

# Forum

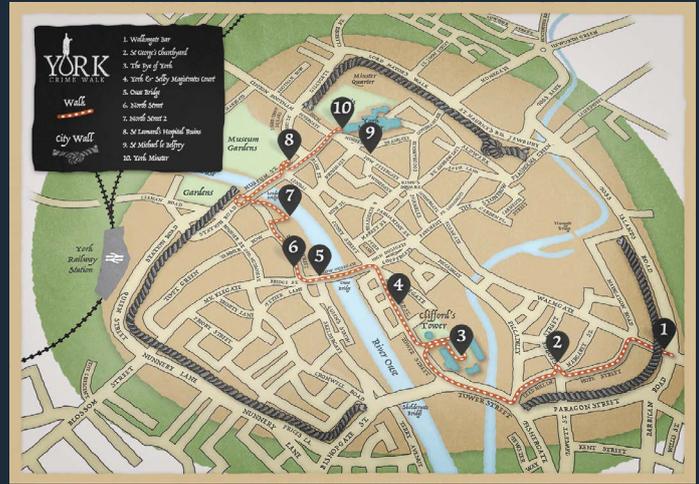
Learning and Teaching Committee



UNIVERSITY  
*of York*

ISSUE 45 | SUMMER 2019

# Creativity in Learning and Teaching



**Innovation  
Collaboration  
Engagement**



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# Editorial

Dear Reader

Welcome to the 45th edition of *Forum Magazine* which has the theme of 'Creativity'. In my role as editor I have the pleasure of recruiting and responding to people who want to write for *Forum Magazine*. I remain impressed by how many people want to share their ideas so we can learn from each other. During the process of gathering articles for this edition I have been genuinely excited by the range of inventiveness and ingenuity demonstrated by staff here at York in how we conduct teaching and enhance student learning.



The lead article for this publication is unusual in that it has been co-written by the team leaders of the four key roles that comprise the *Forum* committee (namely conference, workshops, magazine and blog). Glenn Hurst (Chemistry), Sally Quinn (Psychology), Anna Bramwell-Dicks (TFTV) and myself (Sociology) offer our reflections on not only our roles but also the creativity we have discovered within ourselves (often unexpectedly) whilst serving on *Forum*. I hope that you find the insights interesting and that they inspire more of our readers to get involved with *Forum* led events and activities in the future.

With all my best wishes for the rest of 2019.

**Ruth Penfold-Mounce (Sociology)**  
Editor

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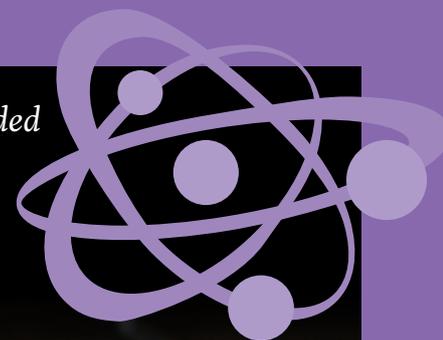
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**Front Cover image** John Houlihan



**Professor Andy Parsons**, Department of Chemistry, was recently awarded a prestigious National Teaching Fellowship in recognition of his inspirational and innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Forum magazine caught up with Andy to talk about the award.

**Firstly, many congratulations on the award of your National Teaching Fellowship. How does it feel to be recognised in this way?**

Absolutely delighted and very proud! I have had the pleasure of working with many talented and enthusiastic colleagues and students, over many years, and without their help and support this award would not have been possible.

**Could you tell us a little more about the specific things that led to this award? To put that a different way, regular readers of Forum will be aware of your work on the chemical communication projects or your commitment to useful technological innovations in supporting learning, but are there particular areas to which you're more attached?**

My approaches to teaching chemistry can be somewhat unusual (including using music, poetry and drama) and I enjoy exploring new strategies for enhancing learning. This has included flipped learning and embracing initiatives linked to employability – ranging from students doing placements in local schools to working on a mini research project, in collaboration with AstraZeneca. I have been fortunate to have the flexibility to innovate and work with students as partners in developing original teaching resources, most recently, a research-led revision of our entire online master's teaching.

**How time consuming was the process of application for the National Teaching Fellowship, and do you have any recommendations for others who might be thinking about it?**

It was a lengthy process, but it was an opportunity to reflect on my career and to celebrate the things I am most proud of. It took a fair bit of rewriting, but I was very grateful for all the help and support of colleagues from the Academic Support Office. My advice is to look very carefully at the criteria and to tell an interesting story, which goes beyond simply describing what you have achieved, giving a rationale and clear evidence for the impact you have made.



**What does being a National Teaching Fellow mean in terms of ongoing practice or engagement in the sector?**

The Fellowship is widely recognised in Higher Education within the UK as well as internationally as a mark of quality. The award has the potential to help open doors to new academic or career opportunities. It is still early days for me, but it enables me to keep up with what's going on, for example, bringing to my attention teaching and learning publications, and it provides a great platform for sharing ideas.

**Much of your work in teaching and learning comes across as being about impact in outreach, in the most positive, meaningful sense of that term: making learning accessible, authoring wide-reaching textbooks, taking science into schools, creating opportunities to reach as many people as possible – for example through your MOOC [Massive Open Online Course]. Is this approach an extension of what you find personally rewarding in teaching or is this something more broadly about the purpose of higher education today?**

I am incredibly passionate about chemistry! My aim is to enthuse others about a subject I find fascinating, which is so relevant to our everyday lives. With this in mind I have constantly explored new ways to engage different audiences

and, as an Admissions Tutor, I have had a particular eye on attracting prospective undergraduates. Running a MOOC has certainly been a highlight – the impact and feedback has been beyond my expectations. Over the last two years, over 12,000 learners from over 100 countries have signed up to the course. It has been a privilege to facilitate the course, alongside undergraduate mentors, discussing topics ranging from how to make the best cup of tea, to how to build a realistic chemical model using Jelly Babies, to the latest research on new antibiotics, including work at York. Higher education should engage the public in the challenges presented by science, using real-life examples to capture their imagination and emphasise the benefits for society.

**Finally, what would you say has been the most useful piece of advice you've received (or given!) in relation to teaching and/or learning?**

Two things spring to mind. Firstly, to seek feedback, use it constructively and try not to take criticism too personally. Secondly, do not be afraid of trying something different and letting your personality shine through.

Keep an eye out for Andy Parsons' MOOC, Exploring Everyday Chemistry, which opens again on 1 July: <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/everyday-chemistry>

# Meet the Learning and Teaching Forum

**Ruth Penfold-Mounce** along with **Glenn Hurst**, **Sally Quinn** and **Anna Bramwell-Dicks** discuss their roles and experiences of serving on the Learning and Teaching Forum.

Increasing pressure is being exerted upon academia in achieving, demonstrating and measuring excellence in teaching and learning. Consequently there is no better time for staff and departments at York to take advantage of the opportunities and training offered by the University of York Learning and Teaching Forum.

The Learning and Teaching Forum is comprised of an interdisciplinary team of staff (who all serve within Forum for 3 years) from the University of York who aim to bring together and support colleagues in teaching and learning. We work to celebrate and raise the profile of learning and teaching, to provide staffed spaces for discussion of issues and to represent and refer staff views from our activities to the University Teaching Committee. At the heart of Learning and Teaching Forum is our purpose to nurture and disseminate creativity and good practice and contribute toward a consistent culture of quality.

In this article we want to shed some light on the inner workings of the Learning and Teaching Forum by exploring the key roles and activities being conducted on an annual basis. We also want to emphasise how this diverse group of academics and learning support staff are passionately committed to improving learning and teaching at the University of York and just how creative and dynamic serving on the Learning and Teaching Forum can be.

