



**Report and Evaluation**  
*of*  
***Parrs Wood Sixth Form Study Day***

**1 April 2004 at The University of Manchester**

prepared by  
date  
for  
copies to

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## Acknowledgements

We appreciate Ruth Johnson for her trust in our efforts to fulfil the brief she gave us. Ruth struck a helpful balance between direction and delegation. In my experience this is a rare facility. The Parrs Wood teachers attended the day with a positive attitude and a willingness to participate or to abstain according to the needs of the students.

We thank our other colleagues for providing tireless support over and above the call of duty. Their efforts made all the difference between a study day and a memorable event.

Zoe Pearson at The Open University in the North West for her practical ideas for producing an attractive study pack.

Jo Wiggans at The Open University in the North West for providing the space and time for the collation of study packs and goodie bags.

Marketing and Publicity at City College Manchester for involving themselves in the briefing, preparation and implementation of the event and for supplying photographs of the study day.

Thanks to my colleague, Amanda Collins for her physical energy in delivering and distributing the materials and to Chris Marsden for collating all the feedback.

I thank the *Headstart* team for their punctuality, commitment, understanding of what was required and engagement with the students. I observed that each had his or her own individual classroom style despite the uniformity of the learning materials.

Thanks to The Conference Centre and to Christine Bolton in particular, who answered queries, supplied everything we requested and turned up punctually at the start of the event to make sure everything was in place.

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# Report on Parrs Wood Study Day

## Concept and organisation

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**Background** Ruth Johnson conceived of the idea of a study day for the whole of Year 12 at Parrs Wood Sixth Form. We started our planning in the autumn of 2003. We decided on:

- an external venue that related to higher education
- a day that included the whole of Year 12 (250 students)

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**Aims for the event** In planning the event we aimed to offer:

- study skills as direct preparation for the imminent AS Levels
- differentiation between three ability levels regarding the materials and approach
- a day out of college that would simulate an HE experience
- a visit to a local traditional university
- confidence-building for the least able
- challenge for the most able
- reinforcement of organisation, preparation and skills for all.

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**Practical problems to be solved** The matters that needed to be organised in order of priority were:

- a suitable venue to accommodate 250 students
- a convenient date
- transport
- recruitment of 15 tutors and extra helpers
- transport
- hospitality—lunch and two breaks

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**Finding a suitable venue** The venue proved to be the biggest problem. Not many institutions can offer accommodation for 250. Urbis, MMU, The GMB College turned us down: in every case for understandable reasons.

Ultimately, we were offered suitable accommodation by The University of Manchester during their Easter vacation which begins in advance of that of the Sixth Form sector.

We occupied the whole of The Roscoe Building and in addition, the adjacent Lascelles Williams Suite.

The Conference Centre staff were very co-operative and efficient throughout the planning and implementation of the study day.

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# Report on Parrs Wood Study Day

## Curriculum and approaches

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### The learning groups and the curriculum

#### *Organising the learning groups*

We decided on groups of not more than 15 students. An exception was the larger group of *gifted and talented* students who numbered 40. These were to be team taught by Dr Roy Johnson (Open University) and Dr Martyn Edwards (UMIST).

The *gifted and talented* group were offered a distinct curriculum so that their abilities were challenged and at the same time they were acquiring skills such as problem-solving, organisation, research and presentation. Their studies for the day were focused on creating a website. This took place in a computer suite adjacent to the Roscoe Building. Please see the learning pack for details.

All other students worked through a common set of materials. There was scope for differentiation to accommodate varying levels of ability. Please see the learning pack for details.

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### Teaching and learning materials and approach

#### *Materials*

The study day teaching and learning materials comprised a bespoke study book. The students wrote their responses and notes in the book and were encouraged to continue using it as a reference tool for preparation for their imminent AS examinations. The book contained three sections viz

- Confidence
- Memory techniques
- Organisation

Every section of the workbook had its own assignments or exercises. A time-planner was included and students filled this in as far as they could as part of the 'organisation' section.

#### *Approach*

A supportive approach was agreed on at the tutor briefing held a week prior to the event. Tutors made the sessions as interactive as possible and applied differentiation in terms of the ability levels of the students.

