

# Excellence in Higher Education. Evaluating the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model® in Higher Education in the UK

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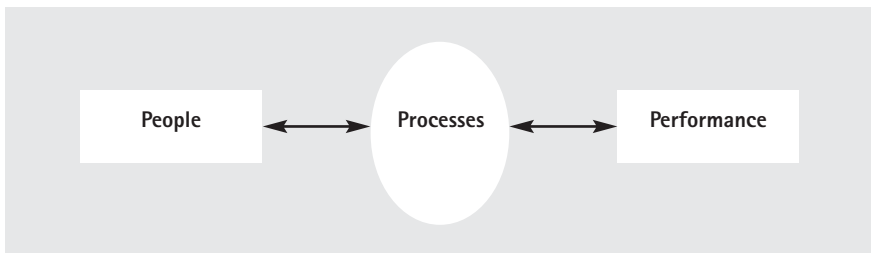
Sheffield Hallam University hat als führende Institution im Rahmen eines der Projekte, die unter dem Higher Education Funding Council for England's Developing Good Management Practice finanziert werden, ein dreijähriges Projekt begonnen, mit dem die Anwendung des European Foundation for Quality Management Excellence Model® evaluiert wird. Der folgende Beitrag beschreibt dieses Modell und gibt als Fallstudie die Erfahrungen der Sheffield Hallam University wieder. Damit wird aufgezeigt, dass das Modell – wie bereits in anderen Bereichen des öffentlichen und privaten Sektors – auch im Hochschulbereich geeignet ist, die Leistungen des Managements kontinuierlich zu verbessern.

## 1 The EFQM Excellence Model® – The Foundation Stone for Excellence

The EFQM model recognized that process improvement was at the heart of any organisational development, but it also made the connection that it is through processes that the talents of its people can be released, which in turn produces better performance. It also followed that improvement in the performance can be achieved only by improving the processes by involving the people. This simple model is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The simple model for improved performance

Source: Total Organisational Excellence, John S Oakland, 1999.

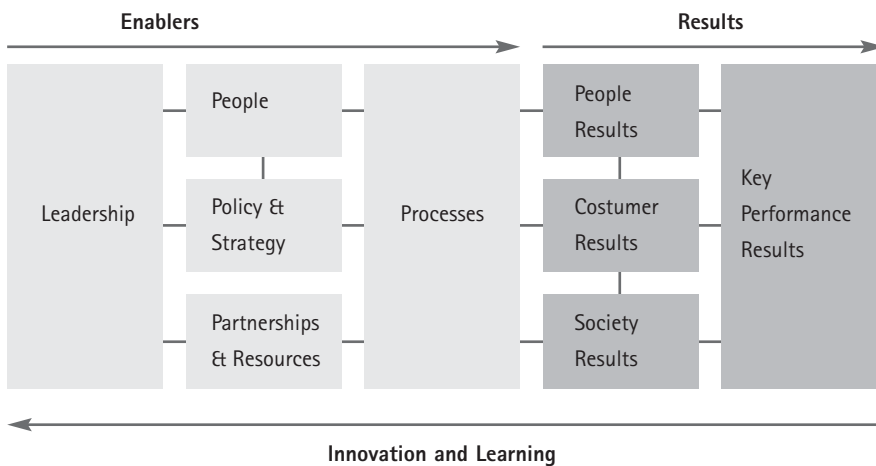


The EFQM Excellence Model® itself (which is a registered trademark) was revised in 1999 to take account of current thinking, practices and working environments. It is described by the EFQM as „a practical tool to help organizations establish an appropriate management system by measuring where they are on the path towards Excellence, helping them to understand the gaps, and then stimulating solutions“.

The model, shown in Figure 2, is non-prescriptive framework based on nine criteria, with five 'enablers' and four 'results'. The enabling criteria cover what the organization does, and the results criteria cover what the organisation achieves. 'Enablers' cause 'Results'.

Figure 2: The EFQM Excellence Model®

Source: European Foundation for Quality Management, 1999.



The model is underpinned by what is termed the 'eight essentials of excellence', or the *fundamental concepts*. The EFQM believe that the achievement of excellence requires total management commitment and acceptance of these concepts.

The eight fundamental concepts are:

- a) Results Orientation
- b) Customer Focus
- c) Leadership and Constancy of Purpose
- d) Management by Processes and Facts
- e) People Development and Involvement

- f) Continuous Learning, Innovation and Improvement
- g) Partnership Development
- h) Public Responsibility

### 1.1 The Criteria and Sub-Criterion

The criteria and sub-criterion are the only prescriptive parts to the model. It is recognized that assessment against all nine criteria is both desirable and accepted as good management practise. Organisations who are applying for the European Quality Award need to demonstrate evidence in each of the sub-criterion areas.

The bullet points given within each sub-criterion are lists of possible areas to address. They are prefixed by 'should' or 'may' to indicate that these are areas which give guidance and promote further thought about the sub-criterion, and are not intended to be mandatory or exhaustive.

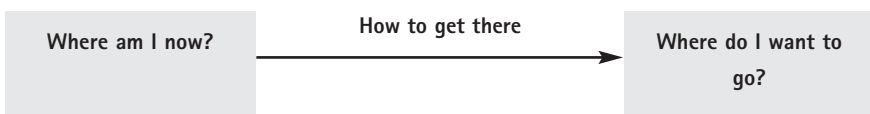
The five enablers each contain either four or five sub-criterion each. The results each contain two sub-criterion each. There are weightings attached to each criteria to reflect importance to that area when scoring is undertaken.

