



## SLN Newsletter 6

The sixth edition of the Sussex Learning Network's (SLN) regular newsletter focuses on the breadth and wealth of activity that has been undertaken over the last few months.

### Learning opportunities – information, advice and guidance (IAG) service

Learning opportunities is the online resource with all the information learners and advisers need about vocational learning at higher education level in Sussex. Users can ask their own questions, read case studies, access a range of information, search for courses in Sussex and download a personalised action pack. This is complemented by our Learning opportunities leaflets which can be ordered from the SLN free shop.



### **We're out and about in Sussex**

In addition the IAG team is providing face-to-face sessions in schools, colleges and the workplace, including:

- staff development for practitioners – a range of activities, from a 15 minute slot in a meeting with an overview of our resources, to an interactive staff development event
- attending Open Days – talking to learners, parents and practitioners
- running student sessions – interactive activities to raise awareness of vocational learning opportunities in Sussex.



If you'd like us to run an event for you, contact Moira Monk ([M.Monk@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:M.Monk@brighton.ac.uk)).

### **Supporting progression**

To support the Sussex Vocational Progression Accord, we are working on an online tool which will enable users to view all the guaranteed progression routes. They will be able to print out a certificate to show their entitlement to a place or interview.

## Student Network Sussex - **New edition**

The Student Network is a team of nine vocational students from a variety of colleges and universities in the Sussex area, who have come together to create this interactive website for the benefit of other vocational learners. Two new resources have been recently developed:

**Engineering special feature** - view the latest of five brand new engineering student profiles.

**Disability - what support is available?** a new resource developed by the student network team providing information on support options in FE and HE along with useful contacts and sources of further information.



For more information contact Rebecca Duffy ([r.l.duffy@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:r.l.duffy@brighton.ac.uk)).

[www.studentnetworksussex.org.uk](http://www.studentnetworksussex.org.uk)





## [Employer zone](#) - NEW

The SLN have launched their new Employer zone packed with useful information about vocational higher education including:

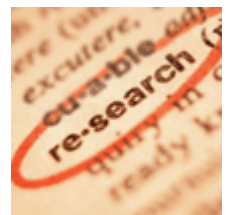
- **Higher education near you** - See how universities and colleges in Sussex can equip students with the enterprise skills you need to grow your business
- **Higher education works** - Sussex stories to inspire you from employers, individuals, colleges and universities working together.
- **Union learning** - Trades unions are meeting the challenge of improving their members' skills through unionlearn.
- **Leaders and managers** - Developing the next generation of business leaders is critical. Learn from others' experiences.
- **Factsheets for employers** - Direct answers about the benefits and costs of higher education to you and your business.
- **Really useful links** - Access the wider network of support offered to businesses across Sussex.



## [Research zone](#) - NEW

The SLN have launched their new Research zone to support and provide information about the broad range of research activity being undertaken by the SLN and its partners. The resource includes:

- **SLN Research Projects** - Details of 21 research projects about vocational learning funded by the SLN
- **Facts, figures & statistics** - Information on local skills and qualifications, the socio-economy and demographics in Sussex
- **Reports and publications** - A repository of completed research reports and publications from the SLN.
- **External resources** - Publications from the wider network



## [FREE Shop](#) - NEW

The SLN online shop has opened for business. Use our online shop to order your free SLN products to support your institution or event. For more information contact Moira Monk (m.monk@brighton.ac.uk)



## [SLN e-Learning Project Update](#)

The SLN e-Learning Project tackled some **troublesome knowledge** in a morning workshop at the InQbate Creativity Zone of the University of Sussex on Tuesday 2nd October.

The SLN e-Learning Project team invited colleagues to begin by considering the idea of 'threshold concepts'. Drawn from the work of Erik Meyer and Ray Land (2006) such 'threshold concepts' represent those essential steps which all learners must make in the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding essential to a particular subject, discipline or set of practices. However, such 'threshold concepts' are not acquired without difficulty. These concepts can unsettle existing knowledge and can challenge taken-for-granted or common-sense knowledge and experience.

