

Creating an Effective Dissemination Strategy

An Expanded Interactive Workbook for Educational Development Projects

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Bridging the Gap – Innovations Project 2001

“Dissemination has been successful when educational practice has changed in response to the disseminated excellent practice.”

FDTL, 1997

Introduction

This workbook has been produced to help educational development projects engaged in the dissemination of new products, materials and good practice in learning and teaching to create an effective dissemination strategy. It is hoped that through this projects will maximise their chances of effecting real change within higher education and widen their impact overall. The workbook draws on experiences from over 100 educational development projects, in particular, the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) and the Teaching, Learning Technology Programme (TLTP) and Innovations Fund.

The workbook has been designed to assist projects to address the following questions:

- What is dissemination?
- What do we want to disseminate?
- Who are our stakeholders and what are we offering them?
- When do we disseminate?
- What are the most effective ways of disseminating?
- Who might help us disseminate?
- How do we prepare our strategy?
- How do we turn our strategy into an action plan?
- How do we cost our dissemination activities?
- How do we know we have been successful?

Section 1: What is dissemination?

If you are reading this workbook and intend to follow it through to the end, then it is quite probable that you have been awarded funding for an educational development project that requires you to disseminate the outcomes of your project to the wider higher education community. You may only have to disseminate to a sub-section of the community, for example, a particular subject discipline but you will, nevertheless, be facing the challenge of how to disseminate to maximum effect within the constraints of the resources allocated to your project.

The term “dissemination” has become a familiar part of our vocabulary within higher education and it is easy, therefore, to talk about doing it without having a real grasp of what it means, “to disseminate” or what it is you are trying to achieve by doing it. It is helpful to think about dissemination in three different ways:

1. Dissemination for Awareness

It can be assumed that, at the very least, you wish people to be aware of the work of your project. This may be useful for those target audiences that do not require a detailed knowledge of your work but it is helpful for them to be aware of your activities and outcomes.

Creating such an awareness of your project’s work will help the “word of mouth” type dissemination and help you build an identity and profile within your community.

2. Dissemination for Understanding

There will be a number of groups/audiences that you will need to target directly with your dissemination. This will be because you believe that they can benefit from what your project has to offer. It will be important, therefore, that these groups/audiences have a deeper understanding of your project’s work.

3. Dissemination for Action

“Action” refers to a change of practice resulting from the adoption of products, materials or approaches offered by your project. These groups/audiences will be those people that are in a position to “influence” and “bring about change” within their organisations. These are the groups/audiences that will need to be equipped with the right skills, knowledge and understanding of your work in order to achieve real change.

“We tried wherever possible to turn the idea of dissemination into one of real participation, for it was important to us that historians as a whole felt a sense of ownership and responsibility for the goals, activities and successes of the project.”

History 2000, Bath Spa University College

“Part of the project’s success is because it has tried to include everyone and embrace staff in practical activity. Previous projects have been about staff awareness, which is where they have failed.”

Sharing Excellence Project, Nottingham Trent University

Perhaps the term dissemination can be best described as the “delivering and receiving of a message”, “the engagement of an individual in a process” and “the transfer of a process or product”.

A project that undertakes all three levels of dissemination will most likely pass through each of the stages in turn. As firstly a project requires its potential audience to be AWARE (Aw) of its aims and objectives, they will then become interested enough to wish a more detailed UNDERSTANDING (U). Involvement in both of these two stages will provide the basis for dissemination for ACTION (Ac). A good example of this can be seen in dissemination activities carried out by the University of London Careers Unit (Innovations Fund 1998-2000).

Outcomes, services and learning from the project were disseminated in the following varied forums:

Jun 1998	<i>Presentation to the Careers Writers Association.</i>	Aw
	<i>Article about the Graduate Careers Centre in Newscheck – read by most statutory careers advisers and published by the ‘Careers Occupational Information Centre’.</i>	Aw
	<i>Attendance at the Camden Jobs and Training Fair.</i>	Aw
	<i>Attendance at the Personal Development Show, Olympia.</i>	Aw
Jul 1998	<i>Attendance at the London Graduate Recruitment Fair.</i>	Aw
Dec 1998	<i>Article about the Graduate Careers Centre in Phoenix, professional journal of the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS).</i>	U
	<i>Attendance at the London Recruitment Fair.</i>	
Jan 1999	<i>Distribution of C2 publicity materials to all AGCAS services via the Careers Services Unit mailing.</i>	Aw U
Feb 1999	<i>Editorial coverage in The Guardian and The Independent to coincide with the free CV surgery at Euston Station. One week long, free CV surgery at Euston Station, sponsored by Focus Central London Training and Enterprise Council.</i>	Aw / U
Apr 1999	<i>Official opening of C2 performed by HRH the Princess Royal, press coverage received in The Guardian and People Management, professional journal of the Institute of Personnel and Development.</i>	Aw Aw / U
Aug 1999	<i>Presentation at the Institute of Careers Guidance conference entitled, “Setting up a Self-Financing Graduate Careers Centres”.</i>	Aw / U / Ac
Sept 1999	<i>AGCAS biennial conference, 2 seminars hosted entitled, “Self-Financing Graduate Careers Centres” and “The C2 Partnership” (co-hosted with representatives from CfBT, West London Careers and The Guardian).</i>	Ac
Dec 1999	<i>Write up of C2’s MBTI sessions in The Daily Mirror.</i>	Aw / U
Mar 2000	<i>Press evening hosted for journalists from various newspapers, resulted in coverage in The Guardian, The Evening Standard and Oxford Press.</i>	Ac

Setting Up a Self-Financing Graduate Careers Centre University of London Careers Service

The scope of C2's dissemination was wide. In addition to the above activities, regular mailings were undertaken to Higher Education and Careers Service Companies nationally. Weekly advertising in The Guardian ensured a consistently high profile. C2 also benefited from networking opportunities, forging effective working relationships with Oxford Psychologists Press (one of the largest distributors of psychometric tests in the UK) who featured the work of C2 in their quarterly newsletter.

