
applied infoKit

Implementing the Ferl Practitioners' Programme

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Implementing the Ferl Practitioners' Programme (FPP)

Introduction

This **applied infoKit** provides a framework that institutions can follow when considering the implementation of the **Ferl Practitioners' Programme** (FPP).

As any implementation of FPP will be a very unique one in terms of approach, timescale and scope, the key concern is to highlight:

- The advantages of using a structured methodology
- Some issues you ought to consider
- Ways of breaking down some of the issues into components
- Some practical resources to help you

Particularly with any programme of Staff Development it will be people issues rather than issues with technology that have the potential for impact on what you are trying to achieve. By this we mean that the technology will normally do what it was designed to do but that people's expectations, skills and familiarity with it may cause them to perceive that there are technical problems.

JISC infoNet has published a series of online materials, known as infoKits that provide a general framework for the lifecycle of information systems – Analysis, Planning, Implementation and Review (APIR).

Many of the materials can be useful in a wider context and a number of them have relevance to organisations implementing FPP, in particular the **Project Management** and **Process Review** infoKit materials.

Pre-Implementation

A successful implementation of FPP requires absolute commitment of every member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) of the College. The SMT should consider how to align the ethos of FPP into the **culture and values** of the organisation.

In particular this approach recommends colleges to consider their state of readiness to embark on FPP. It is a large undertaking and it is recommended that the college considers whether the FPP Guide be seconded or recruited to a full time post. The FPP Guide needs to be fully conversant with the FPP materials and achieving this familiarisation will take some time.

The college should also consider its current ILT culture. To enable any measurement of benefits derived from the FPP the college needs to determine its starting point. Understanding how well, or how little, ILT is embedded into the teaching and learning process will enable the FPP Guide to

make important judgements about the nature of early training sessions.

There are some tools available from the National Learning Network partnership to help institutions evaluate their current state:

- The National Learning Network Audit – <http://www.nln.ac.uk/selfassessment/fento.asp>
- Embedding Learning Technologies Institutionally – a JISC project – http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=project_elti

Taking a Strategic Approach

As implementing the FPP is a large undertaking, comprising a significant staff development investment and likely to introduce measurable change in Learning and Teaching, colleges will wish to recognise this strategically.

There are two reasons why the FPP should be implemented strategically.

- To develop staff skills to match the aspirations of and fit in with the policies supporting the organisation's existing strategy

OR

- As a catalyst for introducing change into the delivery methods and pedagogies that may have become outdated or stale

In this second case, it may be that a college will wish to re-evaluate existing strategies to ensure that the aims and objectives as well as the resourcing of FPP are reflected in Strategy and Development Plans.

There is a single overriding reason for implementing FPP and that is to improve and transform teaching and learning. It is recommended that a Business Case for implementing the FPP is completed. This will prompt the college to think strategically and give reasons for the implementation. The Project Management infoKit includes a [Business Case Assessment template](#).

Project Start-Up and Planning

Planning Techniques

A number of tried and tested planning techniques are available to use, each with different levels of complexity. Further information on some of these can be found within the [Planning](#) section of our Project Management infoKit.

A [Task List](#) has been supplied for you to download and tailor to your FPP implementation which you can use to form the basis of your implementation plan.

A simple but useful graphical tool that can help you visualise the project schedule is a Gantt Chart, a bar chart invented by Henry Gantt. An [example Gantt chart](#) for the pre-implementation phase listed in the Task List has been produced as part of this applied infoKit.

Project Initiation Document

The single most important piece of documentation you will produce at this stage, and probably during the course of the entire project, is a Project Initiation Document (PID). This may also be called a Project Scoping Document, Project Outline, Project Management Plan or sometimes even a Project Brief. As a starting point for implementing the FPP, a draft template Project Initiation Document with some pointers is included here.

Managing the Ferl Practitioners' Programme

It is essential to have the support of a senior member of the college management. This person would become the Sponsor or Champion of the FPP, lending weight, influence and political clout to the FPP Guide in their efforts to implement the training programme.

This is not to say that the Sponsor will necessarily be a hands-on person, spending lots of time devoted to the project, but should be seen to be sponsoring and supporting the aims of the FPP as organised by the FPP Guide on a day-to-day basis.

The Sponsor should chair the Steering Group overseeing the project – or in a smaller college, may solely act in a Management Board role. This would involve meeting with the FPP Guide (as Project Manager) to keep in touch with progress and lend support where needed and to help the FPP Guide prioritise FPP alongside the many other activities and projects the college is involved with. This is a vital support role for any Project Sponsor to help Project Managers exert influence where they do not have any line-management authority. From feedback and comments at JISC infoNet's Project Management Workshops, it appears to be a common source of frustration for Project Managers and a contributing cause of project failure where this support is not forthcoming.

