

# Cascade Partners

*Embedding Threshold Concepts* is a three year project (autumn 2004- summer 2007) that aims to improve teaching and learning in first year undergraduate modules in economics by identifying and embedding threshold concepts in the curriculum. Threshold concepts have been defined as transformative gateways that lead ultimately to 'ways of thinking and practising' which are routine to individuals who are inside a subject but alien and difficult to grasp for individuals who do not regard themselves as part of that subject community.

The initial work of the project in 2004/5 was identifying examples of threshold concepts in economics (for example, opportunity cost, equilibrium) and developing ways in which students can be assisted in recognising and acquiring these concepts more readily. Some of the outcomes of this work are in the paper presented at EARLI in the publications and working papers section of this site. In the current academic year (2005/2006) we will be systematically embedding these concepts in the first year curricula of four universities in the UK (Coventry University, Durham University, Staffordshire University and the University of the West of England) and evaluating the outcomes in terms of students' learning. The development work will aim to identify and address the needs of students studying for an economics degree and students studying for other degrees such as business studies.

We are very keen to establish a group of 'cascade partners' who are willing to support this development by engaging in a dialogue with us about the project and, where opportunities permit, to try out some of the ideas and strategies that are developed through the project. 'Cascade partners' will be able to use the materials developed by the project team and there will be no direct costs, although there will be a time input. In particular we would greatly value:

- Comments on the rationale we are developing for the approach taken in the project
- Comments on the strategies that we are developing to embed threshold concepts
- Comments on our interpretation of data
- Assistance in trialling tools for identifying students' thinking and strategies to develop their thinking

We envisage that 'cascade partners' will find it convenient to engage with the project in different ways and we have no prescribed template for the scale of the engagement. We do, however, recognise that if we are to be successful we need formative inputs from colleagues in the development of the project and if the outcomes of the project are to make an impact beyond the four core partners then the process of widening the discussion needs to start now. We would naturally be delighted if collaboration with cascade partners led on to joint produced and authored research outputs.

If you are interested in becoming a cascade partner, please contact Jean at the address below.

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