



## Change Academy Case Study

Loughborough University  
New Ways of Working with Change

### **WHY CHANGE ACADEMY AT LOUGHBOROUGH?**

In 2013, the University was about to introduce a new university-wide strategy alongside a new financial strategy, and the recently-appointed chief operating officer was keen to engender a service management approach across the professional services. A significant investment in building capacity for change was being made with the creation of a new 'change team' of secondees from across the University and the Change Academy process was intended to support: greater involvement in change projects across the academic and professional staff groups and students; development of business or action plans for resource investment, prioritisation and project delivery; professional development for participants, including the change team.

### **WHO CHAMPIONED CHANGE ACADEMY AT LOUGHBOROUGH?**

The initiative was led by Dr Anne Mumford, director of Change Projects at the University with the support of the senior team. Anne had previously been team leader for a Loughborough Change Academy team as part of the national Change Academy in 2010 and believed that an in-house process could help support the major change initiatives being embraced by the University.

### **WHAT DID CHANGE ACADEMY AT LOUGHBOROUGH LOOK LIKE?**

The Leadership Foundation's Director of Networks and OD, Dr Lesly Huxley, co-designed the Loughborough Change Academy process with Anne Mumford. A second facilitator, Stuart Hunt - a Leadership Foundation Associate, worked with Lesly and Anne. The change team secondees acted as team leaders/facilitators for the seven change academy teams whose projects were selected from a wide range of change initiatives which had already been identified. A development day was organised for the change team through Loughborough's staff development department prior to the three-day residential retreat, and each team was expected to meet at least once before the residential (held over three days in January 2014 on Loughborough's main campus at Burleigh Court) and to undertake some prior scoping work and information-gathering around their projects. The University undertook all administrative arrangements for accommodation, catering and communications and invitations to internal speakers.

The aims, expected route for project outputs and recommendations, and a sponsor from amongst the University's senior management, were clearly identified at the beginning of the process for each project. Senior team members contributed context-setting presentations at the beginning of the residential and heard feedback from teams at other points in the process. Professor Zoe Radnor from the University's Business School presented on her research on Lean systems. Student participation in teams was strongly encouraged and several teams included students.

Some projects were more exploratory than others, and the up-front formal requirement for presentation to a project board, with sponsor support, was premature for some initiatives. For others, however, it was an appropriate route with relatively pre-set timescales.

### **WHAT DID PARTICIPANTS SAY ABOUT CHANGE ACADEMY AT LOUGHBOROUGH?**

A light-touch evaluation was undertaken by the two Leadership Foundation facilitators during the residential, talking to staff and student participants and the change team supporting the process. Team



## Change Academy Case Study

Loughborough University  
New Ways of Working with Change

leaders (change team facilitators) reported high levels of commitment and interest amongst team members both in concluding activity at the residential and continuing to be involved in projects through to successful completion over the coming weeks and months:

<p>"The group is really committed to being involved in progressing the project further"</p>	<p>"There is a huge vested interest in achieving successful outcomes"</p>	<p>"We're really keen to ensure that the change project gets off the ground"</p>
---	---	--

Student team members reflected this; it was clear that they wanted to carry on working with the group and help develop their theme. One remarked "is this it, or can we take this further?" They felt they had plenty of opportunities to speak, but that teams overall would have benefitted from having a wider range of student participants (full- and part-time, undergraduate and postgraduate).

Both staff and student participants valued input from senior managers at the start of the residential and also rated Zoe Radnor's Lean session highly. Other comments on the various plenary sessions included:

<p>"After we got stuck into it, it was really helpful".</p>	<p>"It was really useful, energising and very helpful in moving the project forward"</p>	<p>"People were itching to get back to the team room to move things forward"</p>
<p>"Some people have questioned the underlying decision on undertaking the project; that's a bit disconcerting, but means we need to focus much more on communications and engagement"</p>	<p>"The comments and suggestions have been really positive and constructive, it's been very motivating for the team and given us ideas to take forward for the next stage"</p>	<p>"We generated a million ideas and made progress"</p>

### WHAT VALUE HAS CHANGE ACADEMY AT LOUGHBOROUGH DELIVERED?

Dr Anne Mumford said "A year on it is interesting to reflect on what we have achieved from the projects which came through our Change Academy. The projects themselves have made an impact – of course some more quickly than others – and, together with the visibility for the change agenda, we are clear that the investment in time and money has been worthwhile. The opportunity afforded by Change Academy to have some of the difficult conversations in a place that was 'safe' and with the time to do so and to get outside our normal environments and think more creatively was significant and embraced by participants."

"The first Change Academy was so successful that a second Change Academy was held 12 months on in January 2015. This time the format was two full days but again on a residential basis. The Head of Staff Development and two colleagues facilitated the event and Richard Taylor, Chief Operating Officer, Professor Zoe Radnor from the Business School and John Steele the new Executive Director of Sport provided keynote presentations on process review and on managing change. Approximately 70 people



## Change Academy Case Study

Loughborough University  
New Ways of Working with Change

attended, again split across professional services and academic schools. Some key colleagues were encouraged to attend and others put their names forward or were nominated, many seeing this as a professional development experience. Six projects were considered during Change Academy with colleagues getting a better understanding of change while working on projects. Again a series of plenary sessions enabled cross-fertilisation across projects and input from a wider set of colleagues than those involved in the team. The outcomes and recommendations are now being taken forward and since last year the University has a better governance process for change projects which has enabled the University to identify priority areas for going into Change Academy and resourcing for recommendations for outcomes. Again the change agenda has gained a greater profile through Change Academy."

### **LESSONS LEARNED FOR CHANGE ACADEMY PROCESS DESIGN**

There is a clear distinction between projects which can be managed using traditional techniques, with identified reporting lines and timescales, and the kind of change that the Change Academy process lends itself to best: emergent, complex, synergistic.

The Change Academy process can be helpful in exploring options and ideas as part of the early stages of project scoping or development of options analyses for business cases to initiate projects. Some of the teams at the Loughborough Change Academy were at this stage but others were working with more focused concepts that were already some way down the planning pathway and needed earlier defined outcomes.

The relationship with project boards or committees, while important for securing senior 'buy-in', could be an outcome of the Change Academy process rather than being pre-determined. In short, one size doesn't fit all and Change Academy's main value is in bringing people who don't normally work together to bring different perspectives to bear on change initiatives, rather than the delivery of pre-specified projects which do not have much scope for adaptation through the process. The involvement of senior leaders shows commitment and provides opportunities that might not otherwise be made for engagement in a different kind of setting to the usual committee structures.

Developing an in-house change team to support the process – and wider institutional change – requires investment of time and money, but can be very worthwhile both for the institution and individuals' development.