Section 2: What do we want to disseminate?

Like the majority of educational development projects, you will have, as a core objective, the need to disseminate the outcomes of your project to a particular community or communities. This will only be achievable and successful if, from the outset, every member of your project team has a shared understanding of exactly what it is you want to disseminate and why. One of the difficulties of projects of this nature is that the project team usually understand what they are trying to achieve but that the target audience do not. This may seem hard to believe but there is plenty of evidence to demonstrate an inability, on the part of a project team, to articulate in clear and easy to understand language what it is their project is about and what it offers its particular target audience.

It is essential, therefore, that you and your team have a shared vision and common understanding of what it is you want to disseminate together with a way of describing this to those that are outside your project and who may stand to benefit from your work.

EXERCISE 1

Ask each member of your project team to write down:

- 1) how he/she might describe the project to an outsider
- 2) what he/she believes your project has to disseminate

Collate the lists from each member and, as a group, complete the table below:

<p>Handy Hints</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Try to keep each item brief and concise.2) Try to distil the items into no more than ten key points.3) Use the discussion as a way of engaging the project team and obtaining a shared understanding of what your project is setting out to achieve.4) When you have completed the box, show it to a few people outside your project to check the language you have used is clear.

Our Project is:

Our Project will be disseminating the following:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

Figure 1

Section 3: Who are our stakeholders and what are we offering them?

Having clearly identified what it is your project has to disseminate, you now need to think about to whom you want to disseminate. This requires some analysis of your various stakeholders.

A stakeholder can be defined as:

“Any group or individual who can affect, or be affected by the achievement of the projects objectives - or can influence these objectives.” (Mike Jones – ‘Getting the message across’ Dissemination Seminar - Bridging the Gap)

The term “target audience or group” can be used to describe the different groups of stakeholders connected to your project.

It is important to identify and be clear about who your stakeholders are and then you need to be able to map them to one of the categories outlined in the awareness, understanding, and action model.

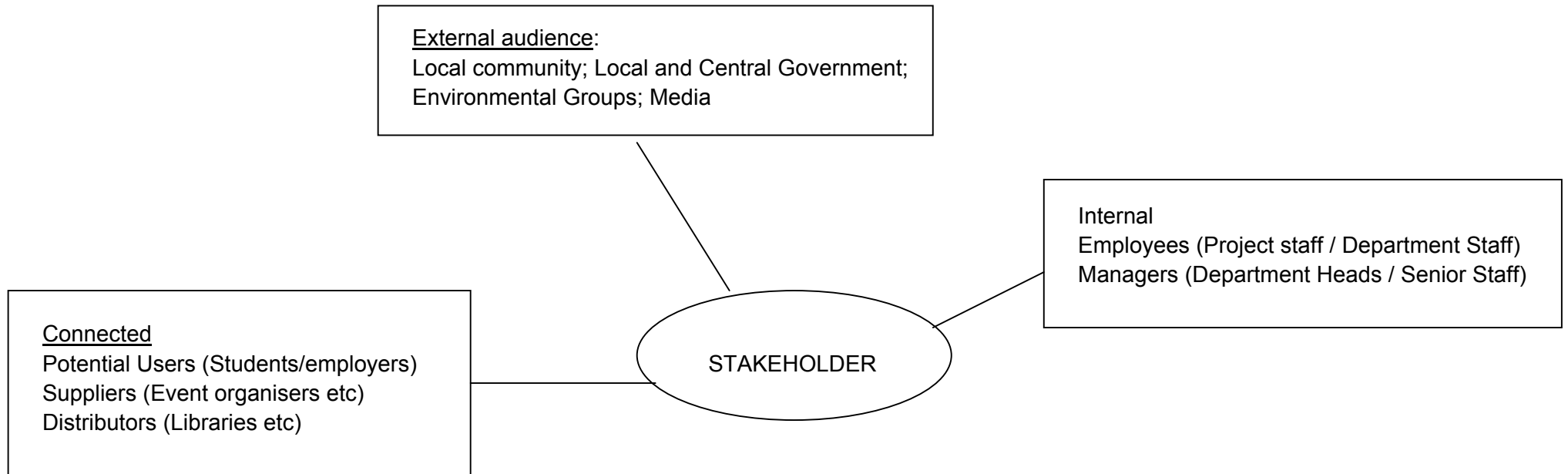


Figure 2

EXERCISE 2

As a project team spend some time brainstorming as complete a list of your project's stakeholders as you can. This list needs to include as many varied individuals/groups as you can think of whom will need to be, at the very least, informed about the work of your project. These might include, for example:

- Students;
- Academic staff within your department;
- Academic staff from other departments;
- Heads of Departments;
- Institutional senior management;
- Heads of institutions
- Funding bodies;
- Educational development units;
- Quality Enhancement units
- Members of your Steering Group;
- Other funded projects;
- Professional bodies/associations.

Figure 3

Using the circles below with your project at the centre map your stakeholders into the circles with those to whom you will wish to disseminate to for action closest to the project at the centre and for awareness in the furthest outer ring. This will give you a clearer idea about who (and how) to disseminate your project outcomes to.

