

Report from the International Panel

Preliminary meeting on the Evaluation of CrED, 9-11 November, 2011

The role of the Panel

During 2010-2012, Uppsala University (UU) has implemented a university-wide project, Creative Development of University Education (KrUUt / CrED). The focus of the project is to enhance the quality in education within disciplines as well as encouraging the exchange of ideas and experiences across disciplines. It is also intended that the project will provide further evidence that Uppsala is committed to providing a high quality educational experience for its students. The initiative is intended to support the University's Teaching and Learning Guidelines for Educational Activity and Development (2008)

At the University, a number of enhancement themes have been identified.

University wide priorities are:

- Cross-disciplinary education
- Research-teaching linkages

Some themes have also been generated bottom-up:

- Constructive alignment of learning outcomes to assessment methods
- Generic skills and employability
- Degree projects
- Student services and support
- Teaching qualifications and recognition
- Educational assessments

The Panel's role has been identified as providing support and encouragement to the CrED project and to support the University as it extends the project into its next phase. The Panel's role is primarily to act as "a critical friend" to the University through recognising good practice and, based on the experiences and expertise of the Panel members, recommend future enhancement actions.

The focus of the preliminary meeting of the review Panel was to identify:

- Ways to approach the prioritised enhancement themes
- Strategies in stimulating educational development, especially cross-disciplinary initiatives
- Ways in which to carry out the evaluation of the project in 2012

The observations made at the visit in Uppsala 10-11 November 2011, the discussions with the leaders of the CrEd initiative and the documents sent to the Panel beforehand, form the empirical basis of the report.

While appreciating that this was intended to be a preliminary meeting to support the University in developing the initiative and in preparation of the review in 2012, the Panel found it challenging to identify the scope of the CrED project and how it related to the Teaching & Learning Plan (2008). A

diagram or summary of the initiatives may help clarify this for the panel and the wider UU community. One observation was that the Panel found it difficult to get a sense of the full CrED initiative in order to understand how it might contribute and add value to the initiatives and the overall project. Hence, some of the comments below may relate to general Teaching and Learning policies and practices more broadly, rather than the CrED project specifically.

The University is to be commended for its proactive approach to enhancing the CrED project as part of its teaching and learning initiatives, as well as preparing for the evaluation of the project in 2012. The members of the Panel were particularly appreciative of the collegiality and hospitality extended to it by the University, and the openness with which the meeting was carried out. Without exception, the Panel met with highly motivated staff and students who were committed to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in their discipline and across the university.

A formative assessment of CrED

During the Panel's visit at the University of Uppsala, presentations were given from UU staff and students. Our impressions of the initiatives, related to different organisational levels and participants are discussed below.

First, we compliment the University's senior management for its commitment to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)'s initiative in establishing and supporting CrED, establishing a committed management team and bringing the Panel together to review the CrED project is indicative of this commitment. The Panel appreciates the efforts and initiatives undertaken to date within the project, and not least, the high level of commitment at the central level of the University sends important messages across the institution. The Teaching and Learning Plan is commendable; not only in its final version, but also in the way it has been developed and anchored within the institution. Importantly, the Plan's strategies have been supported by funding, including the CrED project.

In order to maintain and build momentum for the initiatives that have already taken place to date, the Panel suggests that there are opportunities that can be taken in 2012 to further enhance and embed the CrED initiatives and so we urge the University to take an even more proactive role to teaching and learning development. For example, two of the University's prioritised themes that have not attracted initiatives from the current CrED projects are cross disciplinary education and research-teaching linkages. If the University wishes to pursue these themes, then a way forward might be for the CrED management team to support and nurture a dialogue through workshops and discussion forums to interrogate the themes and consider a range of strategies that might promote initiatives in these areas – including commissioning projects that utilise the suggested strategies. Alternatively, the university might consider reducing the number of themes and invite and/or commission projects on those.

The panel noted that Strategy 4.3 Teaching Career Ladder in the Teaching and Learning Plan (2008) called for teaching and learning contributions to be appropriately recognised and that there was a faculty-initiated proposal on this that had been brought to the senior management as a way to action this strategy. The Panel encourages the senior management to consider the proposal and to identify strategies and initiatives such as these for adoption at the University level that will result in the establishment of suitable recognition and reward mechanisms, beyond teaching awards, of those engaged in high quality teaching and support of student learning. These are a critical component to

implement if the University wishes to give substance to claims of valuing and rewarding quality teaching.