Through these reflections by Forum committee leaders we hope to have given some insight into the roles and challenges faced by the Learning and Teaching Forum particularly in terms of creativity. Please do visit our website, blog and twitter account [@UOYForum](#). Do consider signing up for the Annual Learning and Teaching Conference, taking place on

## Annual Learning and Teaching Conference (and Chair of Learning and Teaching)

### GLENN HURST (CHEMISTRY)

Having served on the Learning and Teaching Forum since 2015 together with being Chair of the group since 2018, I have had the pleasure of working with a very diverse and talented collection of academic and learning support staff. With representation across our institution, the Forum is a marvelous community of colleagues working together on learning and teaching initiatives. Members of the group are always looking to engage staff and students from across the institution in new ways to celebrate and share learning and teaching practice. It is through working with such colleagues that I have learned the most and been inspired to contribute in new ways.

The four major contributions of the Learning and Teaching Forum are to facilitate our Annual Learning and Teaching Conference, to coordinate a portfolio of workshops, to disseminate news through our Forum Magazine and to share important updates, perspectives and digital content through our website and blog. Since joining in 2015, it is clear to me that members of the team have made significant efforts to maintain and advance the work of the Forum. Take use of technology as an example: as our institutional practice has evolved,

Forum has responded (often through collaborating with our Programme Design and Learning Technology Team) by advertising major events (workshops/conferences) through talking heads videos, by recording relevant sections of such events via lecture capture to make content accessible to all, by incorporating use of software for technology-enhanced learning such as Padlet or electronic voting systems into our programme of events and by sharing our work through social media. I feel very privileged to be part of such a forward-thinking and creative team of staff. In my role as Chair, I have the philosophy to be as 'enabling' as I can. Upon team members suggesting new ideas, as a group, we discuss how we can work together to turn such visions into a reality that is of benefit to our institutional community. Personally, I get a lot of satisfaction from working with Forum committee members and seeing ideas transform into reality through collaborating with and supporting one another.

Within our committee, I lead the organisation of our Annual Learning and Teaching Conference. This is the flagship event that the Forum facilitates and, once again, this has undergone transformation in recent years to be more



# and Teaching Forum

## Conference lead (Teaching Forum):

inclusive, interactive and relevant to our community. We have widened the call for contributions to include lightning talks for smaller pieces of work. Year-on-year, we see more and more undergraduate and postgraduate student participation in the event. We celebrate outstanding poster contributions through prizes. Following delegate feedback, we incorporated more opportunities to network, to discuss contributions and consolidate ideas from the day, reflecting on how our practice may evolve.

Our next conference is centred on 'creating valuable learning partnerships in the contemporary university'. This is a relatively open theme and we are excited to review a range of abstracts detailing work in this area. Our sub-theme is specifically focused on 'learning communities' and I am delighted to be hosting Dr Ruth Healey, a National Teaching Fellow from the University of Chester, who will present a keynote lecture on 'Developing learning communities through staff-student partnerships'. New for 2019, in response to your feedback, we will facilitate a panel discussion between Ruth and selected members of our institutional community to provide their perspective on learning communities and how, where relevant, they have innovated in this area.

Further to being an excellent opportunity to learn from and network with colleagues from across the institution through celebrating work within learning and teaching, this is a brilliant event to enhance your continuing professional development and, in my case, has even enabled me to meet a colleague in a different faculty with whom I now collaborate! I wish to take this opportunity to encourage you to attend our conference on 21st June and for you to also encourage others. We look forward to seeing you there.

## Forum workshops lead:

SALLY QUINN (PSYCHOLOGY)

As a member of the Forum committee, my main role is to take the lead with the organisation of the lunchtime workshops. We usually arrange three to four workshops per term and the speakers are members of staff and/or PhD students. The main aims of these sessions are to share good teaching practices with others across the University, to facilitate and encourage conversations about good teaching practice in general and to further these discussions to explore how individual people can integrate the practices of others into their own teaching.

We aim to have a diverse range of speakers and workshops so there is always something for everyone! Many of the speakers are at the forefront of developing innovative teaching practices, having received funding to support a project and/or a Vice Chancellor's Teaching Award for their contributions to teaching provision. The format of the workshops is such that it facilitates discussion between the attendees themselves but also between the speaker and attendees. As expected, these interactions give attendees the platform to discuss how the teaching practices presented in the workshop can be used in their own department and to bounce ideas off other attendees. An additional benefit of these discussions is that the speaker often comes away from the workshop with new ideas. Colleagues from other departments often approach teaching from a different perspective to that of the speaker and discussions can therefore prompt new ways of thinking.

As workshop lead, I am conscious of the workload of staff and the restrictions this places on attendance at the workshops. I'm aware that people sign up for a workshop, fully intending on coming along, but then workload mounts up and the workshop



understandably slides down the list of priorities! We are mindful that the timing of the workshops in the academic year is important. The workshops are there to support staff and to encourage a dialogue of good practice across the University so selecting times when staff feel less under pressure with other work commitments is vital not only to the success of the workshops but also to the ongoing improvement to teaching provision across the University. We are currently looking at the timing of these workshops to see if we can identify optimal times when people are more able to pop along to the workshops that pique their interest.

My parting words are perhaps ones of self-reflection. When I was asked to write this piece on my role as workshop lead, I must admit that I immediately thought I engaged in very little creativity! I will often describe myself as 'not the most creative person in the world.' However, when I delve a little deeper and really think about the different things I do, I realise I'm probably a little more creative than I give myself credit for. Clearly, there are people who find being creative easier than others, and those that might be naturally more creative than others. But let me end by saying this: we all have the ability to be creative, at least to some extent. So, I encourage everyone to reflect on what they do and give themselves credit for creativity, no matter how small you think it is!

# Forum Magazine Editor:

## RUTH PENFOLD-MOUNCE (SOCIOLOGY)

When I became Editor of *Forum* Magazine my fabulous predecessor Claire Hughes (Environment) mentioned how much she had enjoyed being able to use her creative side in the role. My initial reaction was 'Oh, no, I don't think I have a creative side. This is going to be a disaster'. However as time has passed I have come to realise she was right. Being the Editor of *Forum* has its challenges but the rewards are great, especially to be able to encourage staff to showcase the exciting, innovative things they are doing to improve learning and teaching at York.

I think many staff at the University are unaware that it is only a very small team who work on *Forum* Magazine: the Editor, who has oversight of content and quality, writes the editorial and comes up with a theme, and the Sub-editor, who seems to do everything else (!) including: requesting, gathering and organising magazine content, liaising with authors of articles, reviewing and copy-editing articles, assembling the magazine with Design and Print and managing distribution, whilst also supporting the Editor in their role. A sub-committee is formed of 2-3 other *Forum* committee members who largely

help to proofread submissions. As such, *Forum* Magazine team members are acutely aware and appreciative of the authors who contribute to the success of the magazine, many of whom get in touch with great ideas for articles.

I have enjoyed being able to put my personal stamp on each edition of *Forum* through the editorial message and to include the voices of Graduate Teaching Assistants. I have also been pleased with the response to the decision to start a trend of including interviews with key learning and teaching staff whose names we (as employees at University of York) see in emails but might not know a lot about. One of the trickiest decisions for each magazine edition is the use of images. Approving cartoons and choosing the right front cover from what is available can be remarkably difficult and has been known to end in controversy!