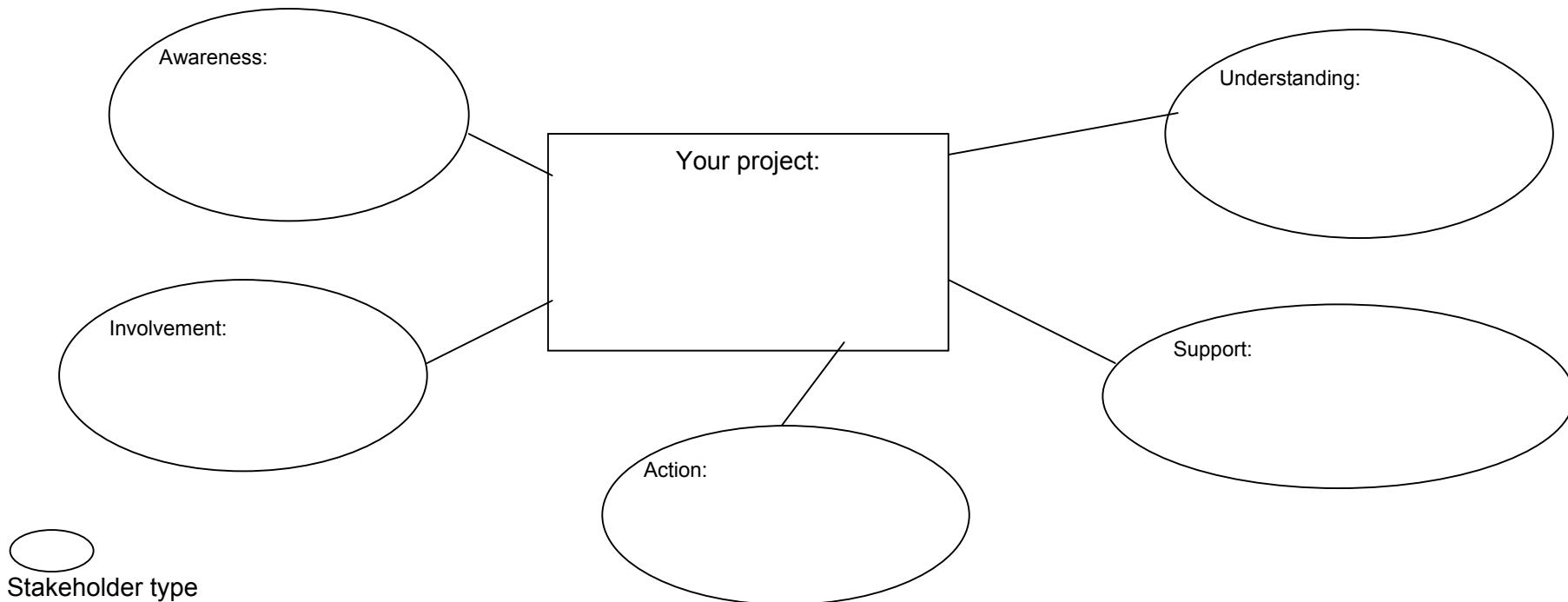


Figure 4

Having articulated clearly exactly what your project will be disseminating and who your target audiences/groups are, it is essential that you think about what benefits the outputs/outcomes your project will have to offer. Nothing interests a person more than offering a potential solution to their particular problem. These may be local and specific, for example, how to embed key skills in the curriculum in Physics or may relate to larger issues, for example, how to improve graduate employability or research ratings.¹ The most successful dissemination strategies will be those that actively engage users and deliver what the users both want and need. Ensuring that you have engaged your users in an early consultation exercise to establish their needs and wants is an essential part of your project's work. You then need to examine the outputs/outcomes of your project and think about how these can be presented as benefits and solutions to your users.

¹ Abstract from A Guide to Dissemination, DfEE, May 1998

EXERCISE 3

Identify three issues/problems that your project's output/outcomes will help to overcome and which target audiences/groups these will apply to. Bear in mind that different target audiences/groups will view their issues/problems differently and are likely to be working in differing contexts - you may need to alter your "message" to suit.

Handy Hints

- 1) Think about how you can present your project's outputs/outcomes as benefits/solutions.
- 2) Place yourself in the "shoes" of each target audience/group and think about what problems/solutions you would be looking for.

Issue/Problem	Target Audience/Group

Figure 5

Section 4: When do we disseminate?

"Evidence from similar initiatives tends to confirm that unless dissemination is built in from the beginning it does not happen."

HEFCE 98/68, Evaluation of FDTL

The National Students Learning Programme (NSLP) engaged one of their stakeholders at an early stage and were able to work with the resources of the stakeholder and develop the project throughout the life of the project. In promoting the project to employers and institutions. Ford were the first graduate employer to come on board with the scheme. Interested initially as a graduate recruiter, and the company wanted to offer NSLP the use of their human resource professionals, and help with residential. In return they wanted a closer relationship with training activities. Development of this link added awareness and credibility to the project, resulting in other large employers becoming involved. Good stakeholder involvement can also result in additional sponsorship from employers. Just under £75k was raised by NSLP in addition to the money provided by the DfEE. In addition to this over £50k was provided by NUS.

Whilst the financial rewards of spending time raising revenue for the project speaks for itself it is important to note that much time was needed to create good business/union links for this to occur. It was these partnerships with business as well as those created between the QAA, CVCP and Centre for Recording Achievement that assisted NSLP in its successful bid to the HE Innovations Fund that was granted raising an additional £150k for future activity and diversifying the project. In addition regular advice and links were provided on a daily basis by both NSLP and NUS, increasing awareness, understanding and action. NSLP maintained a database, which included contact information of staff, sabbatical officers and student trainers. This aided the project staff in the effective support and communication. Showing the value of early and regular involvement of stakeholders in a projects' activities and dissemination.