The senior management is well supported in its teaching and learning ambitions by the Central Units, in particular, the Quality Assurance unit, Uppsala Learning Lab and the Office for Development of Teaching and Learning. These units understand and carry out their remit well as they work across the university, link into faculty initiatives and work with leaders and committed individuals. They are also closely linked to both policy and practice. The QA unit has a strong enhancement focus and facilitates and engages at multiple levels. The Office for Development of Teaching & Learning offers extensive programmes and wide support. Its teaching programmes and leadership programmes are well attended and involve a large number of the relevant members of the University staff. It has good connections into the faculties through the faculty liaison role and is working proactively to develop further connections through supporting individuals, projects and the leadership development initiatives. The programmes on pedagogic leadership and teaching are extensive and laudable.

Uppsala Learning Lab demonstrated advanced technology and great enthusiasm by those who are involved in the initiative. All three central units are involved in T & L enhancement. Our initial impression is that the three units do not have unnecessary overlaps and that there is a fruitful collaboration. However, as there is the potential for some overlap in roles and mission we recommend that the internal relationships are closely monitored to ensure that the units continue to work collaboratively towards implementing the Teaching and Learning Plan.

The Panel reflected on their own organisational structures for supporting teaching and learning and those of other institutions with which they were familiar and noted that separate units are often established to carry out a university initiative, but over time, these were amalgamated into a single organisational unit to avoid overlap and to ensure they maintained a strategic focus. The Panel also reflected on the tendency for central units to attract and work with a limited number of committed academics and staff. The challenge remains for all of us who work in teaching and learning units to identify ways in which more staff are encouraged to focus on their teaching and undertake development and initiatives, as well as to consolidate the excellent work of these committed teachers and to build and support a critical mass into the long term so that initiatives and cultures that promote excellent teaching are sustained. A number of comments and suggested responses to these challenges are included in the concluding recommendations under 'Grow Partnerships'.

It became very clear through the visit that participation and commitment to teaching and learning varies markedly across the different disciplines and Domains. We have understood that there may be resistance from some disciplines and parts of the University to undertaking initiatives to address teaching and learning quality, despite the flexibility of CrED which encourages bottom-up initiatives. This variable commitment is also a concern when university wide-initiatives are planned for implementation. Tackling such resistance is a challenge for the CrED team and for the institutional management. Our impression is that CrED management has adopted a very sensitive approach towards this, but our concern is that if the areas of resistance are not involved in initiatives such as CrED to develop the quality of the teaching and learning in their disciplines, it poses a risk for the University's reputation. One suggestion from the Panel would be to encourage Domains to consider launching an initiative like TUR, which meets their respective disciplinary needs and cultures. Another suggestion is that each Domain identify and support a significant teaching and learning

initiative that they commit to undertake over an extended period, for example three years. An initiative does not need to be a new undertaking; it might involve embedding or expanding an existing initiative that has been successfully implemented in their own Domain, or adapted from another Domain or university.

Whatever strategies and initiatives are adopted, because UU is a big university, there is a risk that the activities and initiatives in the Domains may become removed from the central units and central initiatives and that there is the potential for unnecessary duplication. Good communication and dissemination practices from the central units to Domains and disciplinary units, and Domains to the centre are crucial.

We commend the University's obvious commitment to professional development through the teaching and leadership programs and believe that it is complementary to the CrED initiatives. The number of teachers attending courses is high and for this the university and its management team is commended. There is also opportunity provided for people who want to introduce initiatives (grants, conferences, etc.). However, the Panel found it difficult to gauge the extent to which the uptake is adopted across the institution and in the different Domains, or what systems are in place to encourage and monitor participation. If such a system is not in place now, we would encourage central coordination of gathering the information on teaching and learning initiatives, including publications and participation in pedagogical research and professional development.

At the individual teacher's level, our assessment relies heavily on the presentations we were given in Uppsala. Those presentations showed that there are individuals who have undertaken CrED activities and have shown a willingness to come up with new ideas. These individuals need to be able to draw on the central units and avoid working in isolation. This support is readily available but not all individuals may be aware of this, or avail themselves of it. They are more likely to be successful if encouraged to work closely with the faculty liaison person and staff in central units, and have received the support of their Head of School and Dean.

The student body was represented by a number of students in official roles, as well as individuals committed to the quality of education of their fellow students. The Panel appreciated the opportunity to engage with the student formally in the presentations and informally over meals. The Uppsala students we met were impressively articulate and confident in their role of promoting the University and engaging with the UU staff to enhance the quality of their education. The student mentoring initiative was innovative in the conceptualisation of the scope of the project, with the role of the mentors, distinct from teachers and tutors, particularly well conceptualised. Our assessment is that as this is predominately a student initiative, there may be problems for its ongoing sustainability. We would encourage an evaluation of its effectiveness in achieving its goals, and if positive, would encourage the university to give consideration to providing administrative support at the faculty or university level, in order to secure the project's longer-term continuity. The Panel also encourages consideration be given to the recognition of the work of the student mentors, set in the policy framework, e.g. as credits or salary.