For further details about the event please visit the [SLN e-Learning Project wiki](#).



## Second Year Review

The SLN has committed to an annual review of progress against our delivery plan, and the review highlights some of the major achievements and areas of development within the academic year 2006/07. The full report, together with an updated target table, is now available online.

Here are a few highlights of our activities this year:

### Developing the learning network

- 1,000 ASNs allocated across partner institutions
- Website launched including online IAG resources and foundation degree directory
- Strengthening the employer voice on the Board via the membership of Sussex Enterprise and the Sussex Skills for Productivity Alliance
- Liaising with the TUC in the South East, Unionlearn and individual unions
- Student network website developed and team of students engaged to lead project
- Improved links with other LLNs established regionally and nationally

### Supporting vocational learning

- Sussex Vocational Progression Accord established and signed by all partners
- Five individual curriculum based progression agreements in place
- Study commissioned into use of credit in foundation degrees
- Comprehensive staff development programme devised and delivered
- Practitioner network established offering range of online resources
- Series of practitioner led research projects funded
- Cross institutional pan-Sussex marketing campaign run
- Range of IAG leaflets available in print form and online

### Creating opportunities to learn

- Curriculum groups established in 7 areas
- Provision mapped across the curriculum areas
- Additional mapping and progression work in engineering and construction
- Nine new courses developed for entry 2007, with another four on track for 2008
- New flexible modes of delivery developed across the curriculum
- Three action research projects established examining the use of e-learning
- Five progression agreements developed, another four in development
- Series of events delivered for practitioners in specific curriculum areas
- 164 additional student places filled in 2006/07

### Monitoring and evaluation

- Monitoring of progress against targets under way via second year review
- Independent evaluation of SLN under way
- SLN part of national evaluation of LLNs
- Study tracking progress of SLN students planned for autumn 2008
- SLN curriculum team drawing together plans for publications in 2008

### Sustainability and future development

- Sustainability group established
- Study commissioned to examine options for sustainability
- Structures in place to sustain progression



## News in brief

### [Unionlearn launch careers advice line](#)

Free learning and careers advice line launched, in partnership with learndirect, at the TUC Congress in Brighton.

### [Report sheds light on higher level skills needs](#)

A new report by StepAhead Research into employment & skills in the Gatwick Diamond has been launched.

### [Chichester College - 'Principal of the year'](#)

The principal of Chichester College, Dr Richard Parker, has been named 'Principal of the year' in a national awards ceremony.

### [Universities minister calls on universities to offer more part-time degrees](#)

The government has urged universities to increase the number of adult students by offering more evening classes and part-time degrees.

### [Closer ties with the world of work](#)

John Denham, the Minister for Innovation, Universities and Skills, is expected to announce a big expansion of evening classes, weekend courses and part-time degrees for adults in higher education.

### [Report on university 'non-courses' branded academic snobbery](#)

Universities groups criticise report released by the Taxpayers' Alliance which argues that hundreds of university degrees are 'non-courses' and a waste of public money.

### ['Training is key' in choice of graduate employer](#)

Graduates rate training and development more highly than the salary they will be paid, a poll suggests.

### [Embrace Leitch or lose out to FE, sector warned](#)

THES article suggests that 'skills revolution' poses dilemma for universities.

### [Apprenticeship: A key route to skill](#)

"Apprenticeship: A key route to skill", published by the House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs.

### [Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England](#)

"World Class Skills: implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England" is the Government's response to the independent Leitch Review of Skills.

### [A third of prospective students will live at home](#)

Almost a third of young people starting at university this autumn intend to stay in their family home to avoid getting into debt, a survey suggests.

### [First LSC skills campaign newsletter released](#)

The Learning and Skills Council release their first skills campaign newsletter.

### [Graduate jobs rise, but pay is down](#)

The job market for graduates continues to remain buoyant - but research suggests there are signs in some areas that starting salaries are declining.