

Forum

Learning and Teaching Committee



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Assessment & feedback

**Academic
Support and
Feedback**

**Adaptive
Comparative
Judgement**

**Chairing the
University's Standing
Committee on
Assessment**



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Editorial

Welcome to this Spring edition of *Forum Magazine* which is the first I have produced as the Editor

along with my trusty and capable sub-editor, Phil Robinson-Self, and the wider editorial committee comprised of Helen Bedford (Health Sciences), Glenn Hurst (Chemistry) and Carmen Álvarez-Mayo (Language and Linguistics). On taking up the role of editor, I have to confess to having experienced a large degree of apprehension – and there have certainly been some challenges to be overcome. However, I am pleased with what has been produced and I hope that you, the reader, benefit from the shared knowledge and experiences relating to assessment that are shared within this 43rd edition of *Forum Magazine*.

Following the rigorous process of the initial implementation of the York Pedagogy it has become clear that a huge swathe of departments have sought to shake up and improve assessment within their undergraduate programmes. This assessment-focused edition of *Forum* seeks to bring together a range of insights, extending from the design, development and implementation of a model for academic support and feedback, through consideration of Adaptive Comparative Judgement as an assessment process, to the experiences of being a Graduate Teaching Assistant helping students prepare for assessment, and even an interview with Steve King, the Chair for the Standing Committee on Assessment.

I hope you will agree that *Forum* magazine provides clear evidence of not only excellence and best practice here at the University of York, from which we can all learn, but also illustrates the enthusiasm amongst staff for providing a world class learning and teaching environment for all our students.

Enjoy!

Ruth Penfold-Mounce (Sociology)
Editor

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Dr Glenn Hurst recognised as a Social Media Superstar

Dr Glenn Hurst, from the Department of Chemistry, has been recognised as one of the top 10 UK social media superstars by Jisc (formerly the Joint Information Systems Committee) in a competition celebrating the excellent social media work accomplished in Higher Education (HE).

Glenn was recognised for his innovative use of social media to enhance his teaching. The judges were particularly impressed by Glenn's use of Snapchat to signpost students during inductions. Glenn sends students a blend of annotated pictures and videos to allow them to contextualise the chemistry concepts taught in lectures to the real world. In doing so he also provides students with a glimpse of how chemistry research is conducted in laboratories in the department and beyond. Student feedback includes 'It's super fun to see research in chemistry labs!'

He also uses Twitter to engage with students and the academic community and empowers students to create their own YouTube videos of organic chemistry mechanisms. Students then tweet their videos to him to receive feedback so they can improve. Glenn says 'This approach has allowed me to provide students with even more feedback than other approaches such as tutorials/workshops and enables them to improve their communications skills.'

Other award winners included academics making



use of a wide range of social media platforms, from Facebook Live and Instagram to those developing their own bespoke apps for student learning. Pablo, the library penguin at the University of Portsmouth, was also recognised for being a trustworthy source of information on Twitter and a YouTube entertainer.

The winners receive an edtech visit for their class



including the Jisc social media team, Jisc Head of Student Experience and the social media editor for Times Higher Education.

The Department of Chemistry at York is committed to teaching innovation and excellence as demonstrated by their second place ranking in the 2018 Guardian League Table.

Web links:

<https://www.jisc.ac.uk/blog/our-top-ten-higher-education-social-media-superstars-of-2017-13-nov-2017>

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/top-10-uk-higher-education-social-media-superstars-2017>



Glenn Hurst is a Lecturer in the Department of Chemistry. Glenn is particularly interested in developing new pedagogical approaches and resources to confer a deep understanding and application of subject matter. He is the Director of Studies for Natural Sciences in the Department of Chemistry. glenn.hurst@york.ac.uk

Teaching Fora in Chemistry

The Department of Chemistry have relaunched a teaching fora in order to share best practice in teaching and learning chemistry. Coordinated by Dr Glenn Hurst, the first session took place on Thursday 14th December on the subject of e-learning. This 60 min session included contributions from Dr Kirsty Penkman who discussed how to use Wikis in assessment, Dr Nick Wood and Dr Glenn Hurst who presented how to use two different electronic voting systems to include facilitation of peer instruction, Dr David Pugh and Greg Addicott who outlined new electronic resources to support practical chemistry, and Professor Andy Parsons who discussed the use of electronic books as a new learning tool. The session was very well attended across the Department and proved an excellent way to discuss new teaching methodologies together with ideas for the future. The next teaching fora will occur after the spring term.

Enhancing academic support, assessment and feedback

Jerome Wright, Vanessa Taylor, Department of Health Sciences.

Introduction

Assessment and feedback play a vital role in higher education. The UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B6 (Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) 2013) identifies the expectations which all UK higher education providers are required to meet to maintain academic standards and to assure and enhance quality for the assessment of students. Focusing attention on the methods of assessment and feedback is fundamental to improving student learning, increasing student satisfaction and achieving greater confidence in academic standards (NSS 2017; University of York 2015; QAA 2013; HEA 2012). Effective, inclusive assessment and feedback methods and processes have been identified as improving and enhancing the learning experience, and are critical in encouraging original thinking, determining student learning outcomes and graduate success through preparing students for the world of work (QAA, 2013; HEA 2012). Recommended approaches have included the promotion of regular formative assessments and feedback which are integral to a dialogic learning and teaching process (HEA 2012).

In this article, we outline a phased initiative within the Department of Health Sciences (DoHS), led by academics and professional support staff providing nursing and midwifery education. The 'Academic support and feedback project' aims to review and implement change in order to enhance the organisation and experience of academic support and feedback for formative and summative assessments by students undertaking nursing and midwifery programmes (Table 1). This article focuses on the Department's progress in phases 1-3 of the project. The DoHS is constantly seeking to improve the academic support for its large cohorts of pre-registration Nursing and Midwifery students. With more than five hundred students currently studying across the three years of the two undergraduate programmes, and the complex combination

of practice and theory modules that meet both academic and professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements, the challenges in providing students with consistent and high quality academic support and feedback are substantial. Yet, progressing with implementation of the York Pedagogy, with its emphasis on programme leadership and organisational initiatives to provide strong student pastoral support, the need to focus specifically on academic support and the student experience of assessment and feedback became evident. As in other departments in the University and across the wider HEI sector (Pitt and Norton 2016), the receipt of lower NSS satisfaction ratings for questions related to 'Assessment and feedback' relative to other domains added impetus to the fostering of a deeper understanding and to our drive for improvement.