For me, *Forum* Magazine is about giving University of York staff a source to read that inspires them and gives them insight into what colleagues are doing. It's about creating a sense of community across departments, disciplines and faculties. Teaching and learning is at the heart of the University and so *Forum* Magazine is a way to get us to reflect upon and celebrate our

"I'll have the misspelt 'Caesar' salad and the incorrectly hyphenated veal osso-buco."



achievements as well as to spur each other on towards further excellence. It is a chance to reflect upon our teaching and get inspired by other individuals and disciplinary approaches to learning and teaching.

My time serving on the Learning and Teaching Forum is almost up as my term ends in July 2019. I would encourage more people, especially from the social sciences, to get involved in the opportunities that the Learning and Teaching Forum offers. Make sure you pick up your copy of *Forum* Magazine and give it a read when it is published twice a year or have a look at the online copies available on the Learning and Teaching Forum website. You can also view past copies in the online archive. *Forum* is a great resource from which we can learn from other disciplines and keep our teaching vibrant and exciting. So do make the most of it and do consider contributing an article in the future.



# Forum website and blog lead:

## ANNA BRAMWELL-DICKS (TFTV)



My primary role on the Forum committee is to lead the website team, who are responsible for overseeing the [yorkforum.org](https://yorkforum.org) site. The main aspect of this work involves regularly updating the content of the website to ensure it appropriately reflects and promotes Forum activities, including acting as a repository for details of the workshops, magazine and annual conference. However, when I took over as lead of the website a little over a year ago, I was keen to use my experience in web design and development to redesign the site alongside the day-to-day business of maintaining and updating the content. So, we have been working together to restructure the vast amount of content on the site through using principles of Information Architecture and with an emphasis on usability and accessibility.

This redesign project began by working with Forum committee colleagues on conducting a thorough analysis of the site's existing content together with discussing our hopes and expectations for how the site could be used in the future. Although these tasks may sound technical in nature, they really allowed me to think creatively to improve the site. Many, many post-it notes and sketches were used as tools to support the redesign process! It has been great to be able to use within my Forum role the techniques that I apply in teaching Interactive Media students, as despite being a lecturer in Web Development it's not often that I get to build websites as part of my day job. Once the analytical structural redesign work was finished we

worked on implementing those ideas into the current version of the site. The initial phase of the redesign work has been completed, but there is still some archival, legacy content to be incorporated within the new structure.

From an aesthetic perspective, there's still some way to go with the redesign work on the site; this project is definitely still a work in progress! We are hoping to make the site more visually appealing and the team and I are currently working to explore colour and branding options, together with ensuring the redesign can accommodate the incorporation of more visual and richer media in the site.

My time on the Forum committee is coming to a close at the end of this academic year, but I'm proud of the work the team has done so far to improve the site and look forward to seeing it fill up with much more content in the future. The site is hosted on WordPress, a platform that makes it relatively easy for many people to edit and contribute content without requiring a technical background. I hope that by using my web development skills I have been able to leave the website on a solid structural footing so that colleagues, even those without a background in technical web development, will be able to contribute to leading the website team. I have thoroughly enjoyed being involved in Forum over the past few years, and the opportunity to work with colleagues from across the University who have a shared interest in improving the student experience through developing and adopting innovative teaching practice.

21st June 2019, which is themed around 'Creating valuable learning partnerships in the contemporary university'. There is also the opportunity to showcase your efforts in enhancing teaching and learning by writing for *Forum Magazine*: just contact the editor. You can also contribute to, or just attend, any of the Forum workshops. Last but not least, if you are passionate about pedagogy, the student experience, research-led teaching and improving learning and teaching across the University there are opportunities to apply for a position on the Learning and Teaching Forum as advertised in the Staff Digest. Forum recruits members from all disciplines and is a hotbed for academics and professional services staff who are enthusiastic about learning and teaching at York.



**Ruth Penfold-Mounce**

is Senior Lecturer in Criminology in the Department of Sociology and is the current Editor of *Forum Magazine*. Ruth holds the roles of Director of Criminology and Undergraduate Dissertation Coordinator where she seeks to consistently improve the student experience and uphold the student voice.

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**Glenn Hurst**

is Lecturer (Assistant Professor) in the Department of Chemistry and is the Chair of the Learning and Teaching Forum. Glenn conducts research in using social media in higher education and green chemistry education through the Green Chemistry Centre of Excellence.

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**Sally Quinn**

is Lecturer in the Department of Psychology and is the Lead for the Workshops. She is interested in providing students with general support for their studies and has recently developed a new module 'Academic Skills'. More recently, Sally has been working on supporting Y1 students with writing which involves several 'How to...' videos and other VLE materials.

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**Anna Bramwell-Dicks**

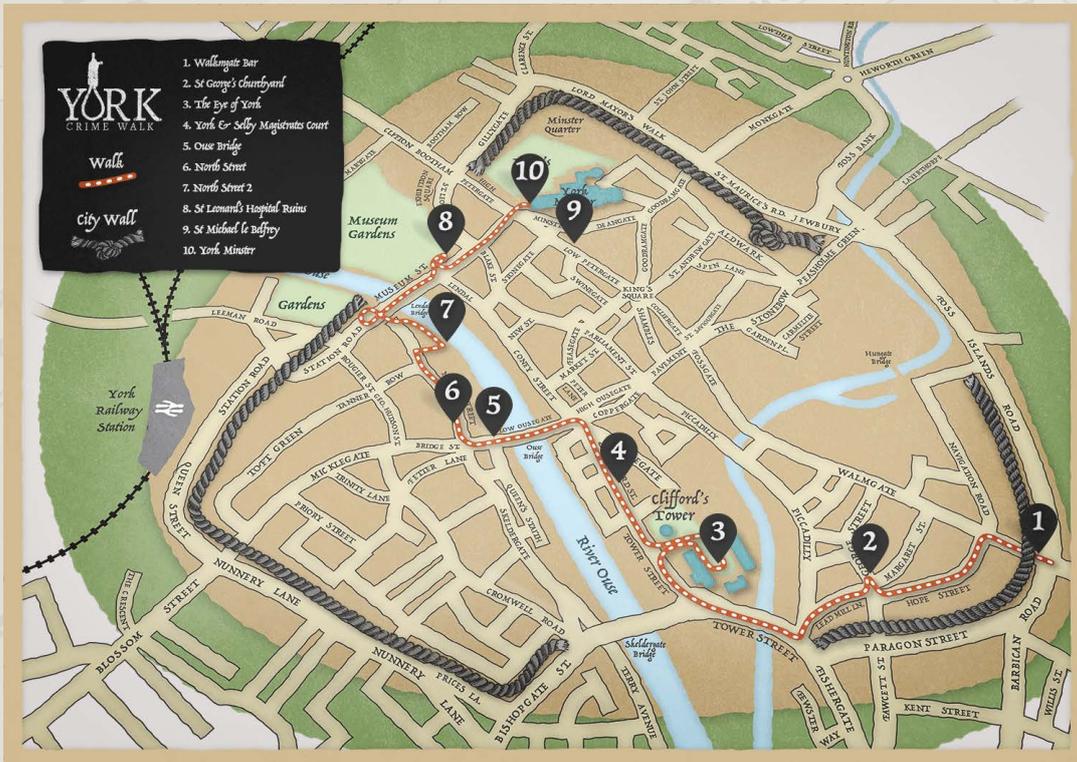
is Lecturer in Web Development and Interactive Media based in the Department of Theatre, Film and Television (TFTV) and is the lead of the Forum website team. Anna conducts research at the intersection of creativity and technology and tries to encourage students to embrace the whimsical and whacky in the design and creation of innovative, inspirational technology products.

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# Teaching through mobile methods:

## The York Crime and Criminal Justice Walk

*Maggie O'Neill and Ruth Penfold-Mounce discuss how they have developed and used a crime walk as a creative (and mobile) teaching method*



The York Crime Walk Downloadable Map (with thanks to Design and Print Solutions).