By 'Steering Group' we are using the Project Management definition of a group not involved in the day-to-day management of the project. Likely members are: the Project Sponsor, Curriculum Manager/Director, the Quality Manager and possibly a member of the Corporation.

The Project Team or Working Party

If the FPP Guide is to act as Project Manager it is worth considering who else should be involved as part of the project team. The Staff Development Manager (or person with responsibility for Staff Development) should be included, as should the IT/Network Manager. The Learning Resources Manager, ILT Manager (or person with responsibility for co-ordinating ILT), ILT Champion(s) and a supportive Curriculum Leader would make up a team with the required mix of skills and influence.

JISC infoNet's Process Review infoKit has further guidance about building teams. Colleges are also advised to review the findings of the JISC Roundtable Project at <http://www.roundtable.ac.uk>

The influence of the Project Sponsor, once their initial promotion and PR involvement gets the project moving, should be by inference and used as infrequently as possible. This ensures both the effect of any occasional 'hit' and keeps the project from irritating the Sponsor with the end result that they become disillusioned and less supportive.

Communications

At the outset the Project Manager should set out the information requirements and communications strategy for:

- The Project itself
- The Project Sponsor (and onwards to Senior Management)
- The Stakeholders – trainees, future trainees, line managers, everyone

The format and frequency of reports into and from the Project Team should be set out once in draft but not finalised until a first baseline Plan is produced. This will allow for any tightening up of report procedures (more frequent or in more detail) at those periods within the plan where control needs to be kept on a tighter rein. People involved in the project should understand what they are expected to do – e.g. one side of A4 with bullet points or a formal report in detail.

The college should consider using the college Intranet or VLE as a method of publishing information about the FPP Programme and its progress for access by all stakeholders. Sharing the plan will make both the plan and all those involved visible and accountable. It will contribute to creating a culture where people are motivated to succeed without need for pressure from the FPP Guide.

IT Infrastructure

The Project Manager should use the IT technical expertise of the college to check training rooms and staff PCs for Internet connection and any plug-ins required by the FPP. The Learning Resources Manager will be able to provide information on current subscriptions and available software/materials.

Risk

All projects involve risk and it is recommended that some formal Risk Assessment is undertaken around the Project. Whilst an ongoing process as part of normal project control, Risk Assessment is vital at the outset of the project and offers an opportunity to involve stakeholders in the project by inviting them to participate. It is vital that they participate not only in identifying risk, but in identifying mitigating and alternative actions to reduce probability and impact of risk.

Risk identification is something best done as a group activity. It is recommended that some risk analysis is focussed on each task identified in the plan. Analysing the probability and impact of identified risks before thinking of mitigating actions and 'what if' scenarios will allow time to be prioritised to those risks with the greater potential for impact on the project.

A [Risk Assessment template](#) including examples of generic risks that most colleges would want to address is provided here.

Issues

All projects involve some uncertainties. Things will happen due to both foreseen risk and unforeseen incident or circumstance. It is important that those involved in the project, particularly the FPP Guide as project manager, understand and expect this and are not disheartened by it.

Keeping a log of issues, together with actions taken to resolve them ensures that:

- Issues get dealt with and are not forgotten
- Repetitive issues have a log of the solution for when they occur again
- A legacy of learning is created to benefit project managers in the future
- There is a record for reference in meetings and reports

Using a database to store details of identified risks, issues and change controls (where a suggested change to the plan or scope is made) can benefit all involved in the project by making the records accessible over the college network. A Controls Database is provided within the Project Management infoKit which can be downloaded and used.

In Summary

- Use the infoNet resources
- Plan and use a project management technique
- Examine institutional processes
- Involve all stakeholders
- Ensure staff readiness in terms of IT skill levels
- Ensure that FPP is an integral part of institutional strategies
- Have senior management buy-in
- Evaluate as an ongoing process
- Communicate with the rest of the institution
- Be realistic
- Share experiences
- Concentrate on people and processes as opposed to technology – e.g. learner focus not VLE
- Make it a mainstream activity – embedding into the institution is important
- Be aware that people fear change
- Remember your reasons for implementation
- Staff are often very busy and overstretched
- Identify both early adopters and areas of likely resistance
- Don't underestimate the time required to understand institutional structures and cultures

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