

The Surrey Award

Background

In February 2009 the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy Group endorsed a proposal by SCEPTRe that the University should actively examine the idea of **an Award that would recognize and value students' learning gained outside the academic curriculum**. SCEPTRe was given the task of coordinating a development and evaluation process. This leaflet sets out some preliminary ideas on the principles that might underlie a Surrey Award and a possible structure within which to develop the operational details of a framework. Its purpose is to help promote conversation about how we can develop such an Award.

Educational vision underlying the Surrey Award

There is no point in developing a University wide Award unless it connects to and supports a university owned vision of our educational mission. The University of Surrey Student Experience Strategy (July 2008) sets out a **vision for a 'complete education'** inspired by the belief that a higher education experience should recognise that students are engaged in learning in all aspects of their lives while they are studying at Surrey. It is this 'whole of life' learning that enables students to develop their unique identity and spirit to be who they want to be and realise their full potential.



'In July 2008 we published our first Student Experience Strategy in which we set out a vision for a *complete education*. We are inspired by a vision of a higher education experience that recognises that students are engaged in learning in all aspects of their lives throughout their time at Surrey. It is this 'whole life' learning that enables students to develop their unique identity, their subject, professional knowledge and skills and the means that will enable them to achieve their full potential and be successful throughout their lives.

Our vision of 'whole life' learning embraces the ideas of 'life-long learning', 'life-wide-learning' and 'personal wellbeing' and encompasses formal and informal learning in the classroom, on work placement, in paid or unpaid work or voluntary service, in extra-curricular settings and other aspects of life. It connects and embeds academic and professional development within the disciplinary curriculum whilst encouraging and enabling students to make use of the wide range of developmental opportunities offered by the university and the wider world. It sees the professional training experience as a key component of learner development and we encourage our undergraduate students to engage in work experiences. Our vision of learning encourages students to actively participate in all the opportunities for learning that life has to offer and seeks to recognize and value learning gained through experience outside the academic curriculum. Our commitment to this vision is manifested in our decision to develop a Surrey Award to enable the University to publicly recognise the learning gained from experiences outside the formal curriculum.'

*Professor Christopher Snowden
Vice-Chancellor, University of Surrey.
Welcome message in Learning to be Professional through a Lifewide Curriculum Conference Programme March 2009*

A students perspective

'To me a more complete education is an education which provides opportunities for students to go beyond academic learning and beyond books to look for something broader and seek opportunities'



...'The benefits [of a Surrey Award] are simply unmeasurable and I would support the scheme'

*Sharon Thangaraj
Undergraduate Winner of the Life Wide Learning Award 2009*

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Conceptualisation

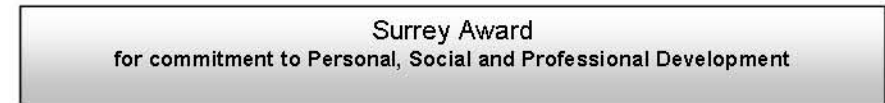
Figure 1 attempts to translate this educational vision into a curriculum framework that can be operationalised. It provides a simple representation of the **sources of experience and learning that might be included in a Surrey Award** focusing in the first instance on the undergraduate level.

There are two possible ways of configuring an Award Framework. Model 1 is a single Award which would contain different pathways to include students who participated in professional training and those that did not. Model 2 has two Awards with different criteria – one focused exclusively on Professional Training the other concerned with experiential learning from wider life experiences.