Phase 1

The first step in seeking improvement was to carry out a review of assessment and feedback practices across the pre-registration nursing and midwifery programmes. Module evaluations and external examiners' reports were analysed and a series of focus groups and individual interviews with students and academic staff were undertaken to examine the current strengths and weaknesses of our academic processes.

The key message from these different sources was the inconsistent academic support for students within and across modules. Inconsistencies were most evident where the same module content was taught and marked by multiple academic staff. Ironically, the range of additional support both from personal supervisors and from academic writing support services from within and outside the department, while appreciated by some students, exposed increased opportunity for inconsistency of advice about module content and assessment support. This inconsistency

created misunderstanding for students. There were inequities too. Some students would access a range of sources of support from within and outside the DoHS, and would gain copious feedback on drafts of their written work. Others would pursue their studies in isolation, receiving little feedback about their academic progress. All agreed that reducing these inconsistencies, ensuring equitable access to academic support and feedback, and improving the quality of that support and feedback, throughout the programme and for each module would enhance students' development as autonomous learners and enrich their experience of academic study.

A Steering Group, formed on behalf of the DoHS' Undergraduate Programmes Board, undertook to re-design, implement and evaluate a new model of academic support for pre-registration nursing and midwifery programmes. Core features of this model were the development of equitable opportunity for formative assessment and feedback, and investing the module lead and module teaching team with responsibility for leading the provision of academic support related to the subject content. Previously, this had been the role of the personal supervisor. This model of support was augmented with a range of student-centred activities and opportunities provided across the nursing and midwifery programmes, and from the start of every module through to the students' receipt of results and summative feedback.

Nested within the overall model of support, therefore, were two key targets:

1. To enhance and co-ordinate the opportunities for students to receive individualised formative assessment support and feedback for each module throughout the programme
2. To improve and standardise the quality

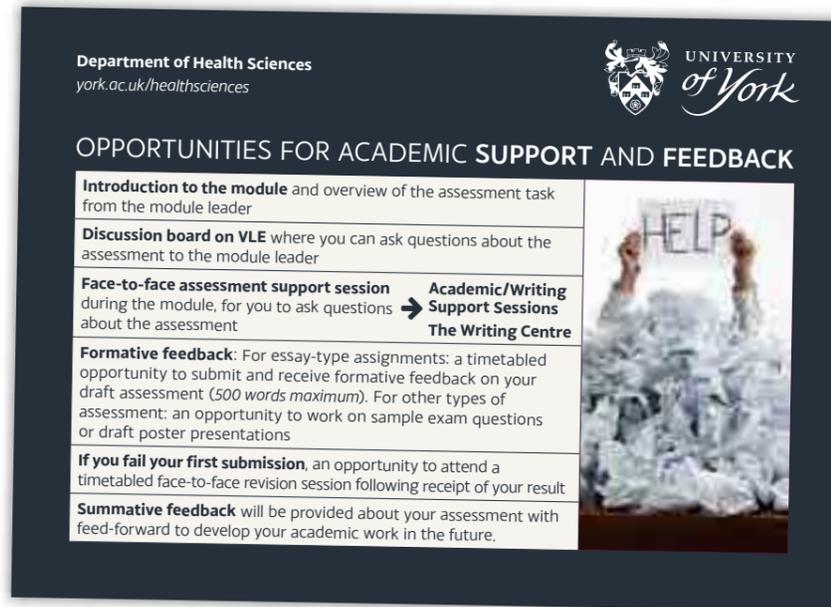
of marking and students' feedback for formative and summative assessments

A system wide approach involving academic, student assessment and professional support staff, as well as student representatives, was initiated and supported through a small grant from the University's strategic learning and teaching fund.

Having established clear aims, the new approach concentrated the responsibility for the provision of student academic support with each module leader and team. The development of a 'postcard' for students aimed to raise awareness of the full range of academic support sessions/opportunities available as part of programme delivery, within DoHS and the through various University services, as well as aiming to promote students' autonomy by making effective use of the formative and summative feedback provided.

Phases 2 and 3: Developing and implementing the model for academic support and feedback

The introduction of the new model required major refinements to the organisation of academic support and involved investment in both human resource and technical solutions. The Steering Group established a quality standard (with associated audit tool), led workshops and provided briefings to re-orientate academic staff to the new model of support. Module leaders and teams reviewed and incorporated each element into their provision. All students were provided with an individual copy of the briefing providing detail of opportunities students can expect in terms of academic support and feedback (Figure 1) alongside the expectations/opportunities for student engagement in the development of their academic skills. Consistent with



Year	Activity	Participants
2014–2015 Phase 1	Review of assessment, academic support and feedback practices Individual and focus group interviews	Academic staff Undergraduate pre-registration nursing students
2015–2016 Phase 2 – pilot	New model of academic support – module lead with module team responsible for leading the provision of academic support related to the subject content for formative and summative module assessments. Support augmented with range of student-centred activities from start of module through to students' receipt of results and summative feedback (including resubmission/resit). Evaluation: Survey and focus groups	Year 3 undergraduate pre-registration nursing students Academic and professional support staff
2016–2017 Phase 3	Implementation across pre-registration nursing and midwifery programmes including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of programme assessment schedule to include timetabled opportunities for formative assessment/feedback aligned to summative assessments Development of DoHS (Nursing & Midwifery) quality assurance standard and processes for academic support, submission, marking & feedback of formative and summative assessments Re-orientation of academic staff to the new model of support Introduction of mechanism to facilitate submission, allocation to markers and return to student of each formative piece of work via VLE Development of an audit tool and auditing of formative and summative feedback Evaluation via survey and focus groups at end of academic year 2016-17 Review of NSS feedback 	Academic and professional support staff Students
2017–2018 Phase 4	Implementation of model across all nursing and midwifery programmes (as phase 3) and: Requirement to attend timetabled programme of academic support and feedback sessions Development of best practice guidelines for assessment feedback Academic staff development workshops on marking and feedback	Academic staff

Table 1: Phases of the 'Academic support and feedback project'

QAA Chapter B6 expectations, this process includes a focus on helping students to understand what constitutes feedback as well as how to make effective use of it.