The University of York Crime Walk (<http://www.yorkcrimewalk.co.uk>) is a self-guided walk through the city, following a route map of criminological landmarks supported by downloadable sound files – so one can walk and listen to the narrative about that place or site. It was developed by three students, Harriet Crowder (3rd year undergraduate), Matt Coward and David Honeywell (doctoral researchers in Sociology and Criminology), and two academics, Ruth Penfold-Mounce and Maggie O'Neill, all based in the Department of Sociology. The York Crime Walk builds upon a

body of research by Maggie O'Neill on walking as a research method. There is a long tradition of walking in ethnographic and anthropological research, but not in criminology; the York Crime Walk aims to address this gap and use it as a teaching tool. The walk emerged from discussions at the University Crime Network and the BA Criminology Board of Studies, in relation to:

- supporting the implementation of the York Pedagogy
- delivering on innovative, engaged teaching methods (to introduce

students to theories and concepts in Criminology as early as possible and in a mobile, engaged way)

- enhancing formative assessment
- Essentially the York Crime Walk was developed as a research led pedagogical method to introduce students to Criminology and to York in an active, embodied and convivial way. It offers a critical pedagogic teaching and learning tool, especially in relation to the history, theories and concepts of crime, justice and punishment and accessed or facilitated via the spaces, places and

stories of medieval York to the current day. The walk is already a favourite topic at Open Days and Visit Days, capturing the imagination of prospective criminology students and their families.

We launched the York Crime Walk at the York Festival of Ideas in June 2018 with a public talk with Q&A and an exhibition of artefacts from the Walmgate Area by York Archaeological Trust. Two guided walks were also delivered to the public and supported by undergraduate students. In October 2018 the walk was introduced in the first year module Sociology of Crime and Deviance which has approximately 170 undergraduates from different degree programmes.

### Process and Practice of Mobile Methods

We developed the York Crime Walk in two distinct phases.

Phase one included: planning, discussing, sharing and operationalising our ideas. Our approach was participatory and inclusive from the very outset. Our intern, Harriet Crowder, conducted archival research and made links with the Museum Trust and Castle Museum. We then developed the relationship with the Museums and conducted a number of pilot walks as we mapped and planned the route in partnership. Finally, Matt Coward developed the website and recorded (in broadcast quality) the walk narrative (available on: iTunes, Sound Cloud, Pocket Casts, Stitcher).

The walk takes between one to two hours depending upon the time taken to stop and reflect upon each landmark. We had to dramatically reduce our content after the first pilot walk lasted over three hours and we didn't even get to the end! It should also be noted that the walk is accessible to people with disabilities and the map and podcasts can be accessed remotely through the website if the walk cannot be undertaken.

Phase two of the process entailed the integration of the walk into the undergraduate module, *Sociology of Crime and Deviance* in September 2018. We evaluate the way students engage with the resources: the digital walk, the actual walk and the resources they access along the way, to highlight the skills they are using and how these will support them in their approach to learning. The walk will also formally become part of the module formative assessment from 2019/2020. Notably this use of mobile methods to teach has led to the development of a second walk: York Death and Culture Walk (launching at a public lecture event entitled 'Walking amongst the dead: The York Death and Culture Walk' on 8th March 2019) connected to the research interests of Ruth Penfold-Mounce.



Matt Coward, David Honeywell, Maggie O'Neill, Ruth Penfold-Mounce, and Harriet Crowder (left to right)

### Why Walking? Pedagogy and Enhancing Learning and Teaching

The York Crime Walk will enhance learning and teaching in the following ways:

1. Walking is a helpful method to introduce people to the history of crime and justice and how diversity and inequality play into this narrative, in ways they will remember, because it is embodied and engages the mind.
2. Walking is a convivial method for teaching and learning and promotes the York pedagogy via active learning. The York Crime Walk adds to the rich pedagogic literature on learning through doing.
3. Taking a walk through the city, engaging with buildings, places and spaces introduces walkers to the critical recovery of the histories of crime, justice and punishment supported by archival work, historical literature and criminological theories.
4. The walk builds upon extensive scholarship around crime and deviance at York. Students are introduced to criminology through mobile methods and staff research interests which facilitates space for them to develop their own criminological understanding.
5. Walking is an experiential methodology and a powerful way of communicating about experiences and ways of knowing across cultural divides. It also focuses attention on the sensory, kinaesthetic, mobile dimensions of lived experience which unites the visual with other senses.

Through walking we are able to get in touch with the past, present and future of crime, justice and punishment in ways that foster understanding and critical reflection; but more than this the York Crime Walk stimulates our criminological imagination.

### Acknowledgements

With thanks to York Castle Museum and York Archaeological Trust; M. Faye Prior and Louis Carter; the Department of Sociology for Internship funds; and the University of York for a 'Rapid Response' Grant. Also thanks to the participants of the Forum workshop as your feedback and discussion was important to us.

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### Endnotes

Maggie has used walking as research for some years. She developed a previous walk with Dr Ivan Hill, HMP Durham Prison Library and Sheila Mulhern, writer in residence at Durham Prison, funded by the Arts Council. See: <https://ghostsofourfuture.com>. A recent development includes a Feminist Walk in Newcastle, for the *Sociological Review* undertaken in partnership with the Women Artists of the North East Library. See: <https://www.thesociologicalreview.com/blog/the-feminist-walk-at-undisciplining.html>.



**Maggie O'Neill** was Chair in Sociology (Criminology), Department of Sociology, University of York and a member of University Teaching Committee. She is now based at University College Cork. She co-founded the University of York Crime Network and the University of York Migration Network. Maggie's research interests include sex work, sexual exploitation and the sex industry; migration and asylum; creative, visual and performative methodologies. [Maggie.oneill@ucc.ie](mailto:Maggie.oneill@ucc.ie) She tweets as: [@maggieneill9](https://twitter.com/maggieneill9)



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# A teaching collaboration between the Department of Environment and Geography and University Estates Services

Claire Hughes, Sarah West and Gordon Eastham

Research methods teaching is a fundamental part of most higher education programmes which require our students to be both consumers and producers of research. However, in a review of the relevant literature Earley (2014) found that students often have negative attitudes towards research methods training. A combination of active and service learning allows students to gain first-hand experience of designing and undertaking research for the benefit of others and has been suggested as an effective approach to increase engagement and motivation. Here we describe a teaching collaboration between the Department of Environment and Geography and University Estates Services which allows students to develop skills in research project design and execution whilst generating important information on the status of the campus environment.

All undergraduate and integrated masters (MEnv) programmes in the Department of Environment and Geography have a well-defined progression in research skills training. Students undertake lecturer-defined research at year 1 and student-led, group projects at year 2 to prepare them for undertaking a substantial independent research project in the final year of study. A key progression point for year 2 BSc/MEnv *Environmental Science and Environmental Geography* students is *Environment Systems Project*. This module offers students the first opportunity within their programmes to design and undertake an authentic research project as part of a group. It is vital that students engage fully with this module in order to gain the skills and knowledge needed to successfully undertake the capstone independent project.

Since 2011/2012 *Environment Systems Project* has focussed on students designing projects on the University campus grounds with a specific focus on key objectives laid out in the original Heslington East Ecological Site Management Plan (ESMP). The module is centred on a series of seminars and practical sessions in which

student groups decide on the topic of focus, define the research question and aim and objectives, design the data collection and data analysis strategies, work in the field and lab to collect data and analyse and report the findings in the form of a written report. Module leaders act as supervisors for the student projects. The option to choose the topic of focus, real-world link and chance to gain a greater understanding of their immediate surroundings appeared to motivate students to engage with the module. Whilst Gordon Eastham (University Grounds Maintenance Manager) provided excellent help and support, in the first few years of the module findings from the student projects were not in turn being communicated back to Estates.