National Student Learning Programme Key Skills Project – National Union of Students

One observation of Bridging the Gap (The Open University) – where many projects, previous and current, were drawn together was, that many project managers have a very narrow view of who their potential stakeholders are, based predominantly within their immediate circle of experience and where they know they are likely to be well received. More thought needs to be undertaken into who the consumers of HE services are, and regard HEIs more widely as service sector providers.

In the course of preparing for the start of your project, you will have been required to draw up a project plan that identifies your milestones. As a dissemination project obviously a significant number of these milestones will be concerned with the completion of a particular dissemination activity. As with all aspects of your project, it is important that your dissemination activities are an integral part of your project plan. This means that you need to plan your dissemination from the outset. Experience from earlier projects has shown that the approach of leaving dissemination until the final year of the project does not work as it fails to allow time for actively engaging users and finding ways of generating a feeling of ownership amongst those people and groups to whom you wish to disseminate and make an impact. The planning and development of your dissemination strategy must have equal importance placed on it as the other preparatory work you will be doing, or have already done.

Having identified exactly what it is your project will be disseminating, you need to give some thought to the timing of particular dissemination activities and the setting of targets. You will need to consider each of your target audiences/groups and the level of dissemination required and begin to plan the timing.

It is important to set yourself realistic targets - for example, you may decide that you want to achieve a 90% awareness of your project's work within your discipline, but that this may be an impossible target to achieve for deep understanding of your project's work. You might, therefore, wish to set a lower target for understanding, say 60%. Your targets will clearly depend upon the overall aims and objectives of the project.

If, for example, you wish to bring about a significant change within your subject discipline or target group, then you will do better to set a realistic target of say 2-3 individuals within each department actively using your project's materials/approaches, than trying to achieve 6-10 individuals. Focus on the quality of your dissemination not just the quantity. Raising awareness right across the discipline does not equate to the full adoption or take-up of your project's materials/approaches in a modest number of departments or institutions.

Handy Hints

- 1) Remember to think about the other tasks/activities within your project, as it may be that some of your dissemination activities are dependent upon certain other task/activities being completed.
- 2) Try to avoid thinking you have to "be all things to all people". Keep your dissemination activities well focussed on what you want to achieve.
- 3) Set realistic and achievable targets otherwise you can only fail!

EXERCISE 5

Using the table below, list your key target audiences/groups together with a timescale by which you will have undertaken one or more dissemination activities. State the reasons for your decisions.

	Target Audience/Group	Timescales	Reasons
Awareness			
Understanding			
Support and Favourability			
Involvement			
Commitment and Action			

Figure 6

Starting early usually increases the impact of dissemination. Providing people with advance notice of what is planned can strengthen partnerships and networks. Using vehicles such as seminars and conferences to give papers on work in progress can be an effective way of disseminating findings whilst they are fresh and will help to stimulate ongoing interest in the work of your project. It is important not to feel that you have to have a completed product or process before starting to disseminate. The greater the involvement of your target audiences/groups, the greater impact you will achieve and the stronger the routes of communication be developed.

“Early on in the project the team decided that regular attendance, as delegates or facilitators, at national events would provide a valuable networking opportunity”
Bridging the Gap, The Open University

Your target audiences/groups need to know your project exists and have some idea of what it is about and trying to achieve. This can be done at an early stage and you can use the opportunity to present a clear and easily recognisable identity for the project.

As you begin to create an identity for your project, you may find it helpful to consider some of the following:

- Previous track records – do any of the project staff have a proven track record in the work you are undertaking and, if so, how might you best exploit this?
- Alliances with other projects – are there other projects within your subject area that you could form links with which would give you a better presence and image?
- Links with professional bodies/subject associations – are there any professional bodies within your subject area that you could build links with and who would be able to promote your work and boost your profile?

“Our first steps to achieving relevance and authority included the establishment of a Steering Group of eminent and active figures in the field of legal education. This Group both enabled the NCLE to gain access to networks and organisations at the leading edge of debate and research in the field of legal education and also gave the project initial credibility with the legal education community at large.”
National Centre for Legal Education, University of Warwick

"We were aware of the importance of building on these foundations by establishing a distinctive identity for the project at the earliest opportunity and this was initiated by:

- *The design of the project "image" in terms of the logo and the associated colours that is used on the entire project outputs.*
- *The publication of a Newsletter in the early months of the project to introduce the project and to begin to canvas support and participation.*
- *The attendance of the Director and Project Co-ordinator at meetings, workshops and conferences on issues in legal education with a view to networking with colleagues and discussing and disseminating information about the NCLE."*

National Centre for Legal Education, University of Warwick

"It is all too easy to spend time working on the planned development and not enough time telling people about it."

MaPPit Project, University of Huddersfield

Section 5: What are the most effective ways of disseminating?

"We tried where ever possible to turn the idea of dissemination into one of real participation, for it was important to us that historians as a whole felt a sense of ownership and responsibility for the goals, activities and successes of the project."

History 2000, Bath Spa University College

It is at this stage that you need to begin to match vehicles for dissemination to your objectives. The two diagrams below set out some ideas around the uses of technology, face-to-face formats and paper linked to the five different levels of dissemination.