In addition, the introduction of an effective mechanism to facilitate the submission, allocation of markers, marking and return to students of each formative piece of work via the module VLE represented a considerable logistical endeavour from academic and professional support staff. One particular aspect designed to increase consistency of marking and feedback, was to institute a system of allocating the same marker for both formative and summative submissions.

As well as guiding the introduction of the model, at the end of the academic year, the Steering Group undertook an extensive evaluation of the initiative involving staff and student surveys, focus group discussions with students from across the three years of their programme, and a documentary audit of formative and summative feedback from across a range of modules.

Phase 3: Evaluation and recommendations

The evaluation and audit indicated that significant steps and effort had been taken to improve the amount, consistency and quality of the model of academic support for students undertaking pre-registration nursing and midwifery programmes with all modules incorporating all aspects of the student support provision outlined in Figure 1.

The consistency of opportunity afforded by the scheduling of formative assessment submissions and the receipt of individual written feedback has been highly valued by students with up to 95% of the enrolled students submitting formative work for some modules. Whilst concerns were expressed by students about variations in the quantity and quality of formative and summative feedback, they were overwhelmingly appreciative of the clearly timetabled opportunities to receive feedback on their formative work throughout each module. Although too early to establish direct correlation, there are indications that changes made are reflected positively in the recent NSS results (2016-17).

Academics, too, welcome the improvements in equity and consistency of academic support which the model appears to have brought to students. The increased volume of marking through the introduction of the scheduled formative opportunity is felt to be balanced by a convergence in providing equitable advice and support.

MAKING THE MOST OF FEEDBACK

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

Constructive:

Clear understanding of how the mark is awarded.
Helpful, suggestions of how to improve

Advice:

Module lead/module team available for academic support
Academic support services available for general academic writing support

On-going:

Regular formative feedback in class and in practice

Timely:

Feedback dates issued in advance.
Formative feedback available to help summative assessment

Personal:

Individual feedback related to your summative work

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Seek out feedback:

If you don't understand, be proactive, ask your module lead/team

Check out feedback:

If confused – ask module lead/team in class or via VLE
Don't speculate/rely on hearsay

Submit draft/plan or other formative assessment:

Plan ahead – submit draft work or engage in other formative assessment opportunities

Listen/participate:

Assignment seminars
Feedback in class and join in groupwork

Reflect:

Review feedback, assessment criteria, marking criteria
What are your strengths and weaknesses?

HOW WILL I BENEFIT?

Improve:

Professional skills, referencing, writing style, knowledge, understanding

Personal feedback:

Feedback and feed forward on your assessments

Valuable:

Develop your knowledge, skills and understanding
Helps you improve your future grades

Professional development:

Feedback to help you improve future work

Learn to receive and respond positively to constructive feedback to improve your work

Figure 1 – Opportunities for academic support and feedback for students.

Recommendations for Phase 4:

Recommendations for 2017-18 include continuing the work of the Academic Support and Feedback Steering Group in order to support and promote:

- Students' awareness of the 'DoHS Model of Academic Support and Feedback'
- Students' awareness of the University and expectations relating to their engagement in developing their academic skills, including utilising and understanding assessment feedback
- The development of DoHS formative and summative feedback guidelines to promote consistent quality feedback

Conclusion

Assessment and feedback are key issues for higher education institutions. They are also sensitive issues for students and academics. Any appraisal as to the quality of academic support and feedback for students is appreciably subjective and individual. And yet equity of access to academic support and feedback, which is timely, constructive and developmental (QAA Indicator 9) are key elements that departments can manage and strive to improve. This phased initiative illustrates how a comprehensive review and re-orientation of student academic support can begin to provide all students with equitable access to more consistent support and good quality formative and summative feedback. From our evaluations, there is emerging evidence that this co-ordinated approach to academic support and enhanced provision of individualised feedback is translating into improved student satisfaction with their programmes.

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Vanessa Taylor is Deputy Head of Nursing, Midwifery and Professional Programmes/Chair in Teaching and Learning. Developing from her clinical roles in cancer, palliative and end-of-life care, Vanessa's academic career has focused on pedagogy, curriculum design and delivery, leading quality assurance and enhancement, and promoting scholarship in teaching and learning.



Jerome Wright is Senior Lecturer in Mental Health and Field Lead for the Mental Health Nursing Programme. Jerome has led the Student Academic Support Project within the DoHS.

Adaptive Comparative Judgment: achieving more reliable assessment?

Scott Slorach, York Law School, offers his thoughts on piloting a new method of assessment.

What follows is an outline of what Adaptive Comparative Judgment (ACJ) is, and some insights from a work in progress at York Law School (YLS). We have run two pilot projects so far this year, with tutors and students respectively using the system for summative and formative assessment. Learning to date, as with many pilots, has raised as many questions as it has provided answers. However, the principles behind and the potential of ACJ mean that the questions are important and the answers worth pursuing. This article focuses on the summative assessment project.

Summative ACJ assessment project

ACJ is an alternative to the traditional assessment method where individual markers assess individual scripts and award a mark based on their judgment as to how a student demonstrated agreed criteria. Instead, a group of academics ("judges") is presented with pairs of student scripts and asked individually to exercise comparative judgment: simply, judge which script is the better, against an agreed assessment statement. It is based on the premise that we are more accurate in making such binary judgments rather than awarding an absolute mark, even against a set of detailed criteria.

From the pool of scripts, the system selects random pairs for a first round of judgments of all scripts. The adaptive

In what may be a first for Forum magazine, this article offers something akin to a 'free gift inside'. If interest is sparked by what follows and you would like to try ACJ, there is access to an ACJ system, plus guidance, available until the end of the academic year.

element of the system identifies scripts with similar numbers of 'wins' or 'losses', pairing these in further judgment rounds. From this, it develops a progressively accurate ranking. The system also identifies 'difficult' scripts – where different judges' decisions place it differently in the emerging ranking – sending them back out for judgment against a number of chosen comparators, progressively identifying more reliably their ranking positions.

