

UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD

Our thanks to Donna Berwick, the Skills and Recognition Manager with the University of Salford Careers and Employability for explaining their matrix Standard journey.

Donna's comments relating to the effective use of the self assessment tool and the importance of the three year accreditation review cycle will be particularly interesting for those just beginning/ embarking upon their **matrix** journey.

The University of Salford Careers and Employability is part of the wider Student Life Directorate. The service met the matrix Standard in March 2012. The service works closely with the academic establishment to fully embed careers and employability within the curriculum of the 3 colleges and 10 schools across the University.

Information advice and guidance services are delivered by 30 staff and the service is ideally situated in the same building with the student union and other student support services.

Salford's matrix Standard story offers some helpful hints for other Higher Education Institutions planning an Initial Assessment or Accreditation Review....

"The starting point for our matrix Standard activity was to use the self assessment toolkit on the matrix Standard website. This tool was really useful as a gap analysis activity. With the support of a Registered matrix Advisor we were able to see what improvements we wanted to make and explore how best to achieve our intended results within a defined timeframe. Perhaps not surprisingly the development areas were related to evaluation and in particular outcome based evaluation practices."

*"As a service we embraced the **matrix** Standard as a business improvement tool and the delivery staff really liked the simple but effective 'plan, do review' cycle. For us this approach provided a clear and effective way of shaping our annual service wide activities into effective business planning, service delivery and then review, and evaluative practices shaping future planning"*

When considering the impact of the **matrix** Standard assessment Donna highlighted the following key benefits:

*"The **matrix** Standard helped us to consolidate quality assurance processes and identify quality improvements."*

*"The **matrix** Standard encouraged us to review and reflect upon our provision especially in regard to how we communicate and deliver services to our students, partners and stakeholders. This in turn helped us to develop ways of articulating our offer more clearly."*

*"The **matrix** Standard provided us with the opportunity to identify our individual inputs into the service and created a sense of ownership and job satisfaction."*

"And finally it motivated all teams to continue to embrace improvement areas and celebrate the endorsement of the good recognised in the assessor's report."

On site assessment against the matrix Standard are designed to be supportive and developmental, and Donna also talked about how this was reflected in Salford's three day long assessment.

Donna continued:

"The assessor was able to drill down and capture evidence in a motivational manner. The main message to stress to my colleagues across the HE sector is the approach taken by our Service. We saw the assessment as an opportunity for us to promote and celebrate our practices as well as reflect upon our strengths and ways of striving for excellence".

Reflecting upon the matrix accreditation review cycle Donna wished to highlight the business benefits of maintaining accreditation every three years.

"For the University of Salford, good practice would now be to have our Careers and Employability service reviewed every three years as this ensures the service evolves and develops in line with the natural life span of the accreditation. We have now achieved the national quality standard for our service and are focused upon continuing to ensure we meet the benchmark".