

£200,000 granted for study to tackle student numeracy issues

In the wake of universities' and employers' mounting concerns about student numeracy and literacy, The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) has been awarded £200,000 by the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTF) to undertake a major three-year project addressing undergraduates' numerical skills.

Titled 'Every Student Counts: Promoting Numeracy and Enhancing Employability, the study will identify the numerical knowledge and skills required within the disciplines of history, bioscience (including nursing) and business studies and how they might be better developed within curricula. In addition, the project will seek to devise support strategies to help students develop their generic numerical skills required by graduate employers.

The project is led by Vicki Tariq at UCLan's Learning and Development Unit, in collaboration with Manchester Metropolitan University and Sheffield Hallam University. It is one out of only nine projects that has been supported in a nationwide competition under new funding arrangements for the NTF.

Vicki Tariq said: "Our contacts in business and industry increasingly stress that graduate recruits must have an all-round skillset, within which numeracy is vital. This project will help students develop and practise the numerical skills required by employers.

UCLan is committed to maximising students' employability, and it has made this an essential part of its mission, so we're delighted that with the funding we can lead the way in improving this core competency amongst students."

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Patrick McGhee said: "This is an important achievement for the University as it builds on our strengths in employability and numeracy and on colleagues' successes in the NTFS. To be one of nine winning bids from an initial 82 submissions is particularly impressive and reflects the hard work of the project team and the high quality of the submission itself."

Professor Paul Ramsden, Chief Executive of the Higher Education Academy said: "We are pleased to be able to support major sector-wide projects that bring together expertise to enhance the student experience."

The key objectives of the research are to assemble empirical data on the nature and level of numerical knowledge and skills required of undergraduates and to identify and evaluate current practices in teaching, learning and assessment for enhancing numeracy in relation to subject benchmarks.

The project, due to start in September 2007, will involve bioscience, business studies and history, the three subject areas in which UCLan has National Teaching Fellows. Research into the bioscience and the business studies areas will focus on in-depth analysis within UCLan, whilst the history research will take place as a joint project between UCLan, Manchester Metropolitan University and Sheffield Hallam University in collaboration with other institutions in Britain and abroad.