Effective dissemination can be defined as that which engages the recipient in a process whether it is one of increased awareness, understanding or commitment and action. There are a number of broad issues for consideration as follows:

- Most audiences are interested in understanding how particular pieces of work fit into a particular context and the extent to which adopting new approaches/methods/materials might have other implications, for example, on future policy, on infrastructure, on staffing, funding, quality assurance etc.
- Different target audiences/groups can be easily overwhelmed by dissemination that they may not be necessarily interested in, for example, the head of an institution is unlikely to be interested in receiving continuous mailings about workshops aimed at departmental staff.
- When development projects are undertaking academic research, it is important to explain to your audience how this piece of work relates to previous work carried out in this field. Academics will rightly expect to see evidence that what you are doing builds on existing knowledge and expertise.²
- Think about quality dissemination as opposed to just quantity - before sending out yet another mailing think objectively about exactly what you are trying to achieve and whether this is the most appropriate method of achieving it. Be selective in order to achieve greatest impact.
- Where several projects are working in similar areas there is always a danger of overlapping or conflicting activities. It is useful to make contact with other projects and think about how you might maximise resources, for example, one national conference on a theme is a much better use of staff time and resources. It can also avoid confusing your audience and overloading them with an unmanageable number of events, whilst providing "strength in numbers".
- Some dissemination can be very quick and in an informal setting. Have in mind a short (2 sentence) statement about the project which can be your introduction for example when asked by a senior manager "how's it going?" whilst travelling in the lift. Put well this could be just enough to gain increased interest but at least awareness.

You will need to adopt a multi-strand approach to dissemination to ensure your efforts are effective. Experience has shown that disseminating using just one vehicle or method is unlikely to be successful.

"A final key dissemination event took place in July 1999 when the CD-ROM was launched publicly followed by a mailshot of the project's products to all geography HEIs. All tutors in Geography departments received an information leaflet regarding the GNU and website and informing them of the person in their department who has received the CD-ROM and paper materials. To coincide with this, an article was published in the Journal of Geography in Higher Education describing the project and its products and an update of the project appeared in the GeoCal magazine."

Geography for the New Undergraduate, Liverpool Hope University College

² Abstract from A Guide to Dissemination, DfEE, May 1998

There is a tendency for all of us to automatically pick up and run with the most obvious methods of dissemination, for example, newsletters, websites and direct mail. This is because they represent concrete outputs that can be easily evidenced as solid methods of dissemination, but it will be important to explore and evaluate which methods are the most effective and appropriate to meet the needs of your stakeholders, as discussed earlier. In particular, established methods of communication may not be sufficient to target and impact on sections of your community which may not be particularly responsive or aware of the work you are undertaking.

Think about disseminating in a variety of ways to suit the needs of your target audiences. Varying your dissemination media will increase your chances of success.

EXERCISE 6

Using the table below, spend some time identifying the range of different dissemination media you might use to engage particular target audiences.

Target Audience	Dissemination Method/Vehicle	Reasons

Figure 7

The following list offers you with some ideas of different types of dissemination media that you might consider using.

- Mailing lists
- E-mail
- Mailbase lists
- Newsletters
- Reports
- Websites
- Briefings
- Workshops
- Roadshows
- Conferences
- One-to-one
- Media

Figure 8

- Mailing Lists

Having identified your target audiences, drawing together a mailing list of key people to receive materials and information about your project is a useful start. This may be a nominated contact in academic departments or individuals that have already expressed an interest in your project's activities. Some questions to consider are:

- how many copies of brochures, publicity leaflets, materials etc. will you send to the contacts on your mailing list?
- how can you encourage your contacts to disseminate copies of materials more widely within their own institution/organisation?
- are there already established units/departments/organisations that would be willing to distribute information on your behalf?

"We also saw the value of having a network that enabled teachers to communicate with each other and also with the NCLE. To establish this network as an organisation that was recognised by the law schools we asked heads of departments to nominate their representative. We wrote to all HEIs and also to all FEIs and were successful in receiving nominations from all but eight institutions. The NCLE relies on this representative to disseminate information on its behalf to other colleagues in the law school. Not only does this encourage activity at the local level but it also helps to engage the representatives themselves in materials, ideas and debates surrounding learning and teaching in law."
National Centre for Legal Education, University of Warwick

- Email/Mailbase Lists

The vast majority of people involved in learning and teaching within higher education are members of at least one mailbase discussion list and these can be a very effective way of communicating with your target audiences. Depending on the nature of your group, you may be able to engage people in lively, active discussions around topics that you have introduced relating to the work of your project. Earlier projects have found that it can be quite difficult to kick-start discussions on mailbase lists so one useful approach is to have regular timed discussions, advertised in advance, and perhaps involving a guest speaker. Using the mailbase list as a way of consulting your community is also another effective method of dissemination.

- Newsletters

A short newsletter (up to four sides of A4 max.) every quarter, term or phase of your project can keep your audience informed of progress and continue to stimulate interest. Although it is not necessary to spend a huge amount of money on producing such a newsletter, it is

important that it is presented well and looks as professional as possible. Again, think about what the important issues are for your audiences and focus your newsletters around these to be sure to engage.

"The Newsletter....summarises key issues in learning and teaching and also provides a vehicle for the publication of short articles by colleagues who want to share good practice or have other information that they want to disseminate."

National Centre for Legal Education, University of Warwick

- Briefings

A briefing can be partway between a newsletter and a catalogue. No more than an A4 page, it can allow you to summarise your project's work and update people on your progress.

"Producing a glossy marketing brochure about the project's deliverables with a detachable application form and mailing this to about 900 named academics was a costly marketing strategy. However, we believe that the cost was justified as our database was continually extended and updated during the life of the project so we knew that we were targeting a wide and potentially interested audience."

Speak-Write Project, University of East Anglia

"The team found that there was an interest in the development work of the fifty six previous projects, providing it was in a user friendly format. This is especially important when trying to reach stakeholders who are not practitioners or academics within HEIs. The BtG team published (1) - a digest of all the final reports, one for each theme; this was based on an earlier but incomplete set of digests produced by Centre for Higher Education Research CHERI

(2) - Nine briefing documents, a general one about the Innovations Fund 1998-2000 plus one each covering the eight project themes. These were aimed at senior managers within HE, but have been popular elsewhere as a concise review of the projects findings and recommendations. To make these user friendly they were kept to approximately four sides of A4 also making them suitable for distribution to senior management, and inclusion in newsletters."

