, Chief Executive Officer and Mrs Marie Pickles, Human Resources Director

THE PLACEMENT
In order to provide a placement experience to explore a variety of policies relevant to Human Resource Management and organisational behaviour it was arranged that Mr Frank Hennessey would spend a period of placement in two different organisations, namely, W D Irwin & Sons Ltd, Portadown and the FOLD Housing Association, Holywood. Two very different organisations added interest to the exercise; one being a private sector and profit focused organisation, FOLD on the other hand, although formally a not-for-profit organisation, was found to be much more target and performance driven than would otherwise be expected.

W D Irwin & Sons Ltd is one of Northern Ireland’s leading bakeries situated in modern premises at Portadown and employing some 450 people. Apart from their own product lines, Irwins produce a wide variety of products under a number of brands ie Rankins, Tescos and Sainsburys.

While in Irwins, Frank helped develop training documentation and gave one-to-one advice and guidance to a newly appointed training officer. In doing so, Frank enhanced his own knowledge and understanding of some ICT techniques. Frank commented: “I found this a most interesting experience and produced a number of spreadsheet models which have been adopted.”

Frank was also placed in the Human Resources Department at the FOLD Housing Association, Holywood. FOLD is a not-for-profit voluntary housing association registered and regulated by the Department for Social Development. Established in 1976, FOLD endeavours to provide the best housing, care and support to those in need of such services.

Frank’s agreed consultancy remit was to review the appraisal scheme in place in FOLD with a view to making recommendations as to how the organisation might develop and enhance the appraisal process. In addition to a report, Frank also presented a step by step guide to appraisal for the line managers along with other supporting resources.

Frank commented: “This was a most challenging and interesting exercise. It is my hope to follow up on this process later this year.”

KEY LEARNING POINTS ON BUSINESS
- The practical application and development of corporate human resources policies, including the training and supervisory function and appraisal techniques.
- The implications of maintaining and developing a family business ethic with specific reference to the dual perspectives of ownership and control.
- Product development and innovation to secure and maintain competitive advantage including required licensing and branding.
- Practical considerations with regard to sales and marketing techniques.
- The changing nature of the not-for-profit sector with particular reference to Northern Ireland.

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE BA (Hons) LIBERAL ARTS DEGREE PROGRAMME OF THE UNIVERSITY
Frank commented: “I have gained a wealth of experience and insights into the areas of Human Resource Management and organisational behaviour which I will specifically link into BA (Hons) Liberal Arts and BEd degree modules.”

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION
Being linked with the Human Resource Departments in both organisations involved Frank in reading all the documentation, policies and observing the practical efforts made to promote equality of opportunity and a positive and harmonious working environment. Frank commented: “It was particularly interesting to note the efforts that Irwin’s Bakery were making to cater for the different ethnic groups that are increasingly coming to Northern Ireland.”

PERSONAL LEARNING
Frank commented: “I found the experience of matching business theory and practice most stimulating and enjoyable.”
Fr Feidhlimidh Magennis – Principal Lecturer in the Religious Studies Department

HOST ORGANISATIONS: St Agnes’ Choral Society in association with the Grand Opera House, Belfast
www.stagneschoralsociety.co.uk www.goh.co.uk

Placement Contacts: St Agnes’ Choral Society Chairman: Mr Peter Burke and Director (Consultant): Mr John Donnelly
Grand Opera House: Resident Stage Manager: Ms Anne Muldoon

THE PLACEMENT
Each year St Agnes’ Choral Society hires the Grand Opera House in Belfast as the venue for their annual musical production. Fr Feidhlimidh Magennis has, in recent years, stepped back from ‘on-stage’ roles to become more involved in assisting with Stage Management. In 2005, the production of the musical ‘Gigi’, under the professional directorship of Mr John Donnelly, provided the opportunity for Feidhlimidh to act, with full responsibility, as ‘Stage Manager’ at the Grand Opera House, Belfast.

The placement included consideration of policies and statutes relevant to health and safety, disability, copyright of script and music, contractual obligations associated with costume hire and the general terms of the Grand Opera House rental contract regarding the ‘Get-in’ and ‘Get-out’ procedures.

Naturally the demands on team building, supervision and coordination were immense and it was in these areas of expertise that Feidhlimidh acknowledged the most significant gain in personal and professional development. The professional contributors to the production volunteered that the "very restricted working area behind stage at the Opera House added to Feidhlimidh' demands as Stage Manager." Indeed this is proven by the current building programme to improve facilities at the Opera House, including a ‘contemporary style’ extension, improved back stage facilities to accommodate large-scale productions as well as extended accommodation for visiting companies including dressing rooms for up to 100 people and a band room for 60 musicians’ (Irish News, 8 May, 2006).