### 1.2 Using the Model as a Self-Assessment and Planning Tool

The model is used by the majority of organizations as a way of finding out where they are now, considering where they want to improve, and then making decisions on how to get there. This can be simply illustrated as shown in Figure 3.

*Figure 3: Simple assessment concept*

*Source: European Foundation for Quality Management, 1999.*



As organizations mature, the model becomes part of the business planning framework, where it is used to gather evidence, with the results being fed in to strategic, operational and personal development plans. This is illustrated in Figure 4:

Figure 4: Integration of the EFQM Excellence Model® with Business Planning

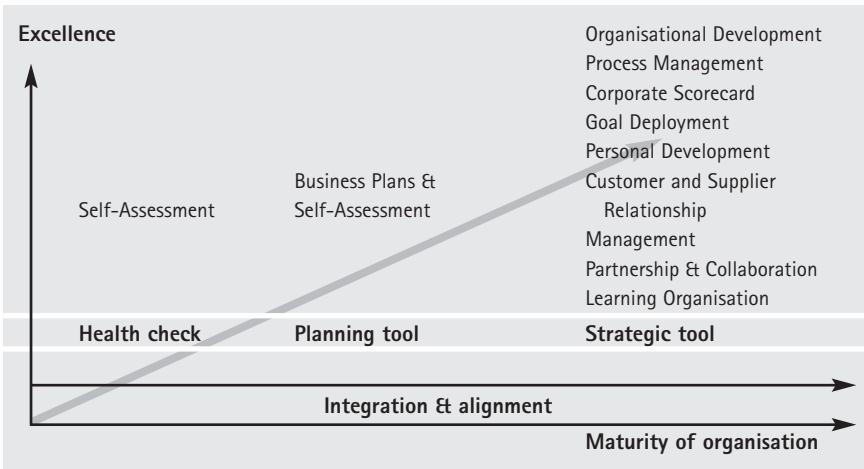
Source: Lloyds TSB



Further use of the model defines it as a management tool rather than a measurement tool, encompassing many other improvement tools, techniques and frameworks which work at more specific levels. Figure 5 illustrates this journey.

Figure 5: The Excellence Journey

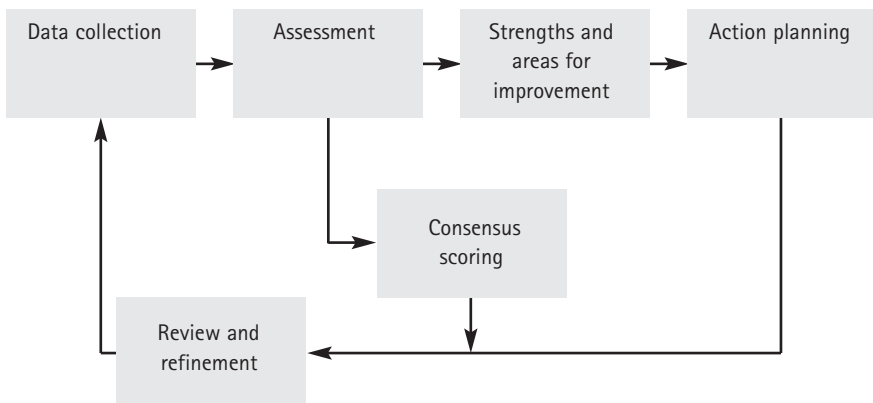
Source: European Foundation for Quality Management



The self-assessment process using the Excellence Model provides an organisation with information by which it can monitor and evaluate progress towards its own goal and organisational excellence. It leads to the identification of strengths and areas for improvement in a wide range of activities, and prompts actions to be owned and taken forward. There are a number of simple steps which can be taken through the self-assessment process. These are shown in Figure 6.

*Figure 6: The key steps to self-assessment*

*Source: Total Organizational Excellence, John S Oakland, 1999.*



A detailed and working knowledge of the model, and a deeper understanding of the relationship and inter-relationship of the criteria and the balance that it provides in terms of looking at all aspects of an organization, means that it can be used holistically to make real and continued improvement.

Before undertaking a self-assessment, many organizations train Assessors within their organization who are then knowledgeable in the philosophy, use and application of the model. Assessor training involves attending a two day workshop hosted by a licensed trainer, where the model is explained in detail and the evaluation and scoring of evidence is practised. Pre-work evaluating a case study is also required. Once trained and licensed, an Assessor is better placed to lead and assess the self-assessment process. Trained assessors are able to assess and validate evidence from other organizations as requested. European Quality Award Assessors, and Assessors for Regional Quality Awards undergo additional training.