Bridging the Gap, Open University

- Websites

A website allows easy access to information about your project and is easily updated. However, your target audiences need to know it is there and have to be interested enough to visit the site in the first place. Once you have attracted them to the site you then have to find ways of ensuring they visit the site regularly from thereon. Your website can be publicised via your newsletter, briefings, brochures and mailbase lists. Make sure your site merits return visits by keeping it updated and by flagging up interesting items on the home page so that

the user can see immediately that there is something new for them to look at. Be aware that keeping records of hits to your website is only useful if you can be sure that users are actively searching and using the website.

It is important that when users carry out a search that your website comes up. You will need to use metatags in order to ensure that search engines such as Yahoo pick up the site. Further information on designing and using websites can be obtained from the:

National Co-ordination Team's website <http://www.ncteam.ac.uk/>

- Reports

Reports can be a useful way to publicise and disseminate findings from your project and can form part of your project's deliverables. These can be produced either in hard copy or made available on your website. The latter does allow for ease of updating and distributing.

- Conferences

Most projects budget to run a national conference or medium to large-scale event. Such an event can reap huge benefits but they can be costly and time-consuming to organise so it is important to budget accordingly and plan for the amount of staff time that will be needed to ensure the conference is well organised and successful. Conferences can be a very useful forum to consult with your target audiences in a face-to-face capacity and to address issues relevant to the work of your project.

You need to ensure that you:

- allow sufficient time for organising the conference;
- identify the venue and dates as far in advance as possible;
- notify your target audiences of the venue and dates well in advance;
- consult widely about the focus and format of the conference to ensure that it meets the needs of the participants;
- maintain a high quality, professional image for all aspects of the conference including advertising materials, delegates packs, signage, proceedings etc.

"The main dissemination events for the project were held approximately eight months before its completion. This gave sufficient time to deal with feedback and interest that came from people following the project."

MaPPiT Project, University of Huddersfield

"The delivery of national seminars and conferences and an early needs analysis questionnaire distributed to all departments, helped greatly to stimulate engagement in our work, and word of mouth soon led to many requests for consultancy visits and departmental workshops."

History 2000, Bath Spa University College

- Workshops

Workshops usually differ from conferences in that they are targeted at smaller groups of participants and involve a much higher and more active level of engagement. For example, a workshop might be organised as a "hands-on" session allowing participants to try out particular materials and approaches.

"The value of the workshops has been to provide an opportunity for law teachers to meet and discuss the issues raised in the NCLE publications with colleagues. As a national project, we have taken care to organise these workshops around the UK to ensure that the opportunity to attend is made available to as many people as possible. Reports on the workshops are posted up on the website so that those who were unable to attend can also benefit from the discussion and ideas generated."

National Centre for Legal Education, University of Warwick

When disseminating through conferences and workshops other important points that are worth remembering include:

Before the event -

- ✓ Chose the most suitable conference for your project material
- ✓ Be sure you understand the "call for papers" and respond to it accordingly
- ✓ Decide on your planned outcomes
- ✓ Decide on the best type of presentation -
- ✓ Decide on a title - short, sharp
- ✓ Provide a clear abstract - Keep It Short & Simple (KISS)
- ✓ Once you are accepted - pre-prepare slide/rehearse
- ✓ Prepare handouts and copy
- ✓ Advise organisers what equipment/material you will require
- ✓ Provide organisers with material for an introduction

- ✓ Have a supply of visiting cards ready
- ✓ Check travel/accommodation arrangements

At the event -

- ✓ Introduce yourself to the Chair of your session
- ✓ Check room, equipment, handout etc
- ✓ State aims/objectives/outcomes/method of delivery of your session
- ✓ Keep to time (perhaps appoint a timekeeper)
- ✓ Review main points
- ✓ Question & answer session
- ✓ Feedback - live or later
- ✓ Network

After the event -

- ✓ Reflect on the feedback
- ✓ Use a check list (learn from each conference you attend - your "mistakes" others ideas)
- ✓ Revise material while conference information is still fresh in your mind
- ✓ Try to keep promise made at conference (eg send out further information requested)
- ✓ Chase up appropriate contacts
- ✓ Think about publishing

(Rakesh Bahnout – 'Getting the message across' Dissemination Seminar - Bridging the Gap)

- Roadshows

Roadshows can be an effective way of demonstrating the work of your project to a particular institution or department or set of departments if you are prepared to travel extensively. They can be a useful way of making contact with individual people who might not normally attend workshops or conferences. It is important to think about the subject and/or theme of your roadshow, again taking into account the needs of your target audiences.

- One-to-One

Although making one-to-one contact with people can be a heavy drain on resources for any project, earlier projects have found it very useful to target key people who you believe will enhance the chances of success of your project.

"Projects should allow time in their dissemination plans for one-to-one contact. This, we have found, is what people want."

Professional Development Initiative, London Business School

"Keen to demonstrate the product, we have hosted a number of people on a one-to-one basis at our office."

MaPPiT Project, University of Huddersfield

- Media

Obtaining news coverage, whether at a national or local level, can increase the profile of your project greatly and reach a very wide body of people within the higher education sector or that within which you are working. Targeting the journalists responsible for the learning and teaching, or most relevant section, of the main educational newspapers can be effective, for example, the Times Higher Education Supplement, The Guardian Education Supplement and the Independent Education Supplement.