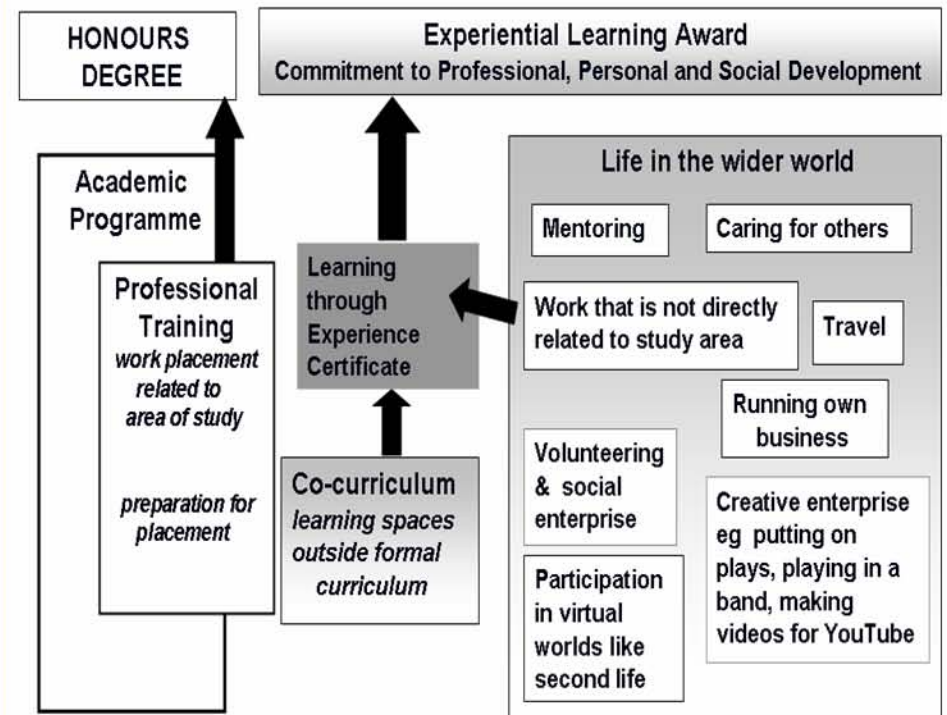


Figure 1 Two ways of configuring an Award Framework to cater for undergraduate students

MODEL 1



MODEL 2



The Surrey Award

PRINCIPLES

Principles on which a Surrey Award could be based *(for discussion and development)*

- Principle 1:** A Surrey Award should **support** and **give meaning** and **substance** to the vision set out in the University's Student Experience Strategy for a more **complete educational experience**.
- Principle 2:** A Surrey Award should **complement and add value** to the Surrey undergraduate model of education that encourages learners to participate in a year-long professional training programme.
- Principle 3:** Participation in a Surrey Award should be **voluntary** and **accessible to all students**.
- Principle 4:** The purpose of the Surrey Award is to **encourage all** of our students (undergraduate and postgraduate) to **value the experiences they have for learning in all aspects of their life** whilst studying at Surrey and enable the University to **publicly recognize** these forms of learning and personal, social and professional development.



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Principle 5: The Surrey Award promotes a number of pedagogic purposes

- To encourage and help learners to recognize and **value their own experiential learning and value themselves as unique individuals**
- To encourage learners to be **proactive in seeking or creating experiences** from which they can gain valuable learning and personal development
- To encourage and support development of learners' **self-awareness** and **self-reflection** and give more meaning and substance to the process of personal and professional development planning
- To encourage the development of **skills, attitudes and personal agency** that will help students **gain employment or be self employed** and help them make good decisions about their **career choices**.
- To **nurture the spirit** that enables people to become who they want to be.

Principle 6: A Surrey Award should enhance our sense of a **learning community** by **connecting** in a coherent learning enterprise all the people and organizations that contribute to our students **personal, social, cultural and professional development and wellbeing outside the formal curriculum**.

Principle 7: The methods employed to support learning and manage the Award should be **cost effective** with the **minimum of bureaucracy**.



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REQUIREMENTS FOR
The
Surrey Award

Reflective Account

of no more than 2000 words that demonstrates learning gained throughout the award

At least 100 hours
**paid/unpaid work
experience**
(that is not part of professional training)
and completion
of a
**Learning through
Part-Time Work
Certificate**

At least 25 hours
Voluntary Service
and completion
of a
**Learning through
Voluntary Service
Certificate**

Opportunities for
Career, Employability & Life Skills Development
provided by
Careers Service, SPLASH, USSU, Wellbeing Centre & Others

At least one other
**Learning through
Experience
Certificate**
engagement in creative/cultural activity
being enterprising and/or personal wellbeing

Personal & Professional Development E-portfolio

containing evidence for each of the 4 compulsory elements above

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Initial ideas for an operational framework

The operational framework needs to be sustainable and to be aligned to the educational vision and principles. The suggestions made in this leaflet are intended to be illustrative to encourage thinking and the evaluation of ideas.

Who can participate in the Award?

The intention is to develop the scheme so that any undergraduate or post-graduate student can participate in the scheme subject to being able to meet specified minimum requirements. But while the scheme is being established the scheme will be limited to undergraduate students.

What would the Award comprise?

A **certificate** acknowledging that a learner had demonstrated sustained commitment to their own personal and professional development during their period of study at the University of Surrey

A **transcript** detailing the experiences and types of learning recognized in the Award.