The links between University Estates and *Environment Systems Project* have been greatly strengthened over the last three years to both enhance the feeling of task value amongst students and to ensure that the important and often very high quality data generated within student projects is put to use. Since 16/17 Gordon Eastham has been attending the module launch and presenting students with information on the key environmental issues of concern to his team on campus. Summaries of first class reports are now compiled into a report to Estates and key datasets are also brought together and shared with Estates. Summaries of student projects from 17/18 were recently included as an appendix to the 2019-2025 *campus Ecological Management Plan* ([https://www.york.ac.uk/admin/estates/operations/grounds/biodiversity/ecological\\_management\\_plan.pdf](https://www.york.ac.uk/admin/estates/operations/grounds/biodiversity/ecological_management_plan.pdf)). The plan also lays out goals for future projects done within *Environment Systems Project*.

In 2018/2019, 31 students will have summaries of their reports included in the report to Estates and will hence make important contributions to maintaining the environment on campus. This year our students will be advising on a range of topics including the nutrient-removal efficiency of the reed beds on Heslington East, the total suspended solids loading of the campus lake, and the success of grassland development on Heslington East thereby providing an important service to University Estates.

## Quotation from the University of York Ecological Management Plan 2019-2025 (pp14)

'In the longer term a decision will have to be made as to whether to dig out the reed beds and replace the underlying layer of blast furnace slag, which has a finite life of circa ten years in terms of absorbing and holding phosphates. It may be however that phosphate levels in the surrounding landscape may have fallen sufficiently by then to only have to rely on the bio-filter properties of the Phragmites. This will no doubt be determined by future water sampling as part of environment student projects.'

Open comments in module evaluations confirm that the two main aspects of *Environment Systems Project* student value most are the chance to choose the topic of their projects and the real-world application of the skills they learn and their findings. The words 'freedom', 'independence' and 'choice' feature heavily in positive student feedback on the module. Furthermore, the open comments often mention 'the real-world application', 'closeness to real-world skills' and 'focussing the module on the Uni campus' as aspects students like most about the module.

Embedding work-related learning activities like this into curricula promotes work-readiness (Moreland, 2005). Many of our students would like to move on to positions in environmental consultancy at the end of their degree programmes. This module gives them the opportunity to act in a consultancy role for the University as they work in a team to meet a brief provided by a 'client'. At the end of the module we provide students with a template for text they can add to their CVs describing what the work they undertook within their projects.

Our experience on *Environment Systems Project* suggests in line with Earley (2014) that experiential and service-learning are indeed an effective way to teach research methods. There may be many more ways that the work students do within modules can be used to define and enhance aspects of the campus environment and life. Such initiatives will not only enhance learning and motivation but could also help to create a greater sense of community amongst students and staff working across a wide range of sectors within the University.



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**“**...the two main aspects of Environment Systems Project student value most are the chance to choose the topic of their projects and the real-world application of the skills they learn and their findings.”



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# Developing a dialogic pedagogy in seminar teaching

Ben Poore from the Department of Theatre, Film and Television, University of York, reflects on a pilot project to enhance interaction and to encourage creative thinking in an introductory core module.



Because of this, you know, this whole study and the way it's been set up, we have a very good framework for moving on to next year and working with new people."

Comment from first year student on dialogic pedagogy during a reflective discussion

## Introduction

Seminar teaching is the most common form of staff-student contact for a number of essay- and presentation-assessed modules on our BA programme in Theatre: Writing, Directing and Performance. Yet it is unusual for new students to receive any explanation of what a seminar is, what staff expectations are for students' conduct and participation, and how seminars are meant to enhance learning. I worried that, in my own teaching practice, seminars could sometimes become a mixed bag of activities whose value and purpose was not altogether clear. There would be 'housekeeping' announcements ('Don't forget to sign up for the theatre trip'); there would be discussion activities; there might be miniature, impromptu lectures, even though this module, like most others on the programme, already has timetabled lectures. As a lecturer in a creative arts subject, I imagined that my seminar teaching – and that of my colleagues – would already be fairly dialogic, interactive and dynamic. However, I wanted to test that assumption, especially in the light of the York Pedagogy, the University's recent programme design initiative, which

sought as one of its core principles to maximise the value of students' contact time in order to propel independent learning. The introductory module on play analysis that I had taught for a number of years consisted of lectures, film screenings, and seminars, and the final assessment had always been an essay. I wondered: could working on students' oracy and argumentation skills in the seminar room lead to better-constructed, better-argued essays?

## What is Dialogic Pedagogy?

In his influential book, *Towards Dialogic Teaching: Rethinking Classroom Talk*, Robin Alexander (2006, p.28) sums up dialogic teaching as collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative and purposeful. Alexander stresses the notion of a teaching repertoire: our ability to respond to situations with a wide range of techniques (2006, p.29). Moreover, Skidmore and Murakami, drawing on the seminal work of Paolo Freire, stress that dialogic pedagogy is not simply a technique that can be transposed into any setting but an epistemological position, and is constructed around knowing as a social activity; the teacher is the leader of the learning activity but re-learns

with the students each time (2016, p.3). Although I didn't fully realise it at the time, this approach to learning and teaching founded on dialogue, and on a collective and reciprocal relationship between academics and students, fits with the longer history of the University of York and its reputation for curriculum and learning innovation as one of the 1960s 'plateglass universities'. Early experiments with course design aimed to bridge the gaps between the arts and sciences, and to offer unconventional study combinations (Perkin, 1969, p.119). The English department pioneered experiments in examination methods, and English and History broke down barriers between subject areas (Beloff, 1968, p.51, pp.100-101).

Drawing on these prior publications and examples – and in the process of trying out different techniques – I developed my own principles of dialogic pedagogy. For me, dialogic pedagogy asks seminar leaders to focus on:

- The quality of the questions that the seminar leader and the group ask, and their value in moving discussion forward;
- Building students' competence



in listening, responding to, and evaluating a range of views, and in collectively organising and reviewing their talk;

- Negotiating seminar activities, restructuring them if necessary, so that tasks meet students' learning needs;
- Making fewer but more effective interventions so that students have more 'air time'.

### The Project and the Results

I received support from the University's Strategic Learning and Teaching Projects Fund to explore this theme of staff-student contact in seminars. My interest in dialogic pedagogy as an approach was originally inspired by a Learning and Teaching Forum workshop given by Dr Jan Hardman of the University of York's Department of Education. Dr Hardman agreed to be my mentor in this project, as it evolved into something that was as much about developing a new teaching repertoire as enhancing students' speaking, listening and writing.

I recorded seminars across an introductory first-year module in Autumn term, *Introduction to Play Analysis*. During the term, I applied dialogic pedagogy

methods to build student confidence and autonomy in responding to and organising talk in the seminar. Reviewing the recordings, I regularly reflected on the quality of talk in seminars with the students, with colleagues, and in a journal. As well as being mentored by Dr Hardman, I also mentored a Teaching Fellow, who led on the teaching of the follow-on module in the Spring and Summer terms, *Dramaturgy*, while I observed and advised on her application of dialogic methods.

In addition to making room for talk about talk in seminars, I conducted a survey of student experiences of different types of seminar activity and held two discussion sessions at the end of the academic year. Students reported that they really appreciated having the chance to test ideas in front of their peers; their reactions and questions made their essay arguments stronger. Students also noted that having opportunities to reflect on their learning made them realise how much their thinking, abilities and confidence had developed in the space of a year.