The make up of the groups was such that they were mixed in terms of ethnicity, and gender but they were selected according to ability. The gifted and talented constituted a large group of 40 students and the other 11 groups comprised a gradation, with two groups of 15 *strugglers*.

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# Report on Parrs Wood Study Day

## Recruitment and briefing of tutors

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### Recruiting and briefing Headstart tutors

#### *Recruiting*

This was done over several weeks and months. Fortunately, we were able to draw on almost all the existing Headstart team.

This included

Kate Fisher	-ex Workers Educational Association
Dave Webster	-CCM
Debbie Hulme	-MMU
Chris Marsden	-CCM
Margaret Bentley	-CCM
Amanda Collins	-CCM
Traci Lloyd Moore	-North Trafford College
Alan Thurm	-CCM
Rita Machin	-CCM
Martin Botham	-Stockport College
Karen Duggan	-MMU
Gill Rice	-MMU
Martin Edwards	-MMU
Roy Johnson	-The Open University
Martyn Edwards	-UMIST

NB Karen Duggan, Gill Rice and Martin Edwards were participating under the aegis of TIPS, the ESF funded initiative for student support.

Together with Kate Fisher and Amanda Collins, I spent the day facilitating, observing and making sure that everything was running according to plan.

#### *Briefing*

A three-hour intensive briefing session was held one week prior to the event. The intensive agenda included

- allocation of groups, rooms and equipment
- induction to the work materials (distributed in advance for)
- discussion of teaching and learning approaches
- protocols
- queries

Tutors were very focused on these issues and I believe that this briefing process was crucial to the success of the day.

The team were all punctual, professional, supportive and tireless in their efforts. All seemed pleased at the conclusion of the day.

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# Report on Parrs Wood Study Day

## The mechanics of the day

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### **Welcoming students and allocating rooms**

#### *Receiving and settling the learning groups*

Our task was to settle the 13 study groups into seminar rooms as quickly as possible after arrival at The Roscoe Building. We used a system of code naming based on literary names that we connected with room numbers. Parrs Wood staff had efficiently briefed the students in advance as to which name group they belonged.

This worked remarkably well and students moved from the large lecture theatre to the seminar rooms in a matter of minutes. The process was helped by the five Parrs Wood staff who accompanied the students to the event.

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### **Attendance**

Attendance was anticipated as a potential problem but a pleasing number attended. Only a handful of students were absent.

NB. 12 students had to miss the event because there was a clash with an official examination. Headstart tutors will go into the college and present an essential version of the study skills day.

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### **Lunch**

#### *Arrangements*

Students had lunch in the university refectory. They were given vouchers to spend as they chose. They enjoyed this part of the day. Many of them mentioned it in their feed back.

Refectory staff were very enthusiastic as to the excellent behaviour of the students. They said that their comportment and level of politeness was exceptional in their experience.

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### **Liaison with Parrs Wood staff**

#### *Parrs Wood*

From the outset of this project, Ruth Johnson, Head of Parrs Wood Sixth form was extremely co-operative, encouraging and helpful. I appreciated her continuous availability both in person and by email throughout the planning period. We had several planning meetings prior to the event, all of which resulted in action and progress.

Ruth and four of her teaching colleagues attended the event and made themselves available to help in whatever way was necessary.

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## Report on Parrs Wood Study Day Implementation—the event

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### Liaison with Manchester University personnel

#### *The Conference Centre*

Christine Bolton of the Conference Centre took on the project and followed each stage of planning through to the last detail. She was always available to answer queries and showed flexibility at times when our needs changed during the planning process. Christine met us in the morning at the venue and made sure everything was in order.

Technicians and porters were punctual, efficient and willing to solve any problems that occurred. This meant that the day went smoothly without any technical hitches.

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### Costing the study day

Here is a table showing the initial estimate of the costs for the study day. Parrs Wood Sixth Form and Headstart Aimhigher each contributed 50% of the total costs.