It is important to ensure that you have identified a "news story" before approaching a journalist otherwise you will have no chance of getting them interested enough in publishing anything for you.

Important points to draw on when producing and presenting material for media dissemination would consider:

Flattery will get you on the starting grid

Demonstrate your knowledge of the journal

Compliment the editor on their publication

Identify with the readers' information needs

'Take the liberty' of forwarding a draft article which matches the 'length and style' of those featured in the publication

Present your article:

Snappy headline

Persuasive introduction

Well spaced out paragraphs

Double spaced text

Sign-off including your 'credentials'

Word count

Timing is important too
How do you work out the news or interest value of what you have to offer?

No USP (Unique Selling Point), no story

Study the target publication - look at:

Check editorial policy:

Develop a relationship

Increase your chances of success
Journals receive 100s of unsolicited articles.
To stand out you need to

Evaluate your offering in relation to other news issues

Be objective

Ask colleagues/associates for their opinion on the research findings

Compare this with the content of the target publication

You are looking for a good 'fit' with the publication

Be realistic

Don't flog a dead horse

Avoid the infamy of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology archive of Useless Research at www.teleport.com/~dkossy/MIT.

style

subject matter

format

Find out if they accept articles for publication

Do they publish guidelines?

What are the terms and conditions?

Who should you write to?

Identify with your customer, the publication

Check your offering for fit with their editorial style and readership

Understand that their job is to attract, interest and keep readers

Put yourself in their position and ask yourself 'what do they want?'

Offer something of real value

Present the information in a clear and accessible format

Ensure that it is relevant to the publication and its readers

Sue Mann – Editor Management Today – 'Getting the message across' Dissemination Seminar - Bridging the Gap Bridging the Gap Seminar - 2001

Further information about publicity, public relations and working with the media can be found on the National Co-ordination Team's website:
<http://www.ncteam.ac.uk/>

"Using the national media is, of course, a good way to disseminate innovative practice and we made ample use of this through the four different articles in the THES."
Speak-Write Project, University of East Anglia

Section 6: Who might help us disseminate?

Earlier projects have sometimes made the mistake of believing that they had to undertake all their dissemination on their own although experience has shown that identifying existing channels through which to work can be one of the most effective methods of dissemination.

Inevitably, your target audiences will already have events, journals, professional bodies and subject associations that they engage with. Your project will stand a greater chance of success if you can work through these existing channels as opposed to creating further publications and events that result in overloading already overworked people.

The team was particularly interested in accessing senior management at HEI's. To this end, contact was made with HESDA (Higher Education Staff Development Agency), who agreed to distribute the BtG briefing papers at monthly intervals (within their regular mailing process) to three hundred named senior individuals within HEI's. They also agreed to provide a hyper link from their website to the BtG site.
Bridging the Gap – Dissemination project 2001

It is worth finding out what other projects working in the same subject area or around the same topics are doing and then approaching them with a view to collaborating - this will probably improve the impact of your dissemination as well as reduce overall costs.

Exercise 7

Spend some time as a project team identifying existing events and other activities that you are aware of that may provide useful channels for dissemination for your project. Identify the relevant organisation or individual and think about whom from the project might approach them with a view to collaborating.

- Handy Hints
- 1) Think about what activities your professional body(ies) or subject association(s) are already involved in.
 - 2) Identify what journals your target audiences are most likely to read.
 - 3) Identify what websites your target audiences are most likely to use and see if links to your site can be made.
 - 4) Identify other projects working in the same or similar area to you and think about how you might collaborate.
 - 5) Avoid duplication of effort – if someone else has already done it then think about another way of using your resources.

Existing Event/Activity	Organisation/Individual	Project member for approach / possible contact

Figure 9

"The team attended each annual ASET Conference throughout the duration of the project and held a session to disseminate the findings to-date. One conference was used to demonstrate the product and its functionality."

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Section 7: How do we prepare our strategy?

By the time you reach this section of the workbook, and if you have completed each of the exercises, your project's dissemination strategy will just about be written. It is important not to underestimate the involvement of the members of your project team in these activities.

If your dissemination strategy is going to be effective, each member of the team needs to feel a sense of ownership – try to involve the team at all stages of the strategy's development and ensure that each member has responsibility for a particular aspect of the strategy's implementation.

Having completed each of the exercises, it makes sense to pull the results of these together to form a coherent document setting out your project's dissemination strategy. It is suggested that you do this under the following headings:

- Aims and objectives of the project
- What the project proposes to disseminate?
- Target audiences/groups
- Benefits to end users
- Dissemination methods/activities
- Timescales and responsibilities
- Targets
- Costs
- Evaluation and Criteria for Success

Once you have produced this document and obtained feedback from the project team you can move on to developing your action plan.

Section 8: How do we turn our strategy into an action plan?

Experience has shown that producing a coherent strategy does not necessarily result in effective implementation unless the strategy is articulated as a clear set of actions. The following framework has been developed to enable you to do this in addition to providing you with a useful checklist for monitoring progress.

This framework has been completed as an example.