Judging by the results for this module, it certainly looks like a more dialogic learning environment encourages students to make more original arguments and to be more resourceful in gathering and evaluating evidence.

### Some Tips for Creating a More Dialogic Seminar Environment

- It is a useful exercise to begin the teaching with explicit discussion of students' own hopes and worries about the module and the dialogic approach, and to set some ground rules for productive talk. Ask students to agree or write their own ground rules.
- In planning seminars, build in the flexibility to extend activities, and where possible, let students decide when they have had the time they need on a task. It may be that they have discovered that a problem has more dimensions than you had anticipated.
- Aim to build in a new talk technique over the initial weeks for students to try out, in order to build their talk repertoire.
- Build in time for debriefing, either about the exercise, how well it went and what they learned, or about the quality of the talk (particularly in terms of the technique(s) they had been practising). Doing both every time can be very time-consuming, however, so be selective.
- With whole-group discussion

exercises, aim to move towards being a 'referee' – to whom students can apply for clarification of the task, of key terms, or of factual points – rather than leading the discussion by default.

- Where possible, invite students to define their own output or end product: 'what does completing this task look like?'
- Starting each new seminar with the group's own conclusions from the previous week creates a sense of their competence building week-on-week. It can also be used to check whether the dialogic approach led to more complex and creative thinking.

### Conclusion

It is worth noting that in their reflective sessions students repeatedly drew attention to the relationship – sometimes the perceived mismatch – between activities in seminars and lectures, and the requirements of the assessment. This brings me back to module and programme design, as discussed at the start of this article. Opening up a space for dialogue can be difficult in modules focused on transmitting specific knowledge rather than skills. While a dialogic pedagogy has the potential to transform seminar-room interaction and the learning environment, sometimes the barriers to taking this further are structural. Therefore, a dialogic approach to learning and teaching requires ongoing reflection on module and assessment design so that the benefit of that productive talk in seminars feeds more directly into assessment activities.

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# Play, practical, participatory

## Experiments with teaching the posthuman humanities



# ...pation:



**Dr Jenna Ng**, Anniversary Research Lecturer in Film and Interactive Media, discusses the value of creative and reflective play through the lens of an undergraduate humanities module.

Critical thinking is at the heart of the humanities. Through methods such as Socratic dialogue (Mitchell 2006), seminar discussion (Parker and Hess 2001) and the essay as assessment (Henderson 1980), the humanities teach skills of independent thinking, sustained debate, tolerating ambiguity, and arguing with lucidity, rigour and precision.

As digital technologies change our daily lives (for better or worse), studying the humanities evolves in tandem. In the 2000s, the “digital humanities” signified an intellectual turn in mainstream humanities research, spotlighting the exploitation of computational and networked technologies to transform (with varying assessments of success) scholars’ treatment, reading and understanding of humanities texts. Humanities teaching likewise branched into creative practices such as critical making (Ratto 2011), creative exploration (Gauntlett 2007) and digital craft (Losey and Meinrath 2016), incorporating hands-on engagement into the cerebral sphere of humanities learning. In these respects we also re-think ourselves, edging onto what Sidonie Smith (Smith 2015) calls the “posthuman humanities scholar”, “prosthethically extendable” to networks, code, creative practice, design and digital architecture, where “ultimately, thinking is a collaborative affair of multiple actors, human and nonhuman, virtual and material, elegantly orderly and unruly.” (Smith 2016, np)

Keeping in mind this flux in the discipline, two years ago I started experimenting with a new kind of teaching session for my module, Digital Culture, Aesthetics and Storytelling (DCAS), a first-year 30-credit humanities module on the Interactive Media (IM) BSc programme, which I also lead. Within this interdisciplinary programme, IM students learn from their other modules a range of coding, media production and design skills.

On DCAS and their other humanities modules, students reflect on the role of technology in contemporary society and how interactive media have changed the way we live, think, work and play.

In the first two years of running this module, I taught in the traditional lecture-and-seminar format, bound with a swathe of independent reading directed through set “essential” and “additional” texts. It worked fine, but I always felt something was missing – some kind of practical engagement to make the theoretical issues palpable, to supply concrete examples on which students could anchor deep reflection. In short: *to educate the posthuman humanities scholar*. I thus devised Interactive Media Play, usually shortened to “IM Play”, or, sometimes, “Play session”.

### Interactive Media Play

I chose the keyword, “Play”, to connote fun and excitement, but also out of inspiration from Johan Huizinga’s thesis in his book, *Homo Ludens* (1949), concerning the primacy of play in the nature of humans (and all mammals) and, in turn, the generation of culture. Play is thus something fundamental to our being, and understanding of ourselves and our world. In small echoes, I also had in mind the references to play in Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations*, particularly where Miss Havisham, pursuing twisted revenge for her scorned love, initiates the mad relationship between Pip and Estella, only children then, by barking her order to them: “Play!” There is thus also subversion in playing – one that borders on creative destruction – which I felt was not unfitting the nature of humanities thinking and critique.

So – what is IM Play? In short, it is a two-hour long weekly session held in a computer lab where students play, read, scroll, click or otherwise engage with and reflect on various digital media objects.

“...two years ago I started experimenting with a new kind of teaching session for my module, Digital Culture, Aesthetics and Storytelling (DCAS), a first-year 30-credit humanities module on the Interactive Media (IM) BSc programme.”

To elaborate:

## i) MEDIA OBJECTS

I first curate a series of media objects which reflect the issues of the module. These range from games to interactive fiction to websites to mobile apps. Some may be accessed online; others may need special installation. Still others may require additional kit, such as Google Cardboards for a session we had with students engaging in Virtual Reality apps using their mobile phones (see main image opposite). I post information about the objects on the VLE each week, including their background and reviews, as well as instructions on the method of access.

## ii) STRUCTURE, ENGAGEMENT AND REFLECTION

I begin with a 10-15 minute introduction of the week's topic, the objects and, most importantly, pose questions for students' reflection as they engage with the media.

The students then start playing. While I plan for approximately an hour's worth of activity (taking into account an average amount of time needed to finish each object), students play at variable rates and inevitably finish at different times. I set a maximum time for engagement to give a structure, but if students feel they are done or bored before that time, they can switch to the next object or move to their reflections.

The last stage, then, is a reflective exercise. Once students have engaged sufficiently or reached the objects' natural ends, they open a shared Google doc, again prepared beforehand and accessed through a link on the VLE, on which they type their thoughts and responses to the questions posed. This gives students a space to reflect more deeply on the issues inherent in the objects, as well as to practise critical thinking and writing skills. Being a shared document, they can also read each other's responses and learn from one another's views and ideas. Finally, I reflect broad feedback on their responses to the class in a VLE post or my lecture the next day.

## iii) RULES

A few rules, reiterated each week to the class, are necessary to support the session and maximise its learning value:

- Engage sincerely with the objects; do not simply burn through the work just to get to the end. The goal here is contemplation and reflection.
- Sign off all responses on the Google Doc with your name. Take ownership of your thoughts and ideas.
- Be respectful on the Google Doc, both

in presenting your own views and in responding to those of your classmates. It is a shared academic space.

