

A bottom up approach to work based learning in the UK

Dr Muir Houston

CRADALL

University of Glasgow

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Case study 2

- Bachelor in Engineering (Hons.)
 - First Cycle (Level 6 EQF; Level 10 SCQF)
 - Credit Accumulation model with expectation of 6 years part-time
 - Partnership model academic/trade union/employer



The Open
University

Scotland



Rolls-Royce

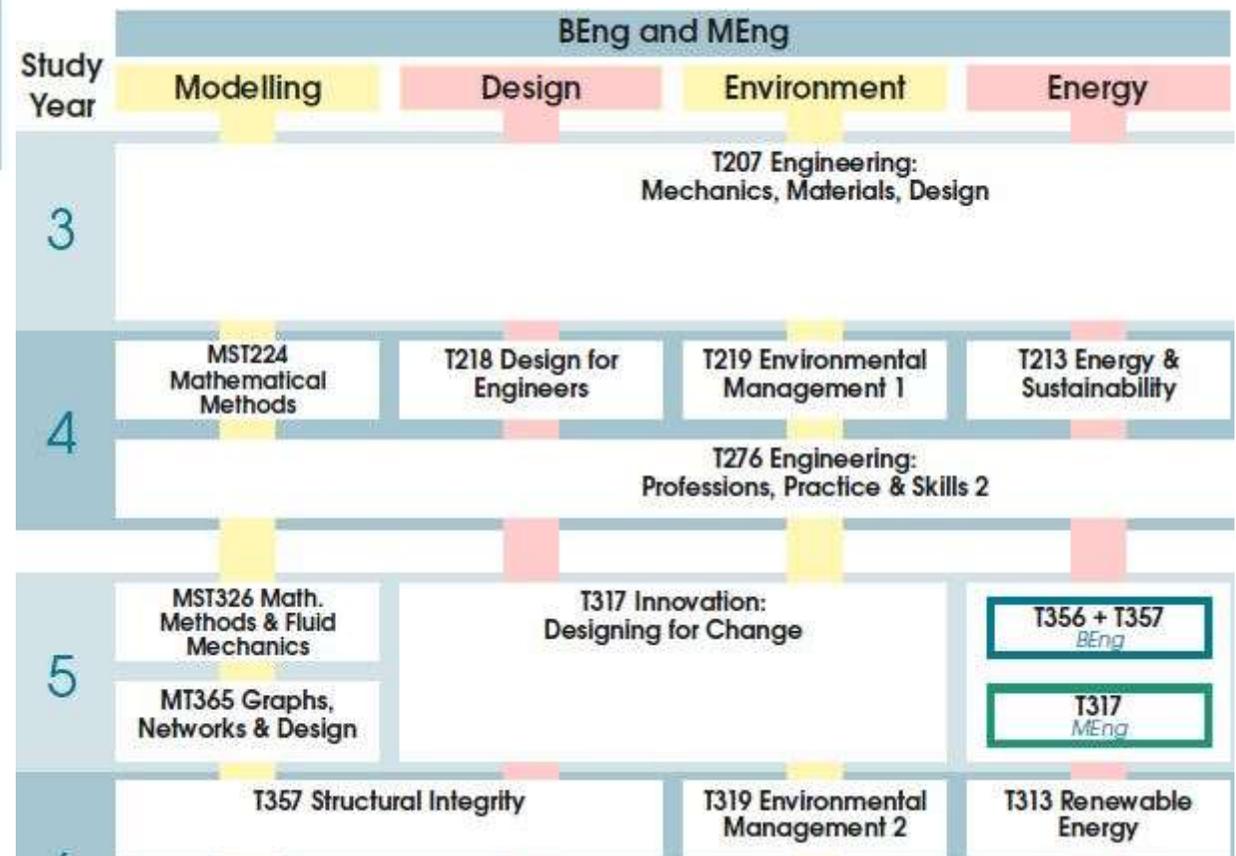
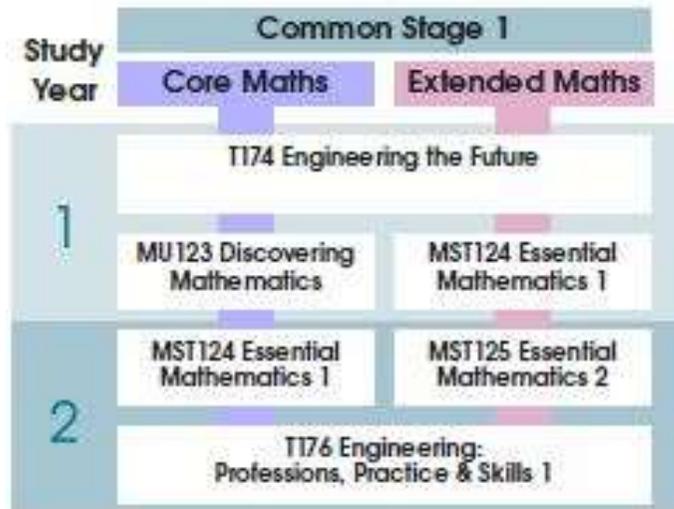
- **Entry requirements**
 - True open access practised by academic partner, options for credit transfer and APEL/APL, trade union member and employee of Rolls Royce
- **Format of programme**
 - Credit based modular system – 30/60 Credit point modules; part-time students but full-time employees
 - 360 credits required for Honours degree
- **Academic /work-based element**
 - Work hosted and supported and modules work-related but not work based (exception may be work-based practice project)