Product or service	Estimated cost
Part time teaching hours – 70 @ 19.53	1,171.00
Briefing session – 2 hours @ 19.53 X10	390.00
Online version of the materials	2,000.00
Teaching and learning packs 250 @ £5	1,250.00
Catering – 2 snacks + lunch	1,250.00
Gift bags @ 7-50	500.00
Certificates 250 @ £1	250.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,000.00</b>

We did not exceed the budgeted sum despite the unexpected charge of £1,300 for the venue. This was made available from the Aimhigher funds as an extraordinary payment.

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# Report on Parrs Wood Study Day

## Evaluation, conclusions and recommendations

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### Evaluating the success of the study day

#### *Methodology*

We gathered feedback from

- all students
- Parrs Wood staff attending the study day
- Parrs Wood teachers who saw the students back at school
- Headstart tutors

We gathered feedback in the main by the completion of pro-formas. In addition to this, we incorporated oral feedback from all concerned as and when it was offered.

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#### *Collation and analysis*

Participants were invited to use a number (1-6 with 6 high) to grade their response. In addition, they were asked to write comments according to the following categories.

- Confidence
- Teaching Style and Approach
- The Day as a Whole
- Work-pack

#### *Rationale*

##### Groups 1 – 11

Most of the students wrote comments. Many more wrote comments than made use of the numbers. The comments have been chosen to reflect that approximately 90% were positive comments. Around 10% of the total comments are listed. I avoided repetition as many of the comments included the words 'good', 'useful' and 'enjoyable'.

##### Groups 12 – 13

I used the same rationale in evaluating the feedback from these groups. Although some of the students did question the relevance of writing web pages, most of these concluded that the day had been enjoyable and useful. As the sample here is smaller I included around 15% of the students' comments. Again the comments have been chosen to reflect that approximately 90% were positive comments.

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# Report on Parrs Wood Study Day

## Evaluation, conclusions and recommendations

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### Groups 1 - 11

Number of feedback sheets returned – 107

### Responses

(1 is low – 6 is high)

*Please note not all students made use of the numbers*

Scores	1	2	3	4	5	6
Tricks of the Trade	3	4	9	19	13	8
Organising yourself	3	4	10	14	13	14
Confidence	2	9	4	16	16	15
Teaching style and approach		1	2	11	26	24
The day as a whole		2	11	12	16	14
Workpack	2	4	3	15	13	19

### Sample Comments

#### ***Tricks of the Trade***

- useful tips that could be helpful in my revision
- bit confusing but understandable
- got thinking of how to take notes
- good didn't get much time to look at it but it was useful
- already knew about mind maps and mnemonics because I am a visual learner but helped me clarify this as I was able to do it
- enjoyable the dreams/nightmare was very good
- to be honest there is not much I didn't know already
- it was good revision practice for me
- learned how to make mind maps

#### ***Organising yourself***

- techniques/preparation good
- learned to approach stuff positively
- very helpful
- interesting and useable to help with planning and revision timetables
- rushed through it a bit; the revision timetables are very helpful
- still stuff we know but more useful
- learned a lot about how to organise my time
- useful but unnecessary long

#### ***Confidence***

- I don't have much confidence so this was helpful for me
- felt more confidence to speak my mind and join in. Useful
- didn't think it had much relevance to what we were here for
- new angle on attitude very helpful
- a bit pointless
- made me optimistic
- group activities and talking in front of groups enabled you to build upon confidence
- helped a lot, most enjoyable part of the day

# Report on Parrs Wood Study Day

## Evaluation, conclusions and recommendations

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### ***Teaching Style and Approach***

- worked together in groups; supportive and encouraging
- good created a nice relaxed environment to make day enjoyable
- very laid back, different but I found it helpful
- excellent the small groups were much better and much more useful than normal classes
- the teaching style is good and anyone can say their point of view
- thorough and enthusiastic

### ***The day as a whole***

- would have been much better spent in college – nice free food
- learnt a lot – good
- good experience and enjoyable
- very good
- tiring but enjoyable
- not extremely useful, possibly more useful if held earlier in the year
- would have like a tour around the university

### ***Work Pack***

- good to keep and refer to
- lots of very interesting information, thank you
- it is quite useful overall
- revision timetable could come in useful
- colourful and not just blocks of writing
- lovely
- quite good, but patronising – bit too key stage 3 /4 !!!