## Feedback

Student response on Play has been very positive. Feedback over cohorts in the last 2 years reflect that 80%-87% of the class definitely or mostly agreed that:

- "The Play sessions helped [them] better understand the topic"
- "Writing at the end of each Play session helped [them] reflect more deeply on the interactive media work"
- "Writing at the end of each Play session helped them practise their critical thinking and writing skills"; and
- "The Play sessions were fun"

Narrative comments include positive references such as:

- Enjoyment and reflection ("I really enjoy these sessions, and find the writing in the Google doc really useful for practising thinking deeper about a topic");
- Exposure to new work ("very good way of showing students more niche pieces of media that they wouldn't necessarily see otherwise");
- Excitement and innovation ("The new and fresh concept [of Play] was exciting, as was meeting people via google doc"); and
- Inspiration for students' own work, key to the emphasis on project work in the IM programme ("I was able to think more critically about how structures can translate into interactive media and it gave me some inspired ideas that I would love to work on myself.")

## Conclusion

IM Play has transformed my teaching in opening up for me a new environment of pedagogical inquiry and communication where I am able to more deeply examine theoretical issues with students as anchored not only by examples but also practice. The *process* of, for example, moving through an interactive environment with deep reflection is just as educational as reading Henri Lefebvre on the production of space. Working together on the same document also opens up collaborative inquiry where students spark ideas off each other. It also helps to texture the module's teaching, otherwise very much centred on words, and shows off the diversity of texts, particularly relevant to IM students who will be producing innovative and creative interactive media in future.

In the larger picture, posthuman humanities environments will surely continue to evolve with their throughlines of computational literacy, multimediated self-presentation, networked knowledge communities, and collaborative thinking involving not only human scholarship but also mediated spaces, lay people, robots and smart objects. I think sessions, such as Play, that involve technology, practice and participatory inquiry will become increasingly important to complement the top-down lecture and the discursive seminar of traditional humanities teaching. Such sessions not only represent teaching innovation for students learning in a changing discipline, but are also harbingers of the working habits and subjectivities of their futures.

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# Social media engagement

## IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**Sarah Olive** (@drsaraholive) participated in the York Professional and Academic Development (YPAD) scheme in 2017-18, leading to the award of Senior Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. YPAD involves the preparation of a portfolio, with one section dedicated to investigating and tangibly influencing an area of teaching or student support with the help of a YPAD supervisor and peer group. She chose the Department of Education's departmental social media accounts, which she has headed up for two years. In this article, she answers some questions about the project, with illustrations from *deptedyork* Instagram.

### What area of teaching/student support was chosen and why?

**What?** Social media engagement of the Education department's students: present, potential, and past through two social media accounts @deptedyork (Twitter) & deptedyork (Instagram).

**Why?** Because of the potential to improve our students' sense of belonging to and participation in the department regardless of which programme they are on. I wanted to raise awareness of relevant academic & extra-curricular activities & events, students' and staff achievements without overloading people's inboxes. I also wanted to address the remoteness – physical and emotional – which our students on the new distance PhD may experience.

Our departmental social media accounts also seek to make the department feel more immediate to prospective students for all our programmes. Our Instagram is quite literally a lens on activities in our classrooms and on campus more broadly. Some of the examples (college food, campus flora and fauna) might seem trivial but they are part of the everyday experience of university life that is hardest to access: it is the stuff not usually covered in prospectuses, brochures or by official university websites.

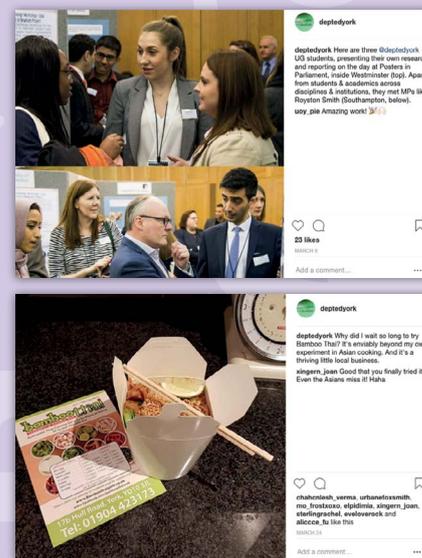
### What did you do – how did you investigate and explore the issue?

I reviewed the use of social media in the 2017-18 academic year with the help of members of the departmental teaching committees and Board of Studies, including student representatives. From this, I concluded that the departmental

Twitter works well for outreach to and networking with academics, departments, research centres within and beyond the university, non-governmental organisations – sometimes also PG students, particularly PhDs. However, Twitter is not extensively used by UG students, prospective or current.

With this in mind, I collaborated with Clémentine Beauvais (Senior Lecturer in English in Education) to fully launch the departmental Instagram account piloted by a departmental student intern, Katie Smith. We went from having only 3 posts in week 1, Autumn 2017, to 150 in Spring vacation, 2018. This resulted in an increase in our followers from 5 to 256. They are alumni, current students and staff, and prospective students who follow us after hearing about the account at open and visit days, where it is now routinely featured in talks. Also other departments, student societies, graduate employers or agencies, and local businesses follow us. Our IT guru, Hayley Houghton, embedded the account alongside Twitter on the departmental website to increase its visibility.

We succeeded in encouraging a range of staff and student interactions with the Instagram account. For example, we shared one student's requests for help with and thanks for contributions to a charity drive to make up Christmas boxes for a Doncaster women's shelter. Charities like Macmillan posted thanks for our support and encouragement for our fundraising activities. Students and staff responded to light-hearted quizzes, commented on posts, and sent congratulations. Likes ranged from 3-26 per post. We piloted the use of videos



later in the year. They gained substantial views: 57-66, alerting us to the power of the moving image to solicit a reaction!

### What next for deptedyork and @deptedyork?

Clémentine is a skilled user of the 'Stories' function on Instagram (posts that only last for a day, then disappear). In the first week of this academic year, she really caught the atmosphere of the first-year induction in real time and made sure students using the account will remember which staff they've met and what their undergraduate or departmental role is.

Watch out for our experiments with Boomerang (mini videos that loop from a burst of photos) and Phonto (a photo editing app with an emphasis on gorgeous fonts) to help mix up our posts with movement, text and image.

We welcome material for the accounts or feedback on them from staff and students in the department via email ([sarah.olive@york.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.olive@york.ac.uk)), but moreover mentions, retweets, comments, replies and – of course – likes!



**Sarah Olive** is a Senior Lecturer in English in Education. Her ongoing research focuses on Shakespeare in popular culture, particularly television and social media, as well as Shakespeare in education in East and South East Asia. [sarah.olive@york.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.olive@york.ac.uk)

# Creative innovation in SEND practice in Hong Kong



**Dr Sophie Brigstocke**, Educational Psychologist and Lecturer in the Department of Psychology, with Ho Yeung Hastings Chim, Peter Quinn, and Mike Wray, discuss a creative intervention in teaching training and inclusive education.

Hong Kong benefits from a long history of responding to global influences on education reform and of involving the global community in its education policy planning and teacher training. This is particularly evident in the field of inclusive education for children with Special Educational Needs and Differences (SEND). Ever since the Salamanca Agreement (Unesco,1994), the Hong Kong Education Bureau has been strongly committed to implementing inclusive (as opposed to segregated) education

practices for pupils with SEND and training their teachers to facilitate this.

The Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK) has been responsible for delivering teacher training courses since 2007 and in 2017 commissioned Dr Sophie Brigstocke, Educational Psychologist and Lecturer in the Department of Psychology, Pete Quinn, formerly Director of Student Support at the University of York and Dr Mike Wray, an Independent Higher Education Consultant, to develop and deliver a course on SEND. This 120-hour course for Hong Kong teachers of English in primary and secondary schools focused on best practice in accommodating children with SEND in the mainstream classroom.