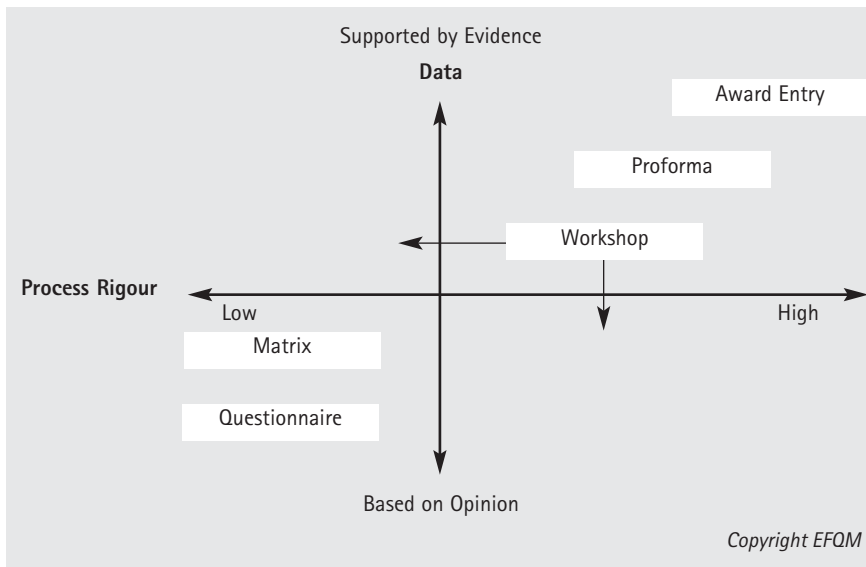
This consistent framework for the training of Assessors ensures that there is continuity amongst the evaluation and scoring of evidence, as most Assessors have been trained to a similar standard.

### 1.3 Key Methods of Assessment

Assessment against the model is flexible dependant on the size, type and maturity of the organization. Assessment can be internal (self), external (assessed by people outside the assessment unit), or a mix of both. The main types of assessment methods are shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Assessment options

Source: European Foundation for Quality Management



Each assessment method has a 'standard' approach, but because of the nature of many of the assessment methods (particularly if being used as part of a self-assessment rather than an external assessment) these are flexible and can be adapted to meet the timescales and resources of individual organizations. It is important that the advantages and disadvantages of each method are considered and the mix of methods used is appropriate to the needs of the institution at that time.

Whichever assessment method is used, it gives organizations the opportunity to look holistically at themselves against a range of criterion which address internal and external factors. The assessment methods can be mixed to ensure that the evidence collected is robust and suitable for the needs of the organization at that time, for example, the workshop and pro-forma based approach could be used in Year 1, complimented by questionnaires. In Year 2 the questionnaires only could be used as a 'health check' to monitor progress. The pro-forma could then be re-visited in Year 3.

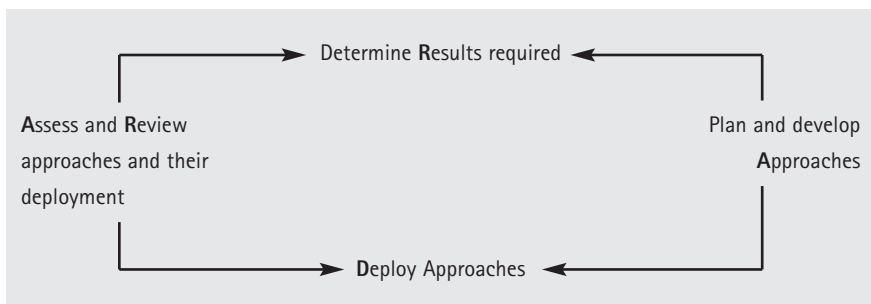
The option for internal and external assessor validation is also an important part of the assessment process. External assessment can be sought at any time to validate current opinion and evidence to ensure that the organization is being open and honest with itself. However, internal assessments are also valuable on a more regular basis to ensure that on-going improvement is being made.

#### 1.4 The Reliance Upon Evidence

At the heart of the model is the logic known as RADAR. RADAR consists of four elements, which are also shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: The RADAR Logic

Source: EFQM Excellence Model®



It is RADAR that gives weight to the model in terms of being built on a strong evidence base. For the results criterion, RADAR provides the framework to look at what an organization has actually achieved across the balanced set of indicators. It requires a demonstration of positive trends and/or sustained performance for three or more years; asses-

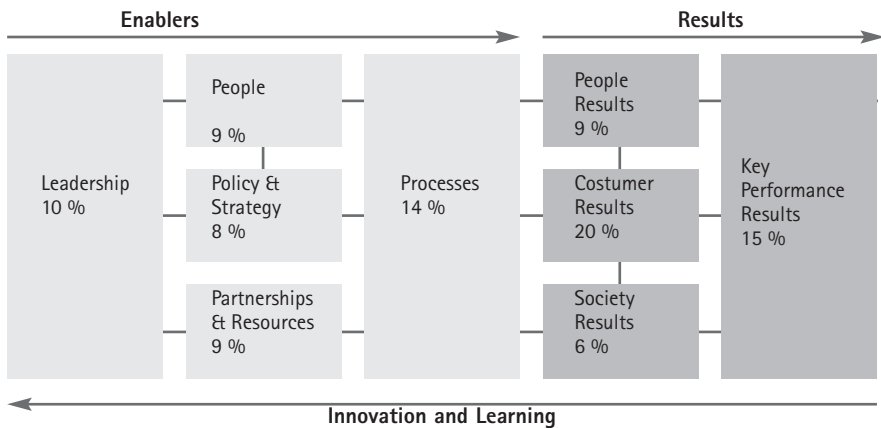
ses whether targets are appropriate and whether they have been met, how performance compares with others, and whether the scope of the results actually addresses relevant areas.