On Feidhlimidh’s application to become involved in the EU Peace II, Proteus project, ‘Enabling Lecturers to Learn from Business’, he stated: "My specialist area of communication skills will be of particular interest for theatre/drama organisations. Such groups are engaged in promoting artistic and communication abilities, and in harnessing enthusiasm among volunteers. Experiencing such work at a professional level will be of immense use in the development of course modules in Communication Skills."

KEY LEARNING POINTS ON BUSINESS
• Valuable experience in managing the budget and operational tasks associated with operating under the terms of the Grand Opera House contract.
• An enhanced understanding of policies relevant to operating in a professional theatre with particular attention to regulations relevant to health and safety, child protection and disability provision.
• An appreciation of the essential combination of verbal and non-verbal commands required to coordinate ‘behind stage’ activities to a professional standard.

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE BA (Hons) LIBERAL ARTS DEGREE PROGRAMME OF THE UNIVERSITY
A development of useful production skills and insights to the world of theatre should enrich the teaching of Oral Communication Skills within the BA (Hons) Liberal Arts degree programme.

Familiarity with production and management issues associated with back-stage may enable the design of more interactive exercises for students, encouraging them to develop their communication and performance skills.

FUTURE LINKS WITH BUSINESS
To maintain existing and develop new links with professional agents and organisations to support the needs of the St Mary’s Drama Society.
THE PLACEMENT
The West Belfast Economic Forum (WBEF), is a non-party political, non-governmental organisation whose membership is drawn from community activists, academics, lawyers, educators and trainers living and working in West Belfast. The organisation works to evaluate the effectiveness of economic and social policies such as inward investment, training programmes, and economic regeneration initiatives in West Belfast.

Dr Gerard McCann, while on placement with the WBEF, was assigned to a project which was aimed at assessing the impact of European funding on the wards within West and North Belfast. The title of the project is ‘The Effect and Impact of European Funding on Socio-Economic Development in the Wards of West and North Belfast’. The work was in collaboration with postgraduate students from the Queen’s University Belfast and the data collection was undertaken by staff members of the West Belfast Economic Forum.

The actual specification of the project was to draw down data relating to sectoral receipts of funding from the various European Union programmes and locating the investment in the ward structure of the areas concerned. This was then compared to the Noble and other indicators of poverty and social exclusion for the areas. The effects of the investment were then assessed on the basis of visible, statistic and viable sustainable development within the areas. The extent of investment was also explored in comparison with other compatible initiatives that have been ongoing in the areas concerned and a summary was presented on the actual impact of investment on social and economic dysfunction in these areas. The European Union aspect was then highlighted and the conclusions represented a unique map of targeted investment into areas that have suffered disproportionately during the conflict and due to ongoing socio-economic disadvantage.

PEACE AND RECONCILATION
Involvement with the work of the Research Unit at WBEF in its review of the delivery and impact of Peace and Reconciliation funding was a valued experience. Gerard commented: “There was an ongoing connection with community sector interests from across the political divide. The tensions were obvious and the work on the interface is still a great challenge to all concerned. There was also linkage and debate with various sectoral organisations which interact with other organisations directly working with interface organisations. The closer we seemed to get to the frontline groups the more difficult it seemed. It was useful to see the way in which organisations at the coalface have had to alter to adapt to the situation of changing policies and funding.”

PERSONAL LEARNING
Apart from this placement being acknowledged as a useful exercise, Gerard commented: “The organisation was extremely supportive. Even in the height of some very difficult situations there was a consideration for my needs. The members of staff were highly professional throughout and were reflective on the need to develop initiatives such as this for the development of the sector and the interests therein.”

Dr Gerard McCann, Senior Lecturer in European Studies

HOST ORGANISATION: West Belfast Economic Forum, Belfast

www.wbef.org
Contact: Ms Una Gillespie, Director
Dr Angela Vaupel – Senior Lecturer in European Studies

Host Organisation: Riverside Theatre, University of Ulster, Coleraine campus
www.riversidetheater.org

Placement Contact: Ms Andrea Montgomery – Artistic Director

THE PLACEMENT

The Riverside Theatre was founded in 1976 by Royal Charter. It is owned by the University of Ulster, funded and managed through partnership with other bodies – the three major stakeholders are the University of Ulster (UU), the NI Arts Council (ACNI) and Coleraine Borough Council (CBC).