Who would make the Award?

The Award would be a University of Surrey Award – individual awards would be approved by a panel whose membership is drawn from the partners in the enterprise.



When would the Award be made?

Students who met the requirements for the award would submit a portfolio of evidence and a personal account of how they had satisfied the requirements in the January of their final year. The evidence would be reviewed and students would be interviewed by the March of their final year. Awards would be made after Easter allowing for students to be presented with their Awards at the USSU Award presentation ceremony.

What forms of learning can be included in the Award?

In order to gain the Award students will need to engage with and demonstrate that they have learnt from experiences in the three elements of the framework, namely – the personal, social and professional dimensions of learning. These dimensions of learning and development lie at the heart of the USSU DAVE scheme which provides a substantial framework of opportunities within the Award Scheme.

What might a Surrey Award involve?

A framework for the Award will be developed through a consultative process during the next few months. The ideas outlined below are based on a similar award in another university. They are intended to illustrate what an award structure might look like. To achieve the Surrey Award students could be required to complete three compulsory and two other elements chosen from a wide variety of experiences Figure 2.



The Surrey Award

compulsory elements

- Involvement in at **least 100 hours of work experience** or **volunteering** - paid or unpaid through which participants gain the Learning through Part-Time Work Certificate
- Participation in **career development, skills and training sessions or workshops** offered by USSU DAVE or the Careers Service (at least one of the Dave modules)
- Involvement in at least **25 hours voluntary service**—through which a Learning through Experience Certificate is gained
- **One other Learning through experience Certificate** which could incorporate a wealth of potential experiences
- Maintenance of a **personal development portfolio** (the same one as students are expected to maintain in their academic programme)
- A synthesis **reflective account** of no more than 2000 words that connects and integrates students' life-wide learning experiences while they have been at University and explains how the student has developed and made their own educational experience more complete

Examples of **other experience-based activities** through which the Learning through Experience Certificate can be gained.

On campus

- Getting involved in **Student Union** activities / joining /running a society
- Being a **student representative** or **mentor**
- Contributing to **STAG Newspaper**
- Taking part in **GU2 Radio**
- Joining SCEPTRe's **Cultural Academy** or **Enterprise Academy**
- Creating and running an **enterprise**
- Participation in Surrey's **Second Life Island**



For examples of students' life-wide learning please visit <http://lifewidelearning.pbworks.com/Surrey-Award>

- **Organising** shows, gigs & performances
- Making a **film**
- Helping to support other students through being a **mentor** or **Fresher's Angel**
- Joining the **Student Ambassador scheme**
- Getting active in the **Sports Centre** and its teams and clubs
- Learning another **language**

Off campus

- Being a member of a **drama group or other association**
- **Volunteering** for a community organization or charity
- **Travel** and exposure to other cultures

Learning from life

We recognise that life is also full of other things, some of which we chose to do, others are foisted on us and we have to deal with them as best we can. The Learning through Experience Certificate can also be used to provide evidence of learning and personal development through these sorts of experiences. For example:

- Being a **parent** or **carer**
- **Overcoming** illness, injury or bereavement
- **Overcoming** financial or accommodation difficulties
- **Dealing with** difficult personal relationships.



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Completing the Award

The requirements for the Award could be completed at any stage in a student's programme but the full benefits will be derived from sustained involvement in the scheme throughout their time at University.

Those who meet the requirements might be expected to

- Submit a **personal account** and **record of the life-wide learning experiences** they have had while they have been at university (this could be in the form of a digital story)
- Complete an **interview** with a Life-wide Learning Coach

On successful completion a **certificate** would be awarded in recognition of the student's commitment to their own development.



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8 Approval Panel decision

7 Recommendations of the reviewer to **Approval Panel**

6 **Review of evidence** and interview with a member of the Review Panel



5 **Completion of requirements** and **submission of evidence** and a personal account and/or digital story to Scheme Director Administrator



4 **Engagement with experiences and construction of personal/professional portfolio** – achievement of Learning through Experience Certificates

3 **Assignment of mentor** / could be personal tutor or someone else

2 **Registration** – mainly early level 1 but a continuous process



1 **Finding out** – Student accesses information explaining what the Surrey Award is all about.



The Surrey Award

academic curriculum



practice curriculum



Recognising & valuing a more complete education

other parts of life



For more information on the Surrey Award
please contact Charlie Rickett
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