

Derby Mini Case Study

The case study looks at the University of Derby's experiences of developing an MSc Professional Engineering.

The project started in Summer 2011 once Derby received funding and support as part of the HESTEM practice transfer partnership active. This support included the appointment of a mentor from a current provider plus access to advice and guidance from the Engineering Council and other providers. By February 2012, the validation documentation had been prepared for a validation event in late March.

The mentor proved very helpful in helping Derby develop the programme and deal with the range of issues. The work based approach to the MSc has provided a number of significant challenges in the development of an academically challenging and demonstrably robust programme for accreditation by Professional Engineering Institutions.

The main challenges faced have been:

- Developing work-based modules that offer sufficient intellectual challenge without significant additional formal learning for advanced technology industries
- Developing work-based modules that fulfil the requirements of UKSPEC
- Gaining understanding and buy-in of prospective students and academic staff

These challenges were addressed using the help, expertise and best practice of the mentor. Solutions have included developing a range of work-based modules which address specific elements of UK-SPEC in order to provide focus.

The practice transfer partnership also helped with employer engagement by providing support for the effective use of this activity. This activity is vital for the success of the MSc as it is work-based and so needs the help and cooperation of employers. Employer engagement also proved useful in the marketing of the MSc. This activity started with the proposed programme being presented to the faculty's Industrial Advisory Board. The board liked the idea and have been very supportive of the concept.

This initial employer engagement led to a number of enquiries from potential students before validation, who have been put in touch with the university by their employers. Enquiries have also come from current part-time undergraduate students and recent graduates. This shows that there is demand for this type of course.

The development of the course to date has been very well supported by the Engineering Council and the practice transfer partnership which has made the development of the course much smoother than normal. This support will also

help with the validation of this programme, as its approach is different from any other MSc currently running at Derby.