

## Strategic enhancement programmes Commissioned funding application form

Closing Date Noon Friday 9 January 2015



Please complete and submit this form electronically to: [SEP2014@heacademy.ac.uk](mailto:SEP2014@heacademy.ac.uk) by noon on Friday 9 January 2015. All submissions will be acknowledged by email within three working days of receipt.

**Please note:** there are word limits (stated in brackets) for sections, and we are not able to consider additional appendices and text.

### 1. Programme

Please indicate which strategic enhancement programme you are currently engaged with:

Strategic enhancement programme	
Embedding Employability into the Curriculum	Y
Internationalising the Curriculum	
Engaged Student Learning	

### 2. Higher education provider name

Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance

### 3. Who will lead the funded project within the institution?

The named lead person should be available to liaise with the HEA throughout the project; the choice of lead is the decision of the institution.

Name	Mark Simpson
Institutional role	Senior Lecturer and Chair, Rose Bruford College Employability Research Group
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Email address	mark.simpson@bruford.ac.uk
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### 4. Funding strand

Please select **one** of the following:

1.	Evidence and impact	
2.	Development of a tool or resource	Y

## 5. Project title

Employability Online – building an Open Educational Resource to support employability in the performing arts.

## 6. Proposal (up to 2,000 words)

Please outline the activities that you would propose to address for your chosen strand.

### **Project aims**

This project aims to build an online Open Educational Resource (OER) that:

- enables a student to assess and understand their 'employability', and identify gaps in their knowledge;
- provides a learning pathway that supports the development of employability skills, behaviours etc.;
- reinforces existing professional preparation teaching across the institution;
- addresses the issues associated with careers in the performing arts;
- works across the College's different academic disciplines;
- is relevant, useful and useable;
- reflects the needs of employers;
- supports life-long-learning and career development;
- can be rolled out to other institutions.

Furthermore, the *process of creating the OER* will:

- provide insight into the needs of employers and how the College might fill the gaps in a student's skill set;
- empower the academic team to recognise common employability attributes beyond their own academic programme;
- grow confidence amongst the College's academic team to discuss, lead and support the development of employability skills, behaviours etc.;
- embed the development of these skills and attributes within our curriculum.

Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance is a specialist institution working within the performing arts. We understand that, upon their graduation, our students are unlikely to enter permanent, full-time, nine-to-five careers. Our students will instead embark on flexible and concurrent multiple portfolio career paths, short-term contracts and freelance work. Many may have a number of different jobs across a number of organisations, as well as managing their own projects, at any one time. We recognise that we have a responsibility to prepare our students for this, less defined, form of employment to give them the entrepreneurialism, adaptability and resilience that this will require.

We already encourage our students to think about their careers and professional development through a specialist module of teaching (Professional Preparation) and our links with the industry. We understand, however, that 'employability' needs to be embedded more thoroughly across our curriculum, including the development of professional skills and behaviours. We also want to provide this support to alumni when they are seeking their first roles and as their careers develop.

Using our experience in developing online learning and Open Educational Resources we will create an online OER that supports our existing teaching across the institution while also developing professional skills and attributes.

The OER will enable students to undertake self-directed learning across a number of themes including both practical advice (CVs, interview / audition techniques etc.) and the professional skills and behaviours that employers seek (team working, creativity etc.).

Students will be referred to the resource throughout their studies and will be encouraged to undertake their own learning. In addition the OER will be available to alumni and other learners outside Rose Bruford College supporting career development and employability beyond 'first jobs'.

The OER will cross the College's academic programmes and disciplines, making it clear that (e.g.) a lighting designer discussing communication or creativity skills is equally relevant to a performer or costume producer.

To ensure relevance, content delivered via the OER will be employer led; real advice from the people who employ our alumni to create a resource that provides students with the skills that employers require.

Utilising our network of alumni and contacts across the spectrum of careers within the wider performing arts we will populate the OER with documents, case studies, interviews, videos and other resources that we can build on and extend over time. The OER will also include regular contributions and blogs across a number of themes and will allow for online comment and discussion to facilitate two-way content creation and learning.

This project supports the HEA objective to, "develop a tool or resource that... engages staff / students with employability".