The student representatives had consulted widely and involved students from all Domains. They were quite clear about their priorities, in particular, more contact hours with teachers, especially active researchers, and the quality of the undergraduate student educational experience. The contact hours set for formal teaching appeared to vary quite considerably in different programmes of

study and Domains. This was a major point of concern raised by the students and prompted a great deal of discussion. Following up on this discussion, it appeared that different funding allocations for teaching by the Domains, and by extrapolation – the value placed on the activity of teaching, may contribute in part for this variation. As this is likely to remain an issue for students, the Panel encourages the University to consider this variation. A way forward may be to lead a discussion on what should be essential qualities of the undergraduate student experience at UU (including the contribution of contact hours and the quality of the contact hours). Such a discussion should include staff and students at all levels, but particularly involve senior university leaders who are responsible for budgeting and resource allocation so that any decisions and conclusions reached can begin to be addressed in both resources and cultural terms.

The way forward – comments and recommendations from the Panel

Foster a dialogue on the quality in teaching and learning at Uppsala University

One conclusion drawn is that it is crucial that there are clear and systematic linkages across the institution, extending on the obvious good work that has taken place to date. As flagged earlier, this may start with a university wide dialogue on “what constitutes quality in teaching and learning at the University of Uppsala” or “what should be essential qualities of the undergraduate student experience at UU”. Obviously, while there will be different opinions and disciplinary variation across the institution, such a dialogue may assist in shaping a shared culture of teaching and learning at Uppsala, and assist in refining a prioritised list of enhancement themes. Currently, a number of enhancement themes have been developed, both centrally and in the disciplines. The Panel questions if a focus on a narrow set of themes, or an overarching theme would be more effective in achieving successful and sustained outcomes. For instance, we saw no examples of cross-disciplinary project initiatives in the CrED presentations, which is one of the University enhancement themes. Encouraging bottom up and sponsoring top down initiatives on identified priorities may be more effective in achieving enhancement in practice.

Reward and recognise excellence and contributions to enhanced practice

We commend the current strategies that encourage both organic growth and strategic support for projects already in place, i.e. initiating new ideas and recognising existing excellence. There are clearly islands of excellent initiatives at UU. There is a need to map all of these islands and initiatives across the institution, with successful initiatives fostered and supported to grow the initiative wider and to help build it into a sustainable initiative through a change in culture. One possible non-intrusive approach could be: “Show us what you are doing in your Domain”. Support and recognition of excellent teaching and practices are needed at all levels and dissemination must be supported if a culture of teaching excellence is to be extended beyond the current islands. Support for individuals, teams and Domains to enable them to test out and embed initiatives (where it supports the institutional mission and priorities), is one way that has been implemented through the mechanism of the CrEd initiative in supporting the implementation of the Teaching and Learning Plan.

To capitalise on the work carried out to date, CrED projects should report back what they have done within their own Domain as well as to the wider university community. Our impression is that CrED seems to have been implemented at the individual and department level rather than the faculty level. Capturing the achievements of the CrED and other teaching and learning initiatives and

documenting the extent of the pedagogical practices and research is a challenge for the central units to accomplish without unnecessarily increasing workloads or bureaucracy for those involved.

Uppsala University should be prepared to reward and recognise excellence in teaching and learning, not only by awards and prizes but also by promotion and career progression. We have noted that a new career structure has been launched at UU and commend the university for this. There is room both to celebrate and frame the successful projects and to seed new strategic initiatives, accepting that some will necessarily be of higher risk and therefore not all outcomes will be successful. To encourage participation in more risky or complex initiatives staff should be supported in their endeavours and not be penalised for unsuccessful outcomes, but recognised for their innovation and strategic risk-taking.

Grow partnerships

A key issue is how to involve university leaders and managers in T&L development. UU needs to involve people at the department level and students in the process. In particular, the role of Department Heads and Deans need to be highlighted, using data where available, so that questions can be asked: "This is what the current situation is in your discipline/school – what are you going to do about it?" Making these examples available via a website might be a useful way to promote the initiatives more widely. Directors of Studies also have a crucial role and need to be involved as well. It is important to identify ways in which other organisational units such as student services, libraries and museum partners can be more involved in the process of supporting and enhancing teaching and learning, especially for SSH. The role of the QA unit and Teaching and Learning Centre is critical in supporting leaders by providing evaluation data and assisting in focusing on strategies to address any aspects that could or should be enhanced.

The following specific comments on CrED initiatives the Panel observed could be taken into consideration for implementation during 2012 as ways in which partnerships could be further developed.