Funding, recruitment, evaluation

- Tuition fees per module (£452–£702 (30 credits) or £833–£1076 (60 credits). Workers above income threshold and pay £70 (30 credits) and £140 (60 Credits) balance is paid 50/50 by trade union and employer
- Recruitment internal and around 10 per year with around 40 at any one time studying modules
- University academic regulations apply to award of credit and ultimately degree
- *We scheduled meetings with the OU and the employer on site, and we have an overview of the tutor marked assessments so we can see, from the tutor marked assessments, how our members are doing, if they need extra support.*

Work-related learning

One to one, face to face session with tutors within the workplace, group tutorial work carried out at the Glasgow Caledonian University on a Saturday morning, peer support groups and Union Learning Rep support within the workplace.



Drivers of the programme

- *We engaged with the employer (Rolls Royce) and we negotiated a learning agreement that set parameters and how we were going to do it The site shop stewards committees, ... made the decision that all the shop stewards could take up the union learning rep roleso you could understand the agenda and drive it. We made the learning and training part of the collective bargaining structure (UNITE rep)*
- *there was a commonality of interest in, predominantly, in engineering and that would be on the B.Eng of the Open University.(UNITE rep)*
- *So we engaged with the employer, and we said to Rolls Royce, “look, there’s a massive under-utilisation of potential, here. Our members have got a huge amount of skills, knowledge and experience. We’re looking to get accreditation round that. The challenge will be, then, to you, we’re not looking to replace your current undergraduate structures or your graduate structures”*

Impact on learners

Support

- *I see it going on with a lot of the cohorts, a lot of individuals who's taking learning, they buddy up, they help each other. I think people seem more confident that when they've got a problem they come and ask us and encourage managers to become the mentor for these individuals and at that, once that happens there would probably be a more full integration.*

Work Life Study balance

- *Sometimes you haven't the energy or the inclination. Other times you don't have the time and then there's times when you, I mean it's, there can be days where both me and Brian will sit in front of a computer all day and then we have to go home and sit in front of a computer again. Do you know what I mean?*

Impact on learners 2

Career

- *There's been guys that have taken up other roles – both on the shop floor, taken on more roles within their teams on the shop floor. There's guys also moved into technical functions. And actually, one of our members who's actually now completed his degree – he was the first guy to complete his engineering degree – has actually transfer... there was a redundancy at Inchinnan, there, but he mitigated the threat of redundancy for himself because he moved to Canada, Rolls Royce Canada – got a job, a technical job in Rolls Royce Canada and that was on the back of his studies, as well.*

Academic/work-based perspective

Delivery

- *.. the peer support that started to develop – and I think has become a, you know a more important part of it – particularly the role of the trade union learning reps who, I mean, we’ve got three in East Kilbride that are also doing the OU as well, so they understand the process and, as new people come on board, they can act as work, you know, as trade union mentors for them and provide peer support. ... that’s been one of the key bits of the workplace delivery aspect of it, that, ... has been really important. So yeah, it’s basically an OU model, but with some additional workplace support.*

Impact

- *But at the end of the day, I mean, the company, I think, have come round to realising what they’ve got is a model that will deliver some graduates for them at less cost than anything else that’s going on. It’s got some workplace support aspect to it, it’s got a commitment to the individuals and, you know, so I think that they can see that there’s something emerging out of this that’s quite different.*

Flexibility

- *That said, it doesn't work for everybody. We've had folk that have done two or three years, then a new child's come alongand they've had to say, "right, you know, going to have to take a step back" and the rest of it. So... And that's something we've had to explain to the company, that when people are doing this in their own time – and it is all in their own time – ... then, you know, life gets in the way sometimes, and so people will, you know, pull back for a year or two and then they'll come back in again.... And I think that's been useful for the company understanding that this isn't people failing – this is the reality of life getting in the way. But you know, it's not the end of the journey.*
- *We had developed a workplace delivery model that could be delivered at a shift-friendly time, workload demands, etc., and there was benefit there. And they, to be fair, at the plant, recognised that*

LETAE criteria and good practice

- Bottom-up implementation for workers already with considerable experience in the industry but wishing to progress in career, over age 25
- Creation of an organic learning culture among member prior to moving to degree level studies
- Role of Union Learning Reps in day to day sustainability of programme (mentoring, budgeting, negotiating with managers, etc.)

SWOT analysis

Strengths	Creation of organic learning culture within organisation by Union Learning Reps; peer support mechanisms; flexibility and support inherent in OU model enhanced by UNITE model
Weaknesses	Impact on work/study life balance requires significant commitment by workers/learners over considerable period of time
Opportunities	Expansion of model to other organisations/industrial sectors
Threats	External pressures on manufacturing and sector more generally; workforce/plant restructuring, financial support not guaranteed long-term