In 2018 we visited Hong Kong, twice delivering the programme to more than 80 teachers. Whilst the course was mainly delivered in classrooms on the university campus, we were also able to visit multiple schools across Hong Kong (and into mainland China). This gave us the opportunity to get to know teachers and mutually reflect on the differences between teaching practices in UK and HK schools, often over food. This teacher



awareness should be beneficial for all pupils, not solely SEND students.

In practical terms, the courses we developed and delivered aimed to enhance teachers' competencies in teaching students with 'cognition and learning needs', with a specific focus on support for students with specific learning difficulties and with intellectual disabilities.

For the 120 hours delivery of each course, the breakdown was as follows:

1. 18 days (108 hours) of lectures; and
2. 4 x half-day (12 hours) sessions of supervised in-school group practicums.

The 'practicum' structure is an innovative teaching method that EdUHK have implemented widely across their professional training programmes. Practicums are observed teaching sessions which avoid reliance on full time 'passive' lectures for the course duration. On enrolling, the teachers were asked to select a special interest group to join: Phonics; Writing; Reading; E-learning; Vocabulary.

The teachers would then specialize in this area for the practicum sessions, thereby gaining experience in devising materials, planning and delivering interventions to pupils in their area of interest. They were mentored by an EdUHK faculty member, Education Board officials or the UK guest lecturers.

Within dedicated practicum preparation sessions, the teachers devised a lesson plan which incorporated the theory and practical tips taught in the classroom-based lectures. Two teachers per group would then deliver the planned lesson to a group of children who they had not met before, whilst the remaining teachers within their group would observe their fellow group members. The practicum would be followed by a group reflection exercise during which the lesson plan would be refined in response both to the observers' feedback and to the teacher's own reflections on delivering the lesson plan. At the end of the course, participants are required to work on an exhibition and a presentation which evaluated the utilization of peer assessment.

The practicum arrangement in inclusive teacher training is still an untapped research area to be explored. Teacher educators in both HK and the UK might consider our overseas collaboration as a prism in reviewing and transforming their own teacher education programs. The EdUHK Course Director, Dr Hastings Chim, remarked: "I am looking forward to working with Dr Sophie Brigstocke again to ignite the sparks on inclusive teacher training both pedagogically and academically."



## *I am looking forward to working with Dr Sophie Brigstocke again to ignite the sparks on inclusive teacher training both pedagogically and academically."*

Dr Hastings Chim, EdUHK Course Director

Pete, Mike and I also had a valuable chance to reflect on different models of training adult learners (the teachers) in Hong Kong, comparing and contrasting with our experience of teaching adults (students and professional) in the UK. One immediate advantage of the programme that was remarkable compared with teacher training in the UK, was that the course was funded by the Government's Education Bureau and involved all teachers being released from their teaching commitments to attend the course delivered over a 4-week consecutive period.

### Conclusions

In developing the course, we were committed to incorporating both theoretical and practical aspects: including the development and implementation of intervention plans, development of corresponding learning materials and sharing evidence-based practice and resources. Teachers were also taught the importance of continually evaluating whether their interventions or changes to their teaching practices were successful or whether their approach needed modification. The WhatsApp group we created (commonplace for interaction between teachers in Hong Kong) enabled us to share resources across both cohorts and gave the teachers, who were based across HK, a forum in which to share should they wish.

The benefits of overseas lecturers working in HK as 'supervisors' of the practicum were noted in comments by the EdUHK Course Director, Dr Chim, who noted that the practice "is likely of benefit to both the educators and teachers in the course: the overseas lecturers experience the inclusive practices in HK classrooms which the teachers can also, [and] in return assimilate the sharing from the overseas expert perspectives into their daily teaching [...] the course focuses a lot on the teachers' reflection process rather than their practicum teaching performance, becoming a driver for both overseas tutors and local English teachers to further consider how SpLD students could be better supported in an inclusive English classroom."

Most teachers were also affirmative towards the structuring and quality of the practicum arrangement. Their feedback

from the course evaluation forms was highly appreciative:

*'Teachers could work together to promote differentiated instruction. Good collaboration can be seen especially in the Booth Setup and the group presentation.'*

*'I appreciated the introduction of different teaching strategies which encourage reflection on self-teaching during the course in terms of observation (peer-learning).'*

*'I could learn from my groupmates and attempt different teaching strategies in the try out lessons.'*

*'I enjoyed learning teaching approaches for SEN students through practicum.'*

*'I have learned more about theories and practice which would undoubtedly benefit my SEN students.'*

*'I appreciated practical components and tips given by different lecturers.'*

*'I was inspired with the E-learning platforms which could facilitate my English learning.'*

That said, collaboration between local and UK experts presented some challenges, especially in terms of the understanding and conception of inclusive practices, due to the fundamental diversities between local and UK approaches. However, this challenge gave both sides an opportunity to comprehend the benefits, strength, weakness and risks of their own inclusive practices. Understanding how diversity in education systems and philosophy could enlighten frontline teacher educators to review and transform their own teaching training programs is a major benefit of a programme which has brought together HK local experts and UK overseas experts. This opportunity aligns with an old Chinese saying that 'a risk always breeds a chance'.



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## Increasing student midwives' knowledge and understanding of the professional regulation of midwifery practice:

# Learning in the moot court

*Helen Recchia, Programme Lead and Lead Midwife for Education, explores innovative ways to encourage student understanding of and engagement with Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) processes and the ways in which professional regulation of midwifery practice can effectively support students' learning and the application of theory to practice.*

### What is fitness to practise in midwifery?

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) are the professional regulators for all midwives, nurses and nursing associates in the United Kingdom (UK). Their role is to guarantee public protection by making sure that all practising registrants have the appropriate skills, knowledge and best evidence to practice safely (NMC, 2018a). One way that the NMC regulate a registrant's ability to practise is by their fitness to practise committee. Part of the role of the fitness to practise committee is to investigate allegations of serious concerns about a registrant's fitness to practise which could place patients at risk,

or negatively impact public confidence in the professions (NMC, 2018a).

There may be a number of reasons why a midwife's fitness to practice needs investigating. For example, it may be a personal reason that is having a profound impact on their physical or mental health, or it may be an education and training need of the midwife. The NMC register has over 646,000 (94%) nurses and nearly 36,000 (5%) midwives on the register. To put the referrals of nurses and midwives into perspective, the fitness to practise committee states that there were 5509 new cases of concern reported to the NMC in 2017/18. This equates to around 8 referrals for every 1000 registrants (NMC, 2018). However, over 3000 of these cases were closed after an initial assessment was undertaken and a need for further investigation was not required.

All student midwives require a sound understanding of the governance and processes that take place when a midwife's ability to work safely and competently comes into question. All qualified midwives must adhere to the professional standards which are published in The Code (NMC, 2015). Therefore, it is imperative that a programme for midwifery practice includes an opportunity for student midwives to fundamentally practice within The Code (NMC, 2015) and to explore the professional regulation and the main principles of The Code (NMC, 2015) for preparing for practice, in a safe and supportive environment.

### Implementing creative learning environments

During Stage Two of the BA (Hons) Midwifery Practice Programme, in the second year of the summer term, students undertake a 10 credit module titled *The Professional and Legal Frameworks Regulating Midwifery Practice*. The main focus of the module is for the student to examine the professional, employer, civil and criminal aspects of accountability (known as the four spheres of accountability). To encompass one of the module learning outcomes, which 'examines the role and function of the Nursing and Midwifery Council in relation to the regulation of the midwifery profession' (University of York, 2018), one of the module teaching sessions focuses on being 'fit to practise' as a midwife.

The routine use of simulated practice for education and training have been recurrently reported as an aid to students' learning, particularly for connecting the theoretical components of a programme with practice (Alanazi, Nicholson and Thomas, 2017). Simulating an actual fitness to practise midwