

Appendix G

Specific postgraduate curriculum development outcomes from the two case story workstreams

WS-2: Apprenticeship development

Having finally achieved Faculty approval in 2022 to develop an OU apprenticeship programme for STPA, eSTeEM members with other ASTiP colleagues were able to produce two new 30 credit modules specifically for the Apprenticeship:

- (i) **Evidencing STiP** (TBXY874) the flagstone *portfolio module* for the STPA. The module guides capabilities through enabling space for students to more deeply reflect on workplace experiences of using STiP tools
- (ii) **Co-designing interventions with STiP** (TBXY873) *sister module* dealing with some KSBs from the STPA Standard that were not covered in other two pre-existing sister modules - *871 and *872. The module provides space for innovative assessment measures inviting construction of screencasts to enhance reflexive reasoning accompanying interventions with STiP

The programme provided two qualifications, an *Apprenticeship* degree and an accompanying *Postgraduate Diploma in STiP [Professional]* degree. It was structured around the central 2-year portfolio module TBXY874 on which apprentices were linked with their personal Practice tutor (PT) and employment line manager. A core output from the module is the theory of change (as a system of interest) relating systemic sensibilities with systems literacy in order to develop STiP capabilities. Alongside *874, apprentices studied existing sister modules *871 and *872 (along with other non-apprentices studying on STiP programme) and the new sister module *873. The three sister modules provided the workplace activities that provided the source of evidencing KSBs undertaken within the portfolio module.¹

¹ The Portfolio module is sometimes regarded as the *work-based* module of an apprenticeship; to be distinguished from the *workplace* activities associated with sister STiP modules. It is work-based

The programme was launched in May 2023 with very favourable support from the External Assessor.² There were less than anticipated registrations - in-part due to the late launch (by 2022, more than six institutions including universities were able to set up as providers of the STPA programme). The OU programme also encountered several teething problems, particularly reconciling student workload issues of doing a portfolio module alongside workplace sister modules (concurrently working part-time on two 30 credit modules). Ordinarily such issues would be addressed through a post-launch review though the opportunity was not afforded due to STEM Faculty decision to withdraw the two modules in 2024 - just half way through the first presentation of the Apprenticeship.

WS-3: STiP 2020

because of the interaction between Practice tutor, employer and employee in regular reviewing of apprentices' work.

² Extracts from EA Report 20/102023 Dr Agnieszka Bates: "The module content and teaching materials are excellent, designed to support learning both in relation to Master's criteria (QAA 2021) and the STP Standard (Systems Thinking Practitioner Standard, Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education 2020). The design of assessment tasks around complex workplace problems offers excellent support to students who are employed or are seeking employment in a wide range of occupations, both STiP Apprentices and students working towards a Master's qualification.

"The structure of the module enables students to study the TBXY874 module concurrently with the other core STiP modules and effectively supports STiP Apprentices in planning and developing their ePortfolios as part of their preparation for their End-Point Assessment

"The teaching materials are highly effective, developed as a highly robust system to support student learning. This system is multi-layered, multimodal and highly interactive. In particular, several iterations of the discussion of KSBs, the links to the glossary, videos, external resources and links to resources in sister modules on the VLE, offer multiple layers of support and multiple connection points to this support throughout the module. The high quality of the teaching material is enriched by events involving students, the teaching team and key stakeholders. University support with accessibility issues is also of great value.

"The processes of support beyond module materials are equally effective. In particular, practice tutors working with designated groups of students are in regular direct contact with students, with the green/amber/red system supporting individual student's progression. Regular meetings between tutors and the curriculum manager are an important additional layer in the system of student support, should this additional support be needed. Given the high level of challenge related to module assessment (preparation for EPA), when compared to typical Level 7 assessments, the induction process would merit a separate welcome briefing for the students studying this module, to explain the end process from the outset and help maintain students' motivation and enthusiasm.

"Overall, the system of support offered to students is excellent."

The two replacement core modules for the mainstream STiP Masters programme were launched around the beginning of 2020, both able to develop more the capabilities element of STiP development:

- (i) **Making strategy with STiP** (TB871) had explicit teaching around *bricolage* in further coupling between a (systematically-oriented) ‘systems’ Tools stream and more (systemically-orientated) experiential People stream as a pedagogic device;
- (ii) **Managing change with STiP** (TB872) further encouraged a form of *methodological pluralism* in drawing on an expanding systems literacy of cybernetics and social learning coupled with individual experiences

For STiP sister modules the *workplace activities* are integrated as part of the pedagogy. Students are encouraged to practice STiP ideas in their areas of practice as a more generalised form of experimentation – another feature of encouraging capability. The OU platform provides a safe space for experimentation through eliciting feedback both from study colleagues on the module forum and their tutors in assessment feedback. Since their launch in 2020 both core modules TB871 and TB872 have continued to record the highest PG registrations in the School and amongst the highest at Faculty level, as well as registering improved retention levels and continued high student satisfaction levels.³

Aside from many STiP students only wanting to do core STiP modules for continual professional development purposes, another reason why STiP students have been reluctant to continue study after undertaking the existing core STiP modules – TB871 and TB872 – is the lack of choice for other STiP modules. Aside from a few Development management and Environmental management modules in which STiP academics have had a significant authorship role, few electives have any STiP component. Students registering on Diploma and Masters can experience dissatisfaction with any sense of continuation with STiP concepts, as introduced in core modules – a means of expanding systems literacy for making reasoned choices with STiP capability. Whilst the STiP team were successful in retaining the mainstream STiP programme after initial recommendations to withdraw the curriculum in 2024, a deeply disappointing outcome from STiP 2020 was the reluctance at the time for considering using the newly

³ From the QME 2021 Review, satisfaction levels for STiP were 91% (up from 87%), and 100% (up from 81%), for Masters and Diploma respectively. For TB871 and TB872 the overall satisfaction levels were 94% and 65% respectively compared with Faculty average of 59%.

developed *873 sister module of the apprenticeship for the non-apprenticeship PG Diploma and Masters qualifications. The inclusion of *873, and adaptation of the portfolio module *874, for the non-apprenticeship programme would significantly enhance the quality of capabilities development amongst students. Expansion of the curriculum remains at this time an aspiration of the STiP team – with recurring support from both the External Assessor for both modules, and the External Examiner for the STiP and STPA qualifications.⁴

At Masters level, students have expressed dissatisfaction with a lack of any STiP community, particularly study colleagues who may be undertaking STiP dissertations as part of their capstone modules (60 credit T802 or 30 credit T803/T847). As a result of focusing on capabilities from this research, in October 2021 the STiP team set up a Journal Club for students wanting to discuss issues of STiP in live sessions orchestrated by STiP ALs on a bimonthly basis.⁵

⁴ From EA reporting for TBXY873 “the module would enhance the learning of students at level 7 who are not pursuing the STP Apprenticeship.” (Dr Agnieska Bates, Final report 19/03/2024). External Examiner Professor Thomas Jun has similarly expressed support at Cluster Exam Board meetings for experimenting on having both *874 and *873 available for non-apprentices

⁵ Support for ongoing STiP journal club secured by Board of Studies by convening, administering, facilitating, and supporting selection of journal club articles and YouTube videos, running events and liaising with members of the club in order to support students to develop the skills for undertaking the capstone modules. Whilst attendance varies between 10-30 participants, over 100 participants have registered by October 2022.