As judgments take place, the system reports on the reliability of the emerging ranking and there is a point at which sufficient judgments are made to achieve this. The reported reliability of the YLS ranking was 0.92, high in comparison to measures from a number of studies of university essay marking, where comparators ranged from c. 0.4 – 0.7. An AQA research paper showed 0.96 reliability of ACJ on Geography A level essays against a previous figure of ~0.57.

For grading, the judging team agrees where grade boundaries sit in the ranking by reference to the assessment criteria, and then uses individual parameters generated by the system to identify where, within each agreed grade band, each script should sit, and thus generates individual marks. To achieve reliability on grade boundaries from year to year, marker or 'seed' scripts from previous years can be inserted into the following year's pool of scripts.

Questions and answers?

The following are questions raised by the pilot project and some answers to some questions that may be in readers' minds. We chose to assess a selection of 60 Y1 skills coursework items marked earlier in the year as formative assessments, to assess the impact had these been summatively assessed. The selection was proportionately representative of the range of original marks awarded by a team of markers and moderated by the module leader. Based on the original marks, we ranked the items 1 to 60.

Five skills tutors acted as judges on a sample of 60 items; there were eight rounds of judgments, with each tutor making around 50 judgments in total. The total of 249 judgments took just over 22 hours of tutor time with the entire assessment process being completed in a single day. Our standard marking allocation for such an item is 30 minutes, thus at least 30 hours for an equivalent sample (tutors report spending more time on average).

Comparing the ACJ ranking to the original, there was little variance in the top 5 and bottom 3 items' position. However, 17 items were ranked +/- 10 places and 13 +/- 20 places from their original placing. If we allocated each item the mark allocated to the item ranked in that position in the original marking, then 33 of the 60 had a mark of +/- 5 from the standard marking, with 11 of those being +/- 10 or more.

If we assume the reliability of ACJ – see the work of Pollitt and others on this – then what are the potential advantages and disadvantages? From a student perspective, there is no difference in what they have to submit. Having work judged by a number of academics rather than one or possibly two may answer claims that 'X marks harder than Y' or 'I wrote the same things as Z but got a different mark'. Whilst we do not allow academic judgment to be challenged, these claims appear to be increasing and 'panel marking' is a valid response. In addition, more employers are asking for class positions and rankings – given the high proportion of students with 2:1 degrees – and ACJ may offer reliability in this regard.

Is it 'impression marking'? That is, is an item better marked rigorously once by an individual or judged against a number of other items a number of times? It is certainly the case that each judgment takes less time than individual marking. Against that is the



I'm going to need some more detail on my formative assessment.

fact that, at least from this author's perspective, when it came to making difficult judgments, it focused the mind on what we were really asking to be demonstrated by our assessment criteria.

The apparent comparative – no pun intended – efficiency of the system needs to be balanced against the imperative of providing feedback to students within agreed timescales. The system used allows judges to note why they made a particular judgment, and also to enter feedback against each item. These can be compiled and reports generated, obviously adding some time to the processes of judgment and administration. Based on the pilot, we would have to establish some conventions to ensure consistency of feedback but of course this is the case with all assessment and feedback. A positive is that, if a report notes that all judges identified similar strengths and weaknesses, a student can be assured that the feedback is reliable.

A final but important point on efficiency relates to the judges. Colleagues reported that the intensity of judging 60 items in between 4 and

5 hours resulted in 'judgment fatigue'. Extending the period during which judgments are made would reduce this, which could be particularly beneficial in later rounds when the adaptive system is presenting more difficult comparators as it refines the final ranking.

Conclusions

The questions and answers above demonstrate the work-in-progress nature of the project. The system is not a panacea by any means. It is not suitable for all formats or lengths of assessment. There are a number of operational issues around marking times and provision of feedback that would need to be addressed to expand its use across a larger cohort. In addition, there are questions around communication to students and their response to being assessed in a different manner. Allied to this is a question as to whether problems would be created in presenting students with a "more reliable" form of judgment in some modules as against traditional marking in others, particularly if the format of assessment is similar. However, any approach that offers greater reliability and, potentially, efficiency in assessment and feedback is such that, at this stage, the conclusion is that it is very much worth investigating further.



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The system used for the pilot is called CompareAssess, and is provided by an organization called Digital Assess. See digitalassess.com for details of the system used. Please contact the author if you would be interested in using the system during this academic year. YLS also ran a project using the system where it was provided to students where they acted as judges to peer review pieces of work as part of a formative assessment process. The system has been used similarly at the University of Edinburgh. One of the intended outcomes of this approach is that it encourages students to become familiar with assessment criteria and to develop a more critical sense of what best demonstrates such criteria. Please contact the author for further details of this pilot.



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York Scholarship
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The second volume of the *York Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Journal* (February 2018) is now available, featuring nine stimulating articles from disciplines across the University of York and covering a broad array of subjects pertaining to teaching and learning. To access the volume, and for more information on the journal, please visit:

york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/develop/network/york-sotl-journal

Long Live the King!



Steve King has recently been reappointed for another term as Chair of the University's Standing Committee on Assessment (SCA). Carmen Álvarez-Mayo caught up with Steve on behalf of the Learning and Teaching Forum.

The beginning

I came to the University in 1995 as a Lecturer in the Department of Computer Science. After a few years, I got involved with the University Teaching Committee (UTC). I was Chair of Board of Studies in Computer Science for two years, and then acted as Deputy Head with responsibility for teaching. I became Chair of the University's Standing Committee on Assessment in 2011; since then, it has become a bigger and bigger role. In some ways, I probably now know more of what is going on at the University than I know about what is happening in the Department. However, more recently, I took on the role of Programme Leader for the main undergraduate

Computer Science Programmes as we undertook the implementation of the York Pedagogy. I introduced the Pedagogy at undergraduate level, and the role has now passed on to a colleague. Over the years, I've spent more time teaching

and managing and my research has diminished. So now I'm in a Teaching and Scholarship role: I moved from being a Lecturer to Senior Lecturer, and now I'm a Reader in Teaching and Scholarship.

What changes in assessment have you seen during your time as Chair of SCA?

One of the main things that has happened is standardisation. Very early on in my tenure, the University was undergoing its Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) review. We had to preface many of the answers to their questions with 'it depends which department you are talking about.' In those days there were very different practices in different departments. It was modularisation, six or seven years ago, that really pushed the issue of standardisation, but there was a long period of discussion prior to that – perhaps too long. Now every student knows that they are being treated under the same rules, whether they are in the English Department or in the Computer Science Department. Having one set of rules across the University means that they can be easily explained to students, that students can understand them better, and that students on combined programmes have a joined-up experience. One piece of advice that I received from a previous Chair of SCA when I started was, 'If you are thinking about changes, always start with the combined students'. Several times I've forgotten that and regretted it. It's a good piece of advice, because if you set up a system and then retrofit it to the combined students it very often doesn't work.

We've also improved some things recently: we amended the rules around

compensation for final year students two years ago, and we have just changed the rules to allow undergraduate students who fail their first year to repeat that year. I think that's a positive change: students who don't manage to progress at the end of this academic year will have the opportunity to come back and try again. It gives another chance to those who, for whatever reason, spent too much time on other things or for whom the transition to university has not been as smooth as it might have been. The overriding principle for as long as I've been Chair of SCA is to make things better for students, more equal, fairer and clearer.

What effects has the implementation of the York Pedagogy had on assessment?

The Pedagogy has this great emphasis on programme level thinking, and we might have thought more along those lines back when we implemented modularisation. That process was driven by the idea that we would have a modular structure for all taught programmes, undergraduate and postgraduate. Fitting into the modular structure meant there wasn't as much opportunity to consider how the programme works as a whole: how students' knowledge builds during their time with us, and how formative and summative assessments are linked to each other throughout. I think the Pedagogy lets us take stock. Lots of departments put a great deal of thought into modularisation, but then over the subsequent four or five years a number of small changes have occurred. Certainly in Computer Science we allow module leaders quite a lot of autonomy; they can make changes to modules. But, naturally, changes were made thinking more at the level of the module than in terms of what works for the programme overall. So the Pedagogy gives us the opportunity to think much more in terms of programmes, which in some ways is hard to do, but it's worth it – because being able to help students to understand where individual modules fit into the programme level structure helps them to see why they are studying particular

things at particular times. That's quite an exciting thing.

It's also exciting that there's more of an emphasis on assessment. We can get programme leaders thinking about how we conduct assessment through the course of the programme, how the work of the student and their formative assessment in a particular module lead toward the summative assessment. So all of those things, I think, will be very helpful in improving the students' experience of their academic programmes. There hasn't been a great emphasis on the importance of formative work before. But it prepares students for summative assessment, and possibly reduces the volume of that assessment. In some programmes there is a huge amount of summative work and you do wonder whether it is all really necessary. We need to have summative assessment in order to have some sort of objective view of how well students are doing and to justify the award of degrees – but we don't need to do it all the time. But of course that then leaves the challenge of how you keep students engaged: there is this danger that students will think 'oh, that's not going to count towards my degree, why should I bother doing it?' That is an issue that we are struggling with, and which we are going to go on struggling with: how we keep students properly engaged. Students need to see the value of feedback on formative assessment; that they are not just receiving feedback for the sake of feedback, but in order to improve what's going to come later on.

Where do you think the University is heading in terms of assessment?

I think there are challenges with assessment. One of the current challenges is about security and making sure that a student's work is really theirs. There are issues around misconduct that we have to be really careful about, for example essay commissioning. This is stuff that has been in the press recently, about contract cheating and commissioning of essays and so on. One obvious way one can deal with those issues is to have more closed exams. That's tempting, but there are

“ *The overriding principle for as long as I've been Chair of SCA is to make things better for students, more equal, fairer and clearer.* **”**

downsides: there are elements of learning that you simply cannot measure so well in closed exams. I also think that one issue concerning closed exams, which will emerge in the next few years (and which is coming up already in other institutions), is the business of handwriting. Student's don't often write by hand anymore outside closed exams, so why are we assessing that way? This is one of my worries, because I don't know how to solve the problem with the real estate that we have at the moment. How do we run an exam which would allow, let's say, two hundred students in a particular subject to write their essays on computers in closed exam conditions? We don't have enough computer rooms to do that, and, even if we did, we could run into problems with making sure that students don't have access to the Internet, that it's really them doing the work. But I think it's an issue that we are going to have to deal with. We have students with disabilities who have particular pieces of software to help them, and we can organise it so that they can undertake exams with their own computer, but these situations do need to be monitored closely. We can do it for a single student; doing it for two hundred is harder. But it's coming because, you know, the world is changing: I'd be surprised if in ten years' time we are still doing the same sort of exams we are doing now. It probably won't be me as Chair of SCA then; I'll let somebody else deal with that!



Steve King was in conversation with Carmen Álvarez-Mayo, a member of Learning and Teaching Forum committee and Associate Lecturer in Spanish.

Team-based Industrial Software Project as a means for Assessment & Learning

Tommy Yuan, from the Department of Computer Science, discusses the benefits of team learning and assessment.



“The effectiveness of using industrial projects for assessment and learning is apparent.”

Introduction

Modern software systems are very sophisticated and normally developed by a team of engineers. There has been increasing research and reports on issues related to the teaching of software engineering team projects. Woodfield and Collofello (1983), for example, discussed many problems observed in the teaching of team projects, such as the evaluation of teams and individuals, project selection and team formation. Gorla and Lam (2004) explored the relationship in small software teams between the team's personality

composition and its performance. Wilkins and Lawhead (2000) discussed the assessment of individual student contributions to a group project. There is, however, little discussion in the literature of the use of industrial projects in an educational setting. This paper intends to fill the gap by sharing our practice in the use of industrial projects as a means for assessment and learning.

The team-based industrial software project

Group Project Software Management

is a core module for the MSc Software Engineering cohort within the Department of Computer Science. It is a 20-credit module assessed by a 25% individual open assessment and a 75% group software project. The interest here is the group software project. Prior to the adoption of industrial projects, project specifications were normally prescribed by the lecturer. This is fine as an academic exercise but students gained very little in terms of employability experience. To address this, an industrial contact was established with British Telecom (BT)

in 2011. BT prepared 2-3 brief project descriptions, each with a few references for initial background reading material. The appropriateness of the projects was assessed by the lecturer and then the internal assessor against the cohort level and expected learning outcomes. The size of the project is typically designated to be around 400-500 person-hours, and this requires each student to work around 100 hours in order to earn the credits.

Teams are required to submit a bid for their favourite projects. The project manager (ie the lecturer) will, in consultation with the clients, assign a problem to a team in light of the bids. No negotiation is allowed once assigned. On top of the initial background reading, teams need to contact the BT client to elicit further details. Typically, 2-3 client meetings are needed whilst minor issues can be clarified via email.

Immediately after the submission of their group report, an acceptance testing will be carried out together with a presentation to the client. All the three items will be initially marked by the client and then reviewed by the lecturer prior to departmental internal audit. The first pilot of this process in 2011 was a success. Teams were well motivated to tackle industrial problems by interacting with BT clients.

The practice outlined above has been adopted since and we have been running industrial team-based projects for seven years. The success of these, we believe, is built on good practices for team formation and a fair marking policy. These practices are discussed in turn below.

Metrics for team formation

A student software team typically contains 4-6 members. Too many will cause communication overheads and too few might lead to skills shortage. Skill set is one of the more important considerations for team formation. Too often, teams with strong engineering skills may lack communication and leadership skills, while teams with every member confident to lead may find themselves struggling with programming. These are typical examples of unsuccessful team formation. Ideally, teams are formed with mixed and balanced skill sets, but creating balanced teams in practice is challenging – especially when there are a large number of students and the lecturer does not yet know them well.

In order to address this issue, we have devised and tried a few metrics. First, as well as students' grades for their programming test, students are asked to

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	average
Mean %	72	72	78	85	85	78

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	average
Score [/5]	4.2	4.7	4.3	4.3	4.6	4.4

Table 1: Cohort average grades and module evaluation, 2013-2017.

complete a self-assessment survey on their strengths and weaknesses in the areas of leadership and communication, analysis, design, coding and time management. The results of the survey, while not infallible, can be used as metrics for uniform distribution of skills to the teams. According to DeMarco and Lister's (1999) guidelines for creating productive teams, female members often play vital roles in making a team gel. Gender is therefore considered as one of the team formation metrics as well. DeMarco and Lister also considered the benefits of self-organized teams, but this might be difficult to achieve in an educational setting for reasons of fairness. However, we have experimented with this in adding an extra entry to the survey: namely, a small wish. The entry allows a student to name a single person he/she would (not) like to work with, and this worked out very well. Further, taking advantage of the diversity of our multinational postgraduate cohort, we normally form teams composed from at least three different backgrounds; this provides students with opportunities to experience different cultures. For students from different cohorts, mixed cohort might be used as a metric as well. In practice, though, it is not necessary to satisfy all of these possibilities as long as the skills sets are well spread out.

Assessing individual contribution

A potential issue with team software projects is the definition of a fair marking policy to motivate individual team members. On the one hand, Demarco and Lister (1999) suggest that joint product ownership prompts good team unity, and this implies that each member should receive the same mark for the group delivery. On the other hand, this may not reflect an individual member's true effort or contribution to the project. It does tend to happen each year that a few struggling students rely on their teammates to pass this module, and here individual discrimination might be needed. To achieve the right balance is not easy in practice. One way to address this is to use peer assessment together with a reflective individual report from students on their team project experience. Students are

invited to assess the performance of their teammates apart from themselves. The reflective report is important for student reflective learning. We currently allocate 15/75 marks to peer assessment and an individual report while maintaining 60/75 for their joint report where each member receives the same marks. Team members are well motivated under this policy.

Wrap up

We have adopted and made use of industrial software projects for a number of years. The team formation metrics were used to form productive teams, and peer assessment and self-reflective reports were used to differentiate at an individual level. The effectiveness of using industrial projects for assessment and learning is apparent. All teams performed well, as shown in the table below, with excellent cohort average grades for the past five years.

Student feedback scores for the module are also excellent, as shown in table 1, above.

With regard to future improvement, we are planning to experiment with using students' personal characteristics (eg introvert vs extravert) as a metric and then study the consequences.

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Sharing your innovation via a York Learning and Teaching Forum lunchtime workshop

Helen Bedford and Rachel Lavelle discuss the value of leading a workshop for York Learning and Teaching Forum.

Introduction

Effective scholarship of teaching and learning is fuelled by individual impetus and action, together with nurturing activities at an institutional level (Adcroft and Lockwood 2010). In the present higher education climate, Longcroft's (2017) advice to avoid 're-inventing the wheel' by learning from, and being inspired by, colleagues is timely.

The regular lunchtime workshops run by York Learning and Teaching Forum provide opportunities for staff to share their work within a format which promotes individual and institutional learning and reflection. Workshops showcase and explore a variety of contemporary activities and themes, and staff from all disciplines are welcome to lead and participate. The workshops aim to share practice and innovation

across the University and consider the York Pedagogy (University of York 2015) in action.

What's involved in leading a workshop

Workshops are held during teaching terms, using venues across both campuses to facilitate easy attendance by staff. Typically 90 minutes long and with refreshments provided, they promote an informal atmosphere for discussion, reflection and sharing. Workshop leads are encouraged to devise engaging sessions which prioritise opportunities for interaction and participation.

York Learning and Teaching Forum organises workshop administration such as timely promotion of each event and managing staff bookings. Each workshop is supported by a member of the York Learning and Teaching Forum, including the facilitation of a mechanism for capturing and collating anonymised participant feedback. Leading a workshop can therefore be a development opportunity and a valuable contribution to annual performance review.

Reflections on leading a workshop

In spring 2017, we led a workshop

exploring our use of 360° feedback to develop the communication skills of second year undergraduate midwives. The feedback tool was introduced within practice-based communications workshops, undertaken in the Department of Health Sciences' Clinical Simulation Unit. In these workshops, professional actors engage with the students to simulate realistic practice scenarios. This provides a valuable opportunity for self-reflection and for feedback from peers, actors and lecturers immediately after the scenarios. Whilst this had worked relatively well, we felt more could be done. A key intention was to promote more detailed and constructive peer feedback within a safe learning environment, enabling students to sensitively and professionally identify weaker aspects and to suggest improvements to communication performances.

We chose to share our experiences of enhancing this aspect of learning within our York Learning and Teaching Forum workshop, as we anticipated relevance for staff facilitating communication skills amongst undergraduates of all disciplines, not just in clinical or professional arenas such as midwifery.

Our workshop therefore explored the value and challenges of facilitating feedback on communication skills from a range of sources (eg self-reflection, peer and lecturer feedback) using a structured tool. We oriented workshop participants by introducing the activity and the 360° feedback tool (Pendleton et al 1984) in action. We then structured a series of focused discussions to share the opportunities and challenges of feedback and communication skills development.

For us, the most notable and beneficial aspects of the workshop were being able to engage with colleagues from a range of disciplines and professional/academic services, recognising their clear interest in the topics and hearing their examples of practice. Participants represented Music, the York Law School,

"Nice pace, lovely feeling of inclusivity and interest."

Chemistry, Social Work, Centre for English Language Teaching (CELT), Careers, and Academic Support Office (ASO). Discussion was collegial and informative, and the workshop provided an invaluable opportunity for networking. Anonymised feedback indicated a high level of satisfaction with the workshop.

The workshop was also deemed successful as an opportunity for sharing practice and furthering participants' understanding of teaching and learning issues:

'I have some really concrete examples now – thank you'

'Really helpful to hear examples from practice in different departments'

Areas which both we as facilitators and the participants felt we could have improved were also identified. For example: scheduling even more time for discussion and reflection, enabling greater coverage of complexities and challenges of the topics and considering the resource implications of initiatives such as ours which involve financial costs. The workshop informed our ongoing reflections using the 360° feedback tool, and stimulated participants as follows:

'I have a list of reflections and questions to follow up'



Your next step

York Learning and Teaching Forum actively encourages and supports colleagues to share and disseminate their work. If you have an idea for a future workshop please do get in touch. For contact details, and to find out more about the workshops running this year, please access: york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/community/peer-support/forum

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"Prompted some ideas for my own work with students."

Leading national education conference held in Department of Chemistry

The Variety in Chemistry Education and Physics Higher Education Conference (ViCEPHEC) is the leading national conference for chemistry and physics education at tertiary level in the UK. This year the conference was held in the Department of Chemistry at the University of York between 23 and 25 August.



Delegates ranged from academic staff at universities to schoolteachers, outreach officers, laboratory specialists, technicians, students, industrialists and publishers. The event, attended by over 175 delegates, provided opportunities to share best practice within the disciplines of chemistry and physics by discussing cutting edge educational research and practice. The conference was organised by an interdisciplinary team from the departments of Chemistry, Education and Physics, namely, Dr Glenn Hurst (local chair), Dr Phil Lightfoot, Dr Kerry Knox, Dr Emily Brunsdon, Dr Lucia D'Andrea, Dr Julia Sarju and Miss Janey Gregory.

New for 2017 was 'Labsolutely Fabulous', chaired by Dr David Pugh, an opportunity for conference delegates

to present lecture demonstrations, experiments and outreach activities. There were contributions to this session from staff and students in the departments of Chemistry, Electronics and Physics at York. This addition to the programme complemented the interactive workshops, oral presentations and 5 minute oral bytes. A poster session at the National STEM Learning Centre provided further opportunities to discuss aspects of teaching and scholarship.

York organising committee

There were a number of contributions from the University of York, including a thought-provoking plenary lecture by Professor Sir John Holman where he explored the transition made by students (and himself) between school and

university chemistry education. Other contributions included Professor Andy Parsons explaining his online course 'Explaining Everyday Chemistry' and the way in which this demystifies organic chemistry to a wide range of different learners. Dr Glenn Hurst presented the variety of ways in which, working alongside Louise Summerton, Dr Avtar Matharu and Professor James Clark, they have been embedding green chemistry principles into a range of different learning environments - from schools in Brazil to undergraduate labs back here in York. Dr Christian Diget delivered an interactive workshop entitled 'Binding Blocks - teaching nuclear physics with LEGO' and Dr Charles Barton presented his observations on 'Improving physics admissions and female student



intake at the University of York'. Dr Emily Brunsdon gave an oral byte entitled '5 steps towards an inclusive lecture' and Katherine Leech delivered a demonstration entitled 'iPads for outreach'.

A highlight of the meeting was the conference dinner held at the National Railway Museum - a spectacular venue, which made a real impression on conference delegates and showed off the City of York at its very best. Chair of

“ A highlight of the meeting was the conference dinner held at the National Railway Museum - a spectacular venue, which made a real impression on conference delegates and showed off the City of York at its very best.”

the conference organising committee, Dr Glenn Hurst said: 'The many great discussions over dinner and throughout the rest of the meeting attest to the

healthy state of education in the physical sciences at university level, and the strong sense of community that exists.'



The Harvard poltergeist and other honest spirits

Matt Coward, Sociology, addresses that most recalcitrant of assessment spectres: appropriate referencing.

Assessment forms part of the wider student experience, especially in the case of first year undergraduates, where the spectre of Harvard referencing looms over their shoulders, like a poltergeist waiting to strike. Fear and the gut-wrenching agony of misplaced commas spill into the minds of undergraduates trying to comprehend an entire discipline within a single term of their programme. 'For shame', they cry, when they are unable to fully unpick the social intricacies of inter-personal interaction within a single thousand-word assignment. And then, as the jet-black text, presented in a standard font on a white background, swells on the page, the poltergeist rises like a monstrosity of Lovecraftian prose to beckon them to complete the bibliography.

I am not too far removed from my own undergraduate experience and remember my first university assignment, exploring the role of the Virgin Mary in Christianity. I, too, made a common mistake in my approach, casting my net wide and thus allowing it only to penetrate in the shallows of the literature. My essay flitted aimlessly from the dense ruminations of *Vatican II* to vivid ethnographies of Marian shrines in Mexico, taking only brief respite in the south of France to discuss Marian apparitions in the town of Lourdes. The poltergeist, too, crawled out from my carefully 1.5 line spaced text. I shudder to recall my first encounter with the Harvard spirit, using square brackets to enclose its messages [Coward, 2018] and, when asked where my page-numbers rested, I retorted: 'they're here' [24]. I tell these stories to my students when I teach, beseeching them not to make the same mistakes I did.