For the enabling criteria, the framework covers what an organization plans to do and the reasons for it. They are scored against whether the approach used is sound, having a clear rationale, being well defined and has a clear focus on stakeholder need. It must also be integrated, supporting policy and strategy and linked to other approaches where appropriate. It also scores the deployment of each approach – to assess whether the approach is implemented in all relevant areas in a systematic way. The final aspect of RADAR concentrates on whether an organization does actually assess and review both the approach and the deployment of the approach, with regular measurement demonstrated and improvements made.

The individual scores are then weighted. The weightings are attribute to what are viewed as the most significant aspects of the model. These weightings were derived at the time the model was formed and so are based on a broad range of experience and wealth of information from across the world. The weighting of the criterion are shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9: The EFQM Excellence Model® with weightings shown

Source: European Foundation for Quality Management



From these final calculations an overall score is derived which can allow an organization to benchmark all, part or specific activities against others within or outside their own sector, locally, nationally and internationally.



## 1.5 Benchmarking Against Others

The EFQM Excellence Model® provides a common framework and language which can be used to compare performance in all areas, or specific areas against others within or outside the sector who are using the same assessment framework. It allows organisations to focus on specific areas for improvement, and learn from others who have had similar learning experiences in the past. It also enables organisations to assess how well they are actually doing in comparison to others, and whether they are actually the 'best in class' in a specific area, and could therefore help others.

Benchmarking is viewed as an important part of the journey to Excellence. The EFQM Excellence Model® provides the framework for analysis, with benchmarking allowing internal and external comparison to promote learning and continuous improvement. There is no final score, or ceiling of achievement, but a progression which needs to be checked and measured through the self-assessment and benchmarking processes.

Whilst the outcomes and scores from self-assessments can remain confidential, many organisations are able to share the learning, methodology, process improvements and pitfalls with others, without contravening commercial confidence. The publication of reports and scores is not mandatory, but many award winning organisations publish summary documents of their award entries, with changes or omissions of sensitive data. This fosters a culture of learning and sharing within and between sectors, which again is based on the understanding and sharing of a common language and assessment framework.

## 2 Practical Use of The EFQM Excellence Model®

According to the EFQM (2001), the Excellence Model is used by over 20.000 organisations (of these at least 10.000 are small and medium-sized enterprises-SMEs) across Europe, by 60 % of Europe's largest companies, and by nine of the 13 European companies in the FT's 50 World's Most Respected Companies. In the UK it has been reported that even in 1996, 35 % of companies were found to be using or intended to use the EFQM Excellence Model® as a guide to self-assessment.

The European Foundation for Quality Management has also established a Public Sector Steering Group, which is seeking to address the particular needs of the public sector,

raise awareness and promote the use of the model. A specifically identified area within this group is that of Education. Mike Pupius, Director of Organizational Excellence at Sheffield Hallam University is leading this Education Community of Practice, which aims to bring together educational institutes from across Europe to share best practise and ideas about the practical use of the model. Experiences and issues from this group will be fed back to EFQM in order to influence and progress the on-going development of the model and any particular support requirements identified by the sector. Further information and papers from Education Community of Practice meetings are available on our web site: <http://excellence.shu.ac.uk/henetwork.asp>

## 2.1 The Challenge for the Higher Education Sector In the UK

Sheffield Hallam's journey towards excellence is to realize its vision to set the standard for a modern progressive University with a leading national role in the 21st Century. In order to achieve this vision, we are committed to putting students at the heart of our teaching and learning. But we must also meet the needs of all those customers and partners using our services, not just in teaching and learning, but in research, enterprise and regional development. We also have a fundamental responsibility as an employer to meet the needs of our staff, and must also satisfy the various demands of the funding bodies and numerous other agencies to whom we are accountable. In other words, we are faced with the task of achieving balanced stakeholder satisfaction. To meet this challenge we must improve our capability for self-reflection.

In common with many higher education institutions we find ourselves in a situation where the lack of resources presents us with some difficult issues. As an institution our response has been a commitment to do only those things in which we can achieve a standard of excellence, whilst recognising the need to regularly review the quality of our performance in all areas.

In its simplest form, we have been using the Excellence Model as a tool for self-assessment or reflection. Using a varied and flexible approach we are finding it can add value in academic, administrative and research areas. As we gain in experience, we are finding that it can also provide institutions with a strategic tool that can begin to inform performance management, governance and business planning. With its focus on understanding our core processes, the Model is beginning to open up opportunities for tackling those cross-cutting issues that can have a critical impact on the student experience such as enquiry management, enrolment and the development of quality and information systems.

At a strategic level, therefore, we are finding that the activity of self-assessment and the raising of awareness of the fundamental principles of how organizations can become more effective is wholly complementary to the development of good management practices such as strategic and business planning, key performance indicator development, and the use of student- and staff-centred survey methodologies. It is therefore becoming an important catalyst in the management of change. As our work progresses we are seeking to address two key areas of the Model by using self-assessment methodologies:

- How an organization does things in terms of the effectiveness of its management approaches.
- What results are actually achieved in terms of customers, people, society and key performance results.

Another issue which we are facing is that of language and terminology. Terms such as performance management, benchmarking and customer focus are commonly used in other sectors, both private and public. It is widely accepted that they are critical to achieving excellence. However, until recently, these terms did not resonate well in a University context. Instead, we described our attempts to reassure our various stakeholders of the quality and standards of the services we provide in a language – quality speak – which was virtually impenetrable to those outside the sector.

## 2.2 Quality Management

One of the things which we have found from our initial experience of piloting the EFQM Model, is that Universities and Colleges confront similar management challenges to other organizations. However there are major differences in values that brings to the forefront the conflict between the drive to provide value for money services through a managerialist approach and the desire to retain the traditional collegial and democratic cultures. The EFQM approach is essentially about how organizations can manage themselves more effectively if they are to be – and be seen to be – quality organizations.

Over 800 of Europe's leading organizations are members of EFQM. When looking at the fundamental concepts underpinning the Excellence Model – Results Orientation, Management by Processes and Facts, Partnership Development, Continuous Learning, Innovation and Improvement – it is evident that they will be interpreted differently depending on whether the organization in question is ICI, Volvo, the Post Office, Rolls Royce or a University. What is becoming evident is that it is through these fundamental

concepts and how they apply to universities that the Excellence Model becomes less threatening to the academic culture.

But that is all that should be different: it is the *interpretation* which makes the terms applicable to the specific organisational context. The fundamental concepts still provide the toolkit needed to make the journey towards excellence. Our experience is that sharing a common language or 'frame of reference' with those outside the sector also brings other benefits. We have learnt a great deal from other organisations with whom we might not necessarily have otherwise engaged.

### 2.3 Why the Issue of Excellence in Higher Education (HE) is so Relevant

The issues which the EFQM Excellence Model® raises could not be more relevant to Higher Education Institutions at the current point in time.

#### Customer (student) focus

The increased financial contribution which all students now make towards the cost of their education has led to increased expectations and demands. Students are right to expect nothing less than an excellent educational experience from us. The Excellence Model places particular emphasis on Customer Focus. To quote from the EFQM Excellence Model®: *'The customer is the final arbiter of product and service quality and customer loyalty. Retention and market share gain are best optimised through a clear focus on the needs of current and potential customers.'*

The concept of students as customers has not been welcomed in some quarters of the Higher Education sector. This reflects the difference between the student as a consumer purchasing say a tin of beans from a supermarket and 'purchasing' higher education. S/he does not purchase a degree or other qualification but contributes to the cost of sharing in a partnership in learning.

However, the dangers of not placing students (and indeed parents) first as valued customers, and orientating provision around our own preferences rather than those of the student are now clearly apparent as institutions struggle to compete for market share.

#### Government and funding body pressures

Together with increased demands from students, institutions are facing unprecedented pressures from the Government and funding councils to demonstrate the effectiveness

of their management processes not least in areas like equal pay and equal opportunities. While this pressure is challenging for a sector which has seen managerialism as a threat to the democratic culture and academic freedom, it is clearly essential if we are to reduce the growing burden of accountability and demonstrate unambiguously that we can be trusted. The recent introduction of performance indicators for the sector, developed by the funding councils, but in reality instigated by the Government, acts as a spur for institutions to consider their performance management in a way which they are unlikely to have done before.

Our experience is that the Model can be applied to any type of department, school, faculty or research institute, and at an institutional level in a way that can provide an holistic framework and a mechanism for all stakeholders to understand what the core issues are. It can provide a route through which internal quality systems can be managed and enhanced, often providing an invaluable wider perspective. At a more strategic level, the Model offers the opportunity of joined-up thinking, linking together the key elements of the management and operation of universities, including strategic vision, business planning, academic and institutional quality.

### **3 The Excellence Framework In The HE Sector: Some Early Lessons From The Sheffield Hallam University Lead Consortium**

The Higher Education funding Council for England (HEFCE) supported *Excellence in Higher Education* Programme is being lead by Sheffield Hallam University, and includes the Universities of Cranfield, Durham, Salford, Ulster and the further education college of Dearne Valley.

This three year programme, which began in May 2000, aims to test the use of the EFQM Excellence Model® in Higher Education, to see if it produces the business benefits that others have been able to demonstrate both within and outside the public sector. A brief outline of the use of the EFQM Excellence Model® within each of these institutions follows:

**University of Cranfield**

Assessment area	<i>Academic School:</i> School of Industrial and Manufacturing Science (SIMS)
Self-assessment method	Started using a questionnaire based approach, then moved to interactive workshops.
Latest outcomes	Two key improvement projects have been taken forward: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Communications project has developed a framework that supports comprehensive communications using a range of formal and informal processes. Champions across the school are being sought to take forward this framework, and it is hoped that it will also be adopted school wide. Further enhancements and evaluation are also planned.</li> <li>2. The Staff Development project has identified a number of key issues. A number of these relate to university-wide matters, and meetings are being held with Personnel to encourage them to take on board some of the ideas; the remaining ideas will be presented to the Senior Management Team (SMT) with recommendations to implement them in SIMS. Interest is increasing from other parts of the University and meetings are being planned to raise awareness of the Model and its use within the sector. It is hoped that further work may be progressed in these areas.</li> </ol>