### ***Methodology (including milestones, timeframes, quality measures and risk)***

At a basic level this project has the following stages:

1. Research phase – what should the OER cover?
2. Planning phase – how should the OER work and how should it be used?
3. Creation phase – building and delivering an initial phase of the OER.
4. Evaluation phase – does the OER provide the outcomes and impact desired? *(NB – this phase is likely beyond the timescale for projects funded in this round.)*

#### **I. The Research Phase (February / March 2015):**

While there are a number of existing models of 'employability skills' (e.g. QAA Generic Employability Competencies, Open University Employability Skills Descriptions, Skills Plus Project Qualities etc.) we want to understand what employability means within the context of the performing arts, and the unique issues associated with the flexible and multiple concurrent portfolio career paths undertaken by our graduates.

Through a number of focus groups we will canvas the opinions of employers and potential site users to inform the scope of the OER content. Focus groups will encompass:

- Employers of performers (casting professionals, producers, directors and agents);

- Employers of technical, 'back-stage' staff (stage managers, designers, lighting, sound, costume);
- Alumni;
- Current students.

Focus groups will be asked to consider relevant questions, including their understanding of 'employability', the skills that are key to being 'employable' and whether it is the responsibility of HEIs or employers to develop these skills.

This builds upon significant work that has already been undertaken internally in this area including engagement with employers and work to understand employability within a performing arts context. This research, along with additional information about the College's employability strategy can be found on the College's virtual learning environment here - <http://vle.bruford.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=773>

## **2. The Planning Phase (March / April 2015):**

The OER will not simply be an online repository of data digested by the user without any learning outcomes. We will ensure that there are opportunities for the student to understand the information, reflect on and develop their own employability, recognise their own strengths and weaknesses and direct their learning accordingly. In addition our academic team will use the OER within their own teaching; directing students to the resource as appropriate.

The findings of the focus groups will be reported to the College's project group for further discussion. This group will make decisions on the scope and design of the OER including how information will be ordered, how to ensure a pathway of learning, and how to phase the project into deliverables.

A conference for the College's project group is planned for the start of April 2015 and this project will form a significant part of the agenda for this meeting.

The planning phase will also allow for College-wide consultation about how the OER will be embedded within the College's curriculum and support the development of the College's academic team and their own understanding of 'employability'. Through these discussions individual members of staff will become empowered to direct students in the development of skills, behaviours etc.

The project steering group includes members of College staff with expertise and experience in developing online learning and Open Educational Resources.

## **3. The Creation Phase (April / May / June 2015):**

A design and wire-frame site will be produced based on the outcomes from the planning phase.

Contributions will be sought from a number of partners that will include case studies, video interviews, documents, blogs and other information. This will be used to populate the site prior to end-user testing and evaluation. The first phase of the OER will go-live at the end of June 2015.

Additional content will go live in further phases and the OER will continue to be developed becoming a 'live' resource supporting the College's students in years to come.

Analytics will be monitored on a regular basis and the OER will be evaluated with end-users and focus group members throughout the first year of live use to ensure that it is relevant, useful and usable.

The most significant risk to this project will be ensuring that the scope of the initial OER deliverable is manageable and within budget. There is a danger that we attempt to encompass too much with the first stage of this project. The College's experience with developing online learning and OERs will be vital to ensure that the project is planned and delivered in manageable phases.

A further risk is that the College's student body (or staff team) do not engage with the OER and it is not widely used. This will be mitigated through the inclusion of a wide representation of staff through the planning phase, and the inclusion of a student focus group in the research, and subsequent testing and evaluation of the phase one deliverables.

### ***Anticipated impact***

The Rose Bruford College Employability OER will:

- influence how the College provides support and training to enhance 'employability' within our student body;
- provide a model, and tool, for use across the performing arts sector to understand and address the 'employability' issues unique to our industry;
- provide a platform for the further engagement and involvement of our industry contacts, partners and alumni in the life of the College and our students;
- develop a relationship with such stakeholders that has real value and is of mutual benefit;
- ensure that students leave Rose Bruford College with the skills required by employers within the performing arts sector;
- break down the barriers across the College's different academic programmes and enforce an institution-wide understanding of employability skills and behaviours;
- provide a mechanism to address our ambitions to provide life-long careers support to College alumni;
- create a resource that will continue to be developed, taking advantage of new technologies that will become a live resource for the College, and the sector, for years to come.

### ***Alignment with the framework***

This project maps directly to the *HEA Framework for Employability* stages 1, 2 and 3.

