

Distinctiveness in Higher Education

Supporting universities in identifying and communicating their distinctiveness

12 June 2012

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#distinct12

Competing on your own terms

- League Tables
 - There are benefits to us NOT all being the same.
 - There are audiences with different needs.....
- Commerce Bank
- What students say

Why distinctiveness?

- Distinctiveness confers competitive advantage, enabling an organisation to stand out from the crowd
- A clear and cogent organisational identity enables those who interact with the organisation to identify with it, and become loyal to it

What is distinctiveness?

- Being distinctive is not about being unique; it is about being identifiable
- Usually based on a distinctive blend of attributes
- Critical to success is finding an expression of identity that works both internally and externally

The 3Rs

- Real
- Rare
- Relevant

Project background

- A Leading Transformational Change Project
- Funded by HEFCE as part of LGM
- Approach:
 - examine the experience of HEIs, and apply learning from beyond HE

Project aims

- Develop a shared understanding of what distinctiveness is
- Capture lessons for developing and executing distinctiveness strategies
- Highlight the role of leadership in developing and communicating distinctiveness
- Transfer knowledge across the sector

The Distinct Framework

Draws on interviews and case studies from HE, private, public and voluntary sectors, as well as surveys, discussion groups and pilot workshops

THE CASE FOR CHANGE

‘What are the strategic drivers for establishing your distinctiveness?’

Increased profile
in sector

Student and
staff recruitment and
satisfaction

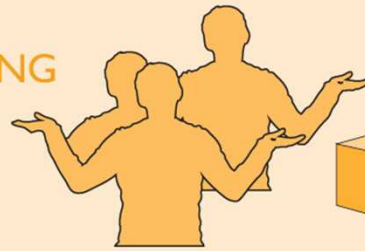
Raising
standards

Diversifying
income
streams

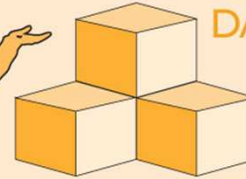
ESTABLISHING YOUR DISTINCTIVENESS

EVIDENCE

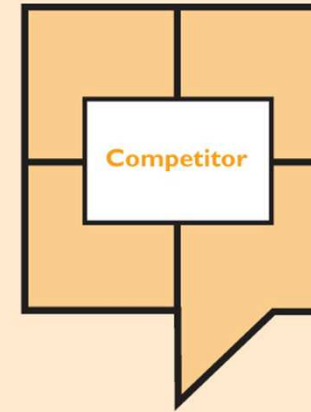
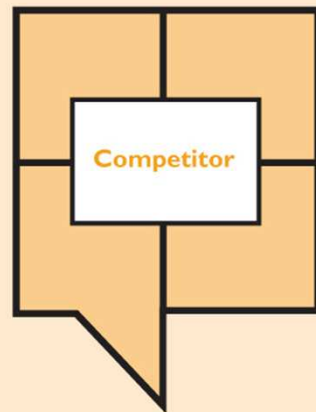
LISTENING



DATA



REALITY CHECK



Real? Rare? Relevant?

Leadership choices

- Choices to be made
- Persist through the doubt
- A creative leap: a strategic insight or compelling creative?
- Can be aspirational.....
- ...but test against what you can deliver

IMPLEMENTATION

GUIDING YOUR INTERNAL DECISIONS

- Student experience
- Research
- HR
- Leadership behaviours
- IT
- Estates
- Finance

**What do we stop
doing, start doing,
or do differently?**

EVALUATION

IMPLEMENTATION

COMMUNICATING YOUR DISTINCTIVENESS

- Tone of voice
- Visual identity
- Marketing campaigns
- Internal communications

EVALUATION

Leadership

Leadership is essential

Leading transformational change

Developing support for leaders:

- Coaching/mentoring?
- TMP
- Facilitated Group Learning?

Learning points for the sector

- It is possible to be distinctive!
- Leadership commitment is essential
- Drawing on existing theories, the framework provides support in an HE context
- Vital to see this as an ‘all encompassing’ process
- It is a rewarding journey

Programme for today

- Based on The Distinct Framework
- Discussion will inform final project information on the website
- Optional workshop
 - #distinct12

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