Purpose	Target Groups	Method	Vehicle	Timing	Responsibility of
Familiarise consortium members' institutions with project	Peers, Subject staff Specialist staff Support staff IT Academic services staff	Face to face Semi-structured interviews Questionnaires	Personal contact Internal mail, Telephone Email, www, research assistant	Sept-Dec 2002	Consortium members responsible for own institution
Raise awareness of the work of the project	Institutional senior management	Institutional committees Informal meetings	Steering group members	Ongoing – reaching 50% of departments by the end of yr one, and 75% by the end of yr two	Steering group members
Promote the project through the press	HE/FE/Secondary communities None discipline specific Practitioners Staff and educational developers	Articles Stories Press releases Personal contact with journalists Letters	HAN network News Educational news LTSN Newsletter Educational pages e.g. Guardian	Ongoing	Pam Lee – HAN Network Mike Jones – THES Steve Robinson – Educational News Esmerelda Dickinson – LTSN newsletter
Investigate transferability of models and accreditation scheme	HE community Five cascade institutions ILT LTSN QAA	Staff development workshops Workshops/conferences Papers Internet/mailbase Reports	Workshops Conferences www dissemination network LTSN	December 2002	Dissemination network Betsy Twit – ALT conference Joe Smith – www Project Team – workshops
Share experiences of embedding project outcomes into 33 modules	Peers in own institution HE community Subject discipline groups	Presentations Written project case studies Workshops/presentations/reports Www pages	Internal workshops / departmental away days Publish case studies in paper form and on website ISL 2003 Regional workshops	Presentations are ongoing Case studies will be produced every six months, beginning in year 2 National conferences are ongoing Web pages developed and regularly updated	Esmerelda Dickinson – write case studies Joe Smith – mount these on www Project team – make presentations and attend National conferences
Promote findings of project	HE / FE communities Professional networks Software publishers	Papers, Publications Press Www	End of project conference	May 2004	Project team

Figure 10

Exercise 8

It is suggested that you now complete this framework for your project.

Purpose	Target Groups	Method	Vehicle	Timing	Responsibility of

Figure 11

Section 9: How do we cost our dissemination activities?

Having developed your dissemination strategy and action plan, you need to ensure that each dissemination activity has been carefully costed. Earlier projects have sometimes overlooked costs associated with dissemination, for example, the costs of reproducing the final materials for distribution to their target audiences. Whilst this might seem obvious you would be surprised how easy it is to overlook when you are engrossed in the work of your project.

Once you have broken down your dissemination activities, for example, workshops, a conference, a newsletter, a website, you can then begin to obtain estimates of the costs involved.

Exercise 9

Using the table below, try to estimate the costs for a workshop / conference:

Handy Hints
1) Think about whether or not you can stage your workshop within your institution or within another institution that would be willing to provide a room free of charge.
2) Think about whether a professional body or subject association would be willing to host your workshop.

- 3) Consider how many participants might attend and whether you can afford to subsidise their attendance either through waiving a fee or contributing to their travel costs.
- 4) 4. Is there another event planned that you could get involved in?

Different Aspects for Consideration when running a Workshop	Estimated Costs
Venue/Room Hire	
Equipment eg. OHP, data projector, PCs	
Refreshments eg. Coffees, teas, lunch	
Travel to/from the Workshop	
Publicity materials	
Subsidies for participants	
Total Costs	

Figure 12

It is always possible to obtain estimates of costs for all aspects of dissemination. If you wish to produce a newsletter, it is worth approaching a number of different printers to obtain the best price for the numbers you want printed. It is always worth going to more than one to obtain a better deal.

Ensure you do a breakdown of costs for each dissemination activity; this will help to avoid any nasty shocks towards the end of the project when you realise you cannot afford to run your final dissemination event or publish the report you promised.

Section 10: How will we know we have been successful?

An effective dissemination strategy will only continue to be effective if you view it as being an evolving and constantly developing process. The environment around you will change during the lifecycle of your project and the contexts within which your end users are working will also change. This means you need to put in place suitable mechanisms for reviewing your progress and the extent to which your dissemination strategy is meeting your objectives.

You will only be able to review and measure your progress if you have established clear targets at the outset. One of the most effective ways of establishing targets is to link them to the five purposes of dissemination as outlined earlier as this will help to focus and drive the dissemination. The five purposes are:

- Awareness
- Support and favourability
- Understanding
- Involvement
- Commitment

You need to set your project realistic and achievable targets. For example, you may decide that the project has the capability of achieving 90% awareness of its activities within your main target group but that this would be an impossible target for understanding. Setting a target for understanding will probably be influenced by a number of different factors, for example, the size of your target group, the culture, the types of materials or methods you are disseminating etc. It may be that a more achievable target for understanding would be in the region of 20-40%. In terms of setting a target for commitment, this is where you will be actively trying to change particular approaches and encourage real implementation of materials or methods. Inevitably, this activity will be more challenging and your target needs to be set accordingly. Remembering that quality is more important than quantity you need to think realistically about the numbers of academic staff (if they are your target group) that you believe you can encourage to change their practice using your methods, approaches or materials.

“We believe that our strategy of aiming for maximum participation was generally successful” History 2000, Bath Spa University College
“We found that it was difficult to reach beyond the core group of law lecturers who were already enthused about what the project was trying to do.”
National Centre for Legal Education, University of Warwick

As you are thinking about your targets it is important to begin to identify what success for your project might look like. Working as a project team, think about your criteria for success. As you undertake the next exercise, think about addressing some of the following questions:

- How will you know you have been successful?
- What might success for a particular dissemination activity look like?

- What evaluation methods will you use to measure success?
- What outcomes (ie. a change in practice) would you like to see as a result of your activity(ies)?
- What other projects (if any) have worked in a similar area and how successful were they?
- How might you build on previous/existing work to achieve a greater measure of success?

Exercise 10

Working as project team, taking into consideration the questions above, complete the table below.

Handy Hint

- 1) Remember that you may have a number of different target groups within each section, for example, awareness – this may involve a range of groups not just one.

Targets, Timescales and Criteria for Success					
	Target Group(s)	Target	Timescale	Reasons	Criteria for Success
Awareness					
Support and Favourability					
Understanding					
Involvement					
Commitment					

Figure 13

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