### **General Comment**

Should be given equal opportunities because it's unfair that our group doesn't get to do same things. (one group 'high flyers' got to do computers).

# Report on Parrs Wood Study Day

## Evaluation, conclusions and recommendations

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### Groups 12-13

Number of feedback sheets returned – 36

### Responses

(1 is low – 6 is high)

*Please note not all students made use of the numbers*

<b>Scores</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
Confidence		1	1	1	3	2
Teaching style and approach		1	5	4	3	3
The day as a whole	2	1	5	3	5	3
Workpack			4	3	4	3

### Sample Comments

#### **Confidence**

- enhanced confidence levels as had to present web pages
- feel more confident
- learnt a great deal on the subject
- I am more confident in producing websites

#### **Teaching Style and approach**

- very good and friendly
- excellent, clear, good powerpoint
- good but would have liked to have done activities at the start to break up the day
- okay, it was a bit patronising
- good talks by lecturers

#### **The day as a whole**

- well organised – short day though
- excellent
- enjoyable, entertaining, useful
- not very relevant to other studies
- I've learnt how to design a web page
- went by fast, had lots of fun

#### **Workpack**

- useful for later
- excellent, useful and well presented, clear
- quite extensive, didn't get time to read it but it looks good
- didn't get the pack

# Report on Parrs Wood Study Day

## Evaluation, conclusions and recommendations

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### Feedback from Parrs Wood 6th Form Teachers

The table below shows all the comments made by those teachers who attended the event.

Comments will also be gathered at a later date from Parrs Wood teachers who deal with the students who attended the study day.

	Topics	Comments
1	If you attended the study day, give us your overview	<p><b>Was the day a success? Any big problems?</b>            Yes – 4 responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• only confusion at the start of the day</li> <li>• the day was very successful, no problems</li> <li>• seemed to go remarkable smoothly</li> <li>• the groups I saw gained a great deal from the day</li> </ul>
2	If you did not attend, please complete this section only	
3	Organisation and structure of the event.	<p><b>Did we succeed?</b>            Yes – 4 responses            Very good – 2 responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no problems at all</li> <li>• very well organised and structured, ideal venue</li> <li>• well organised</li> <li>• I think so</li> </ul>
4	Teaching and learning materials	<p><b>Were they appropriate? Useful</b>            Yes – 3 responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• useful and appropriate</li> <li>• didn't actually see the materials. Many students in G &amp; T group felt that although they enjoyed the website designing they had not learnt anything about study skills</li> <li>• web page handouts needed to be supplemented by tutor</li> <li>• generally good, some students felt they were repeating things learned for GCSEs</li> </ul>

#### Suggestions for Improvement

- do morning only
- more time required
- room very hot, any possibility of improvement?
- if covering web pages again the student work needs to be made clearer

# Report on Parrs Wood Study Day

## Evaluation, conclusions and recommendations

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### Conclusions

#### *Positive overview*

We can conclude that, on the whole, the day was successful and worthwhile. The students were obviously engaged with the learning process and enjoying the change of environment.

Those students I spoke to seemed very positive and the written feedback gave a predominantly appreciative and enthusiastic message.

The practical elements worked well and the extensive planning and attention to minutiae paid off to the effect that:

- students were occupied from the moment they arrived
- materials and resources were continuously available
- dining arrangements ran smoothly
- there were no significant hitches, even with IT resources
- support was to hand throughout the day
- tutors were in no doubt as to their remit

#### *Some areas for improvement*

We can see from some recurring comments in the student feedback that there are some areas for improvement in the study day. These are indicated by the minority of negative comments concerning:

1. Insufficient focus on direct examination preparation for groups 12 and 13.
2. The need to accommodate a few students in groups 3-11 who found the materials and/or the delivery insufficiently challenging.

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### Recommendations

If we were to run a further study day I would suggest the following changes.

The academic areas of the materials might be varied so as to accommodate the more able student.

The materials as a whole might be revised toward a more sophisticated learning group.

Groups 12 and 13 would be offered a choice between web-design and orthodox examination preparation.