**Dearne Valley College**

Assessment areas	<i>Cross College Teams:</i> Quality Management Team College Management Team
Self-assessment method	Mostly workshops
Latest outcomes	Progress being made at College and University wide levels with key activities over the past few months including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a generic high-level process/CSF alignment chart</li> <li>• Chart to show alignment of processes with values and mission</li> <li>• Introductory workshop on EFQM given to Senior Admin team by Ian Raisbeck</li> <li>• Business planning workshop and the link to EFQM given to Senior Management Team by Mike Pupius and Carol Steed</li> <li>• Input by John Hirst into the review of the academic organization of the University, and input to project on Risk Management.</li> <li>• Participation in North East (NE) Excellence Awards</li> </ul>

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- Preparation of student exit survey for implementation across all colleges
- Investigation of SMART (name of computer package) management and its potential for the University
- Meetings of Project Team now being held weekly

### University of Durham

Assessment areas	<i>Residential Colleges:</i> Van Mildert College Grey College Collingwood College
Self-assessment method	Mostly workshops
Latest outcomes	<p>Progress being made at College and University wide levels with key activities over the past few months including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a generic high-level process/Critical Success Factors alignment chart</li> <li>• Chart to show alignment of processes with values and mission</li> <li>• Introductory workshop on EFQM given to Senior Admin team</li> <li>• Business planning workshop and the link to EFQM given to Senior Management Team by Mike Pupius and Carol Steed</li> <li>• Input by John Hirst into the review of the academic organization of the University, and input to project on Risk Management</li> <li>• Participation in NE Excellence Awards</li> <li>• Preparation of student exit survey for implementation across all colleges</li> <li>• Investigation of SMART management and its potential for the University</li> <li>• Meetings of Project Team now being held weekly</li> </ul>

### University of Salford

Assessment areas	<i>Academic Faculties:</i> Health and Social Care Business and Informatics Academic Enterprise
Self-assessment method	Workshops, interview based pro-forma completion
Latest outcomes	1. <i>Faculty of Health and Social Care:</i> three schools within the faculty have undertaken an assessment against seven key performance areas,

identifying existing targets, benchmarks, trend data and enablers. The outcomes of these have been reviewed with the Dean and fed into the planning process for this year. The benefits of this process were seen at school level and also by the Dean – particularly the dynamic and holistic view that was gained, with the opportunity to identify areas for improvement, celebrate success, and find areas of good practice. Other activities have included process mapping of post-graduate programmes; School Admissions workshop; workshops planned with partners in nine National Health Service (NHS) Trusts to identify partnership processes; introduction to EFQM workshops have been given for Faculty staff; series of one hour presentations to school staff to disseminate project and model.

2. *Business and Informatics Faculty*: The work within this faculty is currently being reviewed, with the plan to roll out assessments across the whole Faculty.
3. *Academic Enterprise*: A range of activities have taken place including process mapping to review processes; three student projects have been established to tackle larger projects and the next round of self-assessments is being planned.

#### University of Ulster

Assessment areas *Support departments: Physical Resources  
Catering Services*

Self-assessment method *Questionnaires – paper based and IT based*

Latest outcomes *The next self assessments are being planned for Autumn 2002, with the results being embedded into the planning round for 2003/4. Progress in pilot areas is as follows:*

1. *Physical Resources: People*: Issues from the Communication survey have been actioned through a Staff Development Forum, which is identifying and co-ordinating departmental development needs and informing the staff development plan. If successful, the Forum remit is to be widened. A team building session for managers was also held in January and a new communication mechanism for the whole department was agreed. This is to be used to improve internal communications and internal awareness of business objectives.

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	<p><i>Customer:</i> A customer questionnaire was developed to gauge customer satisfaction and key areas for improvement. A report of results is being considered.</p> <p><i>Planning:</i> As a result of the team building day, issues relating to effective communication and teamworking were seen to be impacting on the ability to plan effectively. The new communication mechanism is being seen as supporting a change in this, and a revised version of the business plan is being prepared to communicate to all staff within the Department.</p> <p>2. <i>Catering:</i> The objectives set for the department are currently being reviewed and rewritten taking account of critical success factors. The unit objectives will then be revised and individual objectives and personal development plans for managers and their direct line staff developed in the first instance. A review of the self assessment method used will be undertaken in July and the next self assessment is programmed for October 2002.</p>
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<b>Sheffield Hallam University</b>	
Assessment areas	<p>Eleven areas of the University are engaged with the journey towards Excellence.</p> <p>This includes academic schools, central departments and research institutes. A University wide assessment is also planned.</p>
Self-assessment methods	<p>Main method has been based on the pro-forma, supplemented by questionnaires. Workshop approach also used.</p>
Latest outcomes	<p>The project is now progressing in three key areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Roll out of EFQM to all remaining schools and departments – Eleven have now undertaken at least one assessment against the model, or have engaged with the thinking in some way. Most of the remaining areas have expressed interest in finding out more.</li> <li>2. Integration of self-assessment and the concepts of excellence as a way of working within the University through the enhancement of current business planning processes. This also includes alignment with our internal Quality Standards Management and Enhancement system to bring together academic management, business management and stakeholder inputs – providing an integrated planning process across the whole University.</li> </ol>

3. Implementation of a University wide self-assessment and enhancement of the corporate business planning process, as well as the identification of University wide areas for improvement.

Other activities have also included the on-going delivery of eight training workshops for internal staff covering a range of EFQM related topics; internal meetings have been held to further develop knowledge amongst a range of staff; delivery of papers at a range of HE and public sector conferences, as well as papers published within and outside the UK.