- The QA unit consider developing a plan for the evaluation of CrED projects. They are also encouraged to work with the faculties to devise a systematic and statistically robust gathering of evaluation data of their CrED projects and teaching and learning initiatives and activities more broadly.
- The Office for T & L is encouraged to continue their successful work and, where possible, identify ways to sustain and translate principles of the programme into different disciplinary cultures. Their staff are encouraged to promote pedagogical leadership continuously and to work proactively with various levels and various units across the university.
- The ULL has the potential to work more systematically and more pervasively beyond their current group of colleagues and early enthusiasts, working more systematically with faculties and whole programs of study to support systemic change in practice. There is also a potential to be more involved in contributing to University policy and direction.
- At the Domain level, the Panel observed significant differences in the way the different domains approached teaching and learning initiatives. The project TUR at the Science and Technology Domain was very impressive, working as a link between the central units and the departments. It was considered an exemplary example of an initiative at the Domain level that has been highlighted by the CrED-project. TUR activities complemented the work being

undertaken at the central level and built on this at the disciplinary level. We especially appreciated the proactive activities and their commitment to promoting the reward and recognition of excellence in teaching and learning at the faculty level and their proposal to expand this into wider University practice.

- The MedfarmDoIT project seems very interesting and useful, particularly in the disciplinary context. They have developed a tool to assist in the preparation of teaching portfolios as a university wide project, and they have produced examples on the use of video as a learning tool. They have developed a number of re-usable teaching and learning experiences for their students. There are potential synergies between the work of this unit and the ULL as the use of technology in teaching and learning expands. This unit is attracting a group of committed teachers who are exploring ways to use the technology in their teaching. The challenge is to extend the work of this unit beyond the current enthusiasts and to work more strategically to support systemic change in the disciplines.

Consider variations in intra-university practices

There appears to be a great deal of variation in teaching and learning practices across the different faculties. Many of these variations are in response to disciplinary and professional needs, but some appear to be less obvious. For example, there appears to be great variation in the teaching contact hours in some disciplines, with few contact hours in some areas and others with significantly more teaching contact hours. Another example is that students told us they want more time with academic staff, and in particular senior academic staff rather than the majority of their teaching carried out by teaching assistants or tutors. It is unclear the extent that senior academics are involved in fostering and supporting students and teaching but this too appears to vary across the university. A university discussion as proposed earlier may assist in bringing these variations to light and establishing where they are critical for student learning or reflect historic or administrative convenience. The key questions to drive the discussions are “What can be said about the quality of the contact and the engagement of students in their learning?” “What are the faculties doing to support their teachers and their programs of study to achieve this?”

To summarise, the Panel has suggested a number of strategies and recommendations to the CrED leadership team in response to the presentations and discussions that took place during the three days of the preliminary review. They are offered with the intention of contributing insights and observations that might assist the CrEd leaders as they implement and extend the CrEd project into 2012. The Panel members have indicated their willingness to continue their initial conversations with their Uppsala colleagues over the course of the year and look forward to their return visit in September, 2012.

International and National Panel Members

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Prof Brenda Ravenscroft, Associate Dean of Studies, Arts & Science, Queens University, Canada	Prof Stefan Lindgren, Project leaders of EQ11, Lund University, Sweden
Prof Vernon Squire, DVC(A & I) Otago University, NZ	Prof Lee Harvey, Consultant, UK, External Expert
Prof Stefanie Gropper, Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Tubingen University, Germany	Dr Victoria Gunn, Acting Head, Academic Development Unit, Glasgow University, UK External Expert
Prof Thomas Luxon, Director, Centre for the Advancement of Learning, Dartmouth University	Dr Claire Carney, Head of Quality Enhancement, QAA Scotland. External Expert

Appendix 1

Notes taken during the concluding discussion with the CrED leadership team and Panel on the design of the follow-up meeting in 2012

Suggested Meeting dates

Week 39, September 26-28, 2012

Principles/framework

- As non-bureaucratic as possible
- As useful as possible
- Sustainable, long-term

Methodology and material to use

- Abstracts
- Reports by faculty boards – scope for future development, priorities
- Site visit – Panel splits in groups and then reforms regularly to discuss observations
- Brief updates continuously from CRED Secretariat
- Documents will be sent electronically
- Degree projects, see some examples and describe the processes
- Involvement of students on the review panel: eg Bring one student from the Matariki network, Undergraduate research project, student conference? Alternatively, Students from Lund and Gothenburg would be useful as they understand the Swedish context.
- More people on the panel?

Aim

- Assess and evaluate the educational development work at UU. Examples from the theme teaching research linkages
- The view on CrED as an implementation tool – strengths and weaknesses of the process
- Views on the Guidelines for teaching and learning, for the future work as well. What kind of document should be developed at UU?
- CrED is a project which should end. But how do we continue the work?