On Dr Angela Vaupel’s application to become involved in the EU Peace II, Proteus project, ‘Enabling Lecturers to Learn from Business’, she stated:

“Apart from a personal interest in the Arts, the opportunity to experience a period of placement will allow me to appreciate how placement learning contributes to the employability of our BA students.”

Angela’s core knowledge of the Riverside Theatre as an organisation was gained by shadowing the work of the Theatre Artistic Director, Ms Andrea Montgomery.

While on placement, Angela was set the task to carry out research to support the need for theatre outreach services. Information gathered would allow Angela to draw up a suitable job description for the role of a theatre Education and Community Outreach Officer.

An ‘Education Forum’ also took place on 8 June 2006 which involved Angela in an extensive range of associated event management tasks. The conference was well attended by representatives from local schools, youth groups, education clients and media and included support from UU provost, Prof Dr Alan Sharp and the regional education Board.

KEY LEARNING POINTS ON BUSINESS

- An understanding of the volatile nature of funded organisations and approaches taken to alter strategy and seek alternative income to survive. This year the Northern Ireland Arts Council announced a cut to the 100% funding for the four regional theatres in Northern Ireland prompting an urgent address to future sources of funding for the Riverside Theatre.

- A working knowledge of the extensive contractual and other legal aspects of theatre lettings, costume hire and front-of-house business.

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE BA (Hons) LIBERAL ARTS DEGREE PROGRAMME OF THE UNIVERSITY

In learning that both the economic and administrative aspects of cultural management are important there is a possibility of creating an additional taught unit on aspects of ‘cultural management’ within the BA modules on European Culture.

FUTURE LINKS WITH BUSINESS

Ms Andrea Montgomery, Artistic Director commented: “The invaluable research report prepared by Angela will serve as a ‘mini-audit’ relevant to strategic planning and the completion of future funding applications.”

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

This placement confirmed the vital role theatre plays in raising awareness of cultural diversity and how it facilitates cross-community activity which serves to promote peace and reconciliation within Northern Ireland and beyond.

PERSONAL LEARNING

Angela stated: “I will keep in touch on various levels: as a loyal customer of the Riverside Theatre, as a newly joined member of the Riverside’s volunteer group and as one of their educational links. The learning is in knowing that an exchange of ‘know how’ allowed me to contribute a research report that will hopefully serve to secure funding for an Education and Outreach Officer.”
RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising from the work of the project it is recommended that St Mary's University College consider the following:

- Investigate the terms of membership of 'Business in the Community', an organisation which subscribes to the peace and reconciliation agenda.
- Explore provision through Queen’s University, Belfast and Ulster University, Coleraine, for funding and resources available to support 'enterprise studies' within the BA (Hons) Liberal Arts degree programme.
- Raise awareness of the various Peace and Reconciliation initiatives undertaken by the participating businesses and organisations through distribution of this report and by making the report available on the college website.
- Facilitate placement lecturers to represent, at college committee level, services or contacts offered by link organisations that might enhance the work or provision of student support services offered by the college.
- Respond to the offer of guest speakers from participating businesses and organisations who wish to contribute to aspects of the BA (Hon) Liberal Arts degree programme.
- Request that the college Staff Development Committee consider funding activities to support lecturers' future links with their placement businesses or organisations assuming anticipated outcomes are relevant to their teaching or serve to promote the employability of our students.
- Lecturer experiences that have inspired proposals for new taught units or course content relevant to employability or enterprise should be considered by the relevant Faculty Course Teams for inclusion in college degree programmes.
- Encourage students to observe 'civic responsibility' and consider a term of placement in an organisation within the social sector of the Northern Ireland economy.

CONCLUSIONS

The following are the main summary points of the project:

- The host businesses and organisations provided an excellent working environment for placement lecturers and were totally supportive of the project objectives.
- St Mary's University College entered into the spirit of the project wholeheartedly and supported it continuously.
- The lecturers who undertook placements reported highly significant learning experiences and some described participating in the project as being motivating and inspirational. Most placement lecturers reported a boost to personal confidence and were surprised that they were able to contribute to their placement business or organisation in such a meaningful way. Employers, in their feedback, confirmed this exchange of 'know how' and valued the change to perspective when approaching a work task involving input from a placement lecturer.
- The project can be sustained through the College Staff Development programme.