The objective of the research phase is understanding what we and our stakeholders mean by 'employability' and the skills, behaviours etc. that our graduates need to demonstrate to be considered as highly employable. This phase will create and define a shared point of reference, led by our stakeholders, from which we can build a strategy to embed these skills into our teaching and curriculum. This shared understanding will enable us to break down the barriers of the College's different academic programmes, move us beyond the mind-set of (e.g.) "the needs of a lighting designer are different from those of a costume producer", and embed these core competencies across our academic programme.

Through our engagement with students and alumni we will also begin to understand to what extent our students are engaged with ‘employability’, where there are gaps in our provision and how, if at all, they are self-directing their learning to fill these gaps.

The planning phase of the project gives the College the time and space to reflect upon and understand what we are already doing (whether through formal or informal learning). It will enable us to review practice across the institution to map different engagement strategies, to recognise best practice and ensure that this is reflected in the planning of the OER. It will also enable us to identify where there might be gaps in our provision and plan how we might address these gaps.

The creation of the OER will be directly informed by the needs of our industry partners and the needs and experience of our students and our alumni. By focussing our planning on the findings of the focus groups we will ensure that the OER provides learning that is applicable in real-life and is not based on our own preconceived ideas of ‘employability’.

Once created the resource will become a central part of learning and teaching across the institution, working, in effect, as a traditional reading list, allowing academic staff to direct students to relevant articles, videos etc. that support the curriculum.

Although outside of the timescale for this proposal, the OER will be continually monitored and evaluated to ensure that it is effective and the desired outcomes are being achieved. This will include feedback from students, staff members and other users and the monitoring of site analytics. This evaluation supports the HEA framework stage 4 creating a resource that provides a College-wide and cross-discipline approach to supporting employability.

## 7. Budget

Please identify a full breakdown of costs including VAT, and details of any matched funding. N.B. The HEA cannot fund: normal cost of course delivery, FeC/overheads, contingency funds, international travel. Equipment requests would need to be essential to the running of the project and not routinely available for use, e.g. laptops, PCs etc.

Description	Cost (£)
<b>Phase I</b>	
Project Management – 22 days @ £150 per day (To include: management of focus groups, coordination and chairing of internal project group meetings, coordination of content etc.)	<b>£3,300</b>
Professional Video – 8 days @ £350 per day + VAT (To include: filming of interviews etc. with employers, post-production, editing, supply of HD video etc.)	<b>£3,360</b> (£2,800+£560)
Web / OER Development – 20 days @ £150 per day (To include: building the site, testing live roll out etc.)	<b>£3,000</b>
Licenses, software etc. (To include: purchase of URL, hosting, relevant software license etc.)	<b>£350</b>
<b>Phase One Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£10,010</b>
<b>Amount requested from HEA</b>	<b>£10,000</b>

<b>Ongoing - Year One</b> (funded by Rose Bruford College)	
Additional resource management and content development (annual) – 12 days @ £150 per day	<b>£1,800</b>
Further web / OER development (annual) – 12 days @ £150 per day	<b>£1,800</b>
Additional video content creation / editing (annual) – 2 days	<b>£840</b>
Site maintenance, hosting, licenses etc.	<b>£200</b>
<b>Ongoing Expenditure</b>	<b>£4,640</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£14,650</b>

## 8. Working group

In the table, please include the members of a working group who will be responsible for delivering the project.

<b>Institutional role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Email</b>
Senior Lecturer	Mark Simpson	Mark.simpson@bruford.ac.uk
Head of Development and Alumni Relations	Andrew Scanlan	Andrew.scanlan@bruford.ac.uk
VLE Development Manager	David Matthews	David.matthews@bruford.ac.uk
Director of Learning, Teaching and Curriculum	Professor Kathy Dacre	Kathy.dacre@bruford.ac.uk
Additional staff as required, to be identified		

## 9. Signature

The Higher Education Academy will be storing data on the selected institutions and their working groups for the duration of the project. By submitting this application you will be indicating your agreement to this. The application should be signed and dated by a senior manager (for example a Pro-Vice Chancellor or Vice Principal) of the institution.

Please indicate your agreement with the following:

- I agree that my institution's involvement in the commissioned funding strand of the strategic enhancement programme can be publicised by the Higher Education Academy.
- I understand that the information I have provided will be stored in an electronic format by the Higher Education Academy for the duration of the project.
- I understand that the information I have provided will be accessible to, and shared by, the Higher Education Academy with other participating institutions.

Signature\*:

Name: Dr Andrew Walker

Position: Vice-Principal

Institution: Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance

Date: 12 January 2015

\* An electronic signature is acceptable.