## Case Studies from Sheffield Hallam University

### An Academic School

#### Overview:

- Approx. 150 staff in the school
- 2.000 undergraduate and 600 postgraduate students
- No problems with student recruitment – good student interest year on year
- Sound financial position
- Committed to Investors in People
- Completed self-assessment against the EFQM Excellence Model® in November 2001
- Used pro-forma workbook based approach
- Team of nine people undertook assessment activity

#### Learning gained from self-assessment:

- Recognized themselves as „a business“ as well as an area of academic focus
- Recognition of the need to have a more strategic focus on the way the school is managed
- Senior staff need to communicate more effectively and engage with staff at every level
- Have to understand and map processes more effectively and more strategically
- Better management skills needed by all managers (inc. academic managers)
- Need a clearer vision, mission, strategies and set of values that are owned by everyone
- Need to identify exactly what should be measured, what for and how
- Need to assess and review approaches more effectively

### A Research Institute

#### Overview:

- Approx. 50 staff
- 35-40 PhD research students
- Difficult financial position, with increasing demands to increase income from external sources
- No previous experience of using 'management' methodologies
- Completed self-assessment against the EFQM Excellence Model® in November 2001
- Used workshop based approach – two half days
- Team of ten people undertook assessment activity

#### Learning gained from self-assessment:

- Need a better shared vision, mission and values
- Need a clearer identification of customer groups
- Better fix on core processes is essential – including management processes
- Development and understanding of need for acceptable and consistent leadership styles
- Realized need to ask the staff more frequently what they think
- Communication is key – but two way and using a range of media and messages – for good news and bad
- Need to ensure that change management is embedded as part of an on-going process
- Better assessment and review of approaches in place, and feeding back the learning

### Central Department A

#### Overview:

- Approx. 90 staff
- Pressures to reduce costs and become more efficient and effective in all activities undertaken
- Completed self-assessment against the EFQM Excellence Model® in January 2001
- Used pro-forma based approach, with questionnaires and mentoring workshops
- 19 people undertook assessment activity as part of Criterion groups
- Engaged all staff in an appropriate way to gather information

#### Learning gained from self-assessment:

- Need to develop a clear and systematic approach to many systems and processes – strong move toward process identification and process working. Development of a process matrix, mapping current processes, the links and the people

- Need to build better feedback and self-review mechanisms to inform business planning and quality audits – link to processes
- Customer information was not held in one place – needed pulling together to ensure it is accurate, current and used to inform relevant operational and strategic decisions
- 360° feedback is needed as part of a leadership development programme to ensure that all 'leaders' are properly equipped with skills and information about how they work
- Development of clearer (Human Resources) HR policy at local level to encourage staff development and 'freedom'
- Need to understand and map key partnerships within and outside the University, and consider how they are managed

### Central Department B

#### Overview:

- Approx. 600+ staff
- Good financial position, but with increasing demands to reduce overall cost to the University
- Achieved Investors in People in 1998 and re-accredited in 2001
- Completed self-assessment against the EFQM Excellence Model® in January 2000, again in January 2001 and November 2001
- Used pro-forma based approach and questionnaires
- Team of ten people undertook initial assessment activity, with six to eight in subsequent years

#### Learning gained from self-assessment:

- Thought they were very customer focused – realised they were not
- Found that they were doing a lot of good things, but not necessarily in a consistent or co-ordinated way
- Recognition of the need to link policies and strategies with key performance indicators
- Clearer management information and exchange system required, to ensure data collected is found and used appropriately
- Identifying and managing processes is key to how future working practices are defined – implementing SMART Management
- Must focus on customers, identify them accurately and manage the relationship with them
- Need to identify what needs to be measured, why and how
- Need to link results to approaches – making the connections

## 4 Results So Far

Our results are difficult to measure statistically. Many of the benefits being experienced are at a strategic level. Our staff and student surveys will hopefully show some improvements, as may some of our student trend data, but it is still early days. The next phase of the programme is to evaluate in more detail the results demonstrated from the work undertaken.

### 4.1 Our learning so far is probably best summarised as follows:

- VC and senior management leadership commitment, drive and ownership to adopting these principles at a corporate level is essential if the Excellence Model is to assist in making break-through improvement.
- Self-assessment has highlighted the unconnected nature of many activities within Universities – work is undertaken often in isolation, rather than being linked through core or common processes, and a common way of working.
- It exposes a lack of clarity about an organisation's principles and values – exactly what are we here to achieve, and for whom?
- Other management tools, models and Higher Education/Further Education (HE/FE) auditing frameworks can be used synergistically with the Excellence Model. They can be seen as 'approaches' to tackling specific issues, whilst still looking at the connectivity using the Excellence Model.
- Communication (internal) is a critical process – how and what is communicated is also a delicate balance.
- The use of the EFQM Excellence Model®, with some adaptation and interpretation exposes the fact that people are doing things without knowing why.
- The exercise has provided a common language and shared learning that has not necessarily existed before, with academic schools, central departments and research institutes learning and sharing experiences together.
- Common themes are emerging across all pilot areas, despite the use of differing assessment methods.
- Staff want to improve what they are doing – there is a real willingness to embrace excellence.
- Much of the knowledge/information already exists, it just needs to be captured, enhanced and co-ordinated. The Excellence Model has provided a consistent and logical framework for this to happen within.
- The complexity of our institutions is great, but the potential impact of change is

greater. The Higher Education sector is complex when compared to other sectors, but when considered through a process orientated, the complexity can be fairly easily unpicked.