This academic year I have the pleasure to be teaching on two very distinct modules across two departments, both of which ask students to produce a report as their first assignment. When I tell them

I shudder to recall my first encounter with the Harvard spirit, using square brackets to enclose its messages [Coward, 2018] and, when asked where my page-numbers rested, I retorted: 'they're here' [24]."

this, though, they ask if I mean an essay. 'It's different', I say, listing a series of possible formatting options that they might use. 'Use headings and subheadings', I say, thinking on my feet, and add: 'you might want to make a table'. Though, for the most part, students are not concerned with the report itself. Conversations return once again to the spectre of assignments: the Harvard Poltergeist.

I am in a position that my students tend to find strange. I understand the poltergeist, I know what it wants, I can communicate with it, and maybe I even consider it my friend. Although I am in no way a qualified linguist, I can tell you that the word *Poltergeist* finds its etymological roots in two German words: *poltern* ('to make noise'), and *Geist* ('ghost/spirit'). I believe that this is a perfect way to talk about referencing, as not only does it encapsulate the fears and dread with which undergraduates perceive it, but it also encapsulates the very heart of referencing: academic integrity. Referencing is used to 'make noise' and draw necessary attention to the work of other scholars, to communicate the value of the research being discussed, to analyse, discuss and critique – which all root back to the very essence of academic practice.

If you don't believe in yourself, who will?

Through referencing we might commune with scholars and academics the world over; many might even use the likes of *EndNote*, *Mendeley* and *Zotero*, the *Ouija* Boards of referencing, to aid and hasten our communication. Although these services are available to aid the clarity and consistency of communication, it is important that undergraduate students learn to communicate in the traditional way, individually typing and crafting their references by hand, heeding each source, much in the same way as ancient Chinese diviners threw bones to communicate with the noisy ghosts.

We might, then, consider both referencing and academic integrity to be esoteric in nature to undergraduate students, for it is only understood by those with select knowledge, remaining hidden only to be revealed within the confines of academic practice. The Harvard Poltergeist, the noisy ghost, simply wishes to be recognised and addressed, much in the same way as the other honest spirits residing within the ancient halls of academia. We, as academics, are aided by these honest spirits in our practice and must pass on our esoteric knowledge to others, through which we can underline to students across the University the four principles which guide all assessment: equity, openness, clarity and consistency.



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RESEARCH-LED TEACHING IN PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE



UNIVERSITY OF YORK ANNUAL LEARNING AND TEACHING CONFERENCE 2018 FRIDAY 22 JUNE 2018

Research-led teaching and learning are distinguishing features of Russell Group universities. They are also key factors that influence students' choice of university and their satisfaction with their course. Translating research excellence into learning opportunities to expose students to current research, including our own contributions to the discipline, are priorities from the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy and form core elements of the York Pedagogy. York has an outstanding reputation for research in many fields and is well-placed to inspire and engage students. The University ensures that students

benefit from the very latest knowledge and thinking, enabling them to develop analytical skills vital to their future careers.

However, despite clear and numerous benefits of bridging the traditional divide between research and teaching, achieving these objectives presents several challenges. This conference will explore how these challenges can be overcome by showcasing examples of best practice in research-led teaching. This will be achieved through keynote presentations, lightning talks, discussion workshops and poster sessions. Join us to contribute to the debate.

For more information visit: york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/community/events/annual-conference/2018

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#YORKLT18

Support, development and recognition for LEARNING AND TEACHING

FORUM WORKSHOPS

The Learning and Teaching Forum organises an exciting series of one-off workshops and events, delivered and facilitated by experienced academic and support staff. Workshops are open to all staff and postgraduate students. If you are unable to attend an event but would like a copy of the materials, please let us know. For further information, see: york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/community/peer-support/forum

THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING NETWORK (SOTLN)

The SoTL Network brings together a suite of resources, professional development, discussion and dissemination opportunities focused upon looking at teaching and student learning in a scholarly and research-orientated way. The current range of activities organised as part of the network includes an annual SoTL journal, invited speakers, and a strand of seminars designed to engage colleagues with key and emerging pedagogical literature. For more information, see: york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/develop/network

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The Rapid Response Fund supports small-scale short-term projects, initiatives or purchases to enhance the quality of learning and teaching by addressing a clearly-identified need or issue. Funding is limited, and grants will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis; please also note that departments in a stronger financial position may be asked to fund initiatives from their own resources. For more information, see: york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/support/funding

THE YORK PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT (YPAD) SCHEME

The YPAD scheme is based upon the University's Peer Support for Teaching policy, and involves participants working to develop their practice in groups supported and facilitated by an experienced colleague. The scheme is designed to be inclusive of all staff groups who teach or support student learning (including graduate teaching assistants, research staff with teaching responsibilities, associate staff and learning and teaching support staff) and caters for all levels of experience. YPAD is accredited by the Higher Education Academy; this means individuals who successfully engage with the scheme will secure professional recognition through the award of an HEA Fellowship category appropriate to their role and their level of responsibility for teaching and supporting learning. For more information, see: york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/develop/ypad

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S TEACHING AWARDS

One of the ways in which the University rewards excellence in learning and teaching is through the Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Awards, introduced in 2006. Nominations, in which students play a part, are invited from departments in the Spring Term of each academic year. The scheme recognises staff (either individually or in teams), including postgraduates who teach, who demonstrate excellence in teaching and/or learning support at York. For more information, see: york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/reward/awards

THE NATIONAL TEACHING FELLOWSHIP SCHEME (NTFS)

The NTFS Individual Awards form part of a nationwide, government-funded initiative to promote excellence in learning and teaching. Operated by the Higher Education Academy, the Individual Awards competition recognises individuals who have made an outstanding impact on the student learning experience. 55 awards are available each year, to be used for personal, pedagogic and professional development in learning and teaching (there is no longer a formal project requirement). Details regarding the 2018 nominations are provided by the HEA. For more information, see: york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/reward/ntfs

SUPPORT FOR TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING (TEL)

Technology enhanced learning refers to the use of online systems and tools in support of learning and teaching activities. TEL support at the University of York is provided by the E-Learning Development Team in the Academic Support Office. The team offers individuals and Departments support in the design, delivery and evaluation of learning technology interventions at the activity, module and programme level. This includes guidance on the use of the University's centrally-supported virtual learning environment *Yorkshare*, and advice on a wide range of learning technologies, including use of Google Sites for portfolios, multimedia and video, lecture recording, technology-supported assessment, in-class technologies and collaboration out of class. For more information, see: york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/support/technology