- The key to linking all these together is clear leadership, having a clear approach to process identification and management, clear communication channels, and a balanced set of key performance indicators.

It has been demonstrated that there have been beneficial impacts of using the model at a number of levels:

- Strategic (institution wide)
- Strategic (business unit – school, department etc.)
- Operational (team based improvement projects within business units)

#### **University wide impacts:**

- Clear recognition of the need for process identification and management
- Leadership and management development issues are being surfaced
- Internal communication across all boundaries is seen as key
- Recognition of the need for better partnership working
- Balanced set of measures and targets are needed
- Better feedback and listening to 'the customer'
- Starting to view HE from a 'management' perspective
- Growing realisation that complacency is dangerous!

#### **Business unit impacts:**

- As for University wide in many cases in terms of recognizing the significance of processes, management development, partnership working, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and feedback etc.
- Surfacing issues of efficiency and effectiveness in the way things are done and helping them to be looked at differently
- Greater focus on managing and planning the business at a strategic level, rather than just operational and academic management
- Change in mindset of both administrators and academics – given a new united voice and common language

#### **Team based impacts:**

Many operational projects are underway (approx. 200+)

Examples include:

- introduction of complete process management infrastructure
- change to the way laundry is collected in student residences cutting number of staff needed, time and effort considerably
- improved business plans now being submitted and accepted
- student surveys being introduced and methodology rolled out to others
- development of more cross-team working projects
- greater involvement and engagement of staff in process improvement activities
- training and development provided in new skill areas for staff
- partnership working between parts of institutions who may not previously have engaged together

#### 4.2 Key Learning Points and Helping Factors

- There is a need for corporate commitment
- A champion (who is a trained assessor) in each area is highly desirable
- If we accept where the organization is, moving forward is much easier
- It is voluntary, so colleagues can choose their own time and pace
- It is complementary / supportive to other initiatives
- There is a sense of focus – a prioritisation of initiatives
- It helps that is widely known and has global origins
- People who use it can demonstrate real benefits e.g. bottom line
- It applies to all types of organization and within the organization to all types of school and department
- We have been able to engage in a positive transfer of learning

#### 4.3 Key Barriers and Hindering Factors

- Fear of benchmarking and league tables
- Fear of scoring
- The possibility of scoring being introduced too soon in the process
- Time commitment for initial engagement
- Possible review overkill
- The title 'EFQM Excellence Model®' and associated „jargon“
- Consultants who don't have working experience
- Training materials not specific to the sector
- Commitment from some senior managers is still patchy
- Lack of appropriate training in some areas and for many staff

- Need to 'avoid death by 1.000 initiatives'
- Need to manage expectations
- Can be threatening: disturbs the status quo
- The 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' attitude can hinder progress
- Habits that are well established are hard to change or adjust
- People's belief that they are doing the right thing may be misguided

## 5 Top Ten Tips for Those at the Beginning of the Excellence Journey

1. Get commitment from the top – get the top team to commit to a culture and processes of continuous improvement, to work as a „one-vision“ team and to champion change actions. Equally, involve everyone and keep everyone informed if you want to get the best results and effect change. People at the top cannot change an organization by themselves.
2. Keep it simple – avoid the jargon and acronyms. Simplify the processes to fit your needs; for example, ask people to score out of ten the performance under key headings; then focus on the three key areas for improvement to tackle as priorities.
3. Make it relevant to your situation and context – the Model and the methodologies you can use are flexible and adaptable. Use ideas and suggestions from other places, but make sure they fit your organization before you implement them – and interpret the Model – it's what's behind and within it that counts, not the Model itself.
4. Honesty is always the best policy – make sure that the information you collect and answers you give are open and honest – look into the mirror of truth. Make sure you are using the Excellence Model for the right reasons.
5. Make sure this is seen as a new way of working – this is not an appendage to current activities, or just a self-assessment process that will come and go once a year (or whatever). It is a fundamental shift in the way people think about and carry out their daily tasks.
6. Use the Model as an umbrella working alongside and supporting other quality improvement and auditing initiatives – if possible, make your system robust so that it incorporates the diversity of data required for all the models, then the information becomes interchangeable and can reduce the overall burden of accountability.
7. Don't forget to benchmark – don't wait until everything is perfect before you benchmark, use benchmarking as part of your learning and improvement activity. Make sure though that you are clear about what you want to benchmark – don't become a benchmark tourist.... someone who just wants to know what others do and how they do it!



8. Use scoring advisedly – there are different opinions about scoring. Our experience is to focus on the evidence and the actions, but use scoring afterwards to really interrogate how robust the evidence actually is. Equally if you do not score to some extent, it can be difficult to know when and where you are achieving change. So find an approach that is manageable. Alternatively, use the RADAR philosophy when gathering the evidence to mentally ask the questions as you go along.
9. Don't rush it – go at your own time and pace, but be purposeful and aware that momentum needs to be maintained, and people need to see action, or scepticism will set in.
10. Manage your journey properly – nominate a driver who has good project management skills. There is huge potential to wander of in many directions, so focus on the road ahead, but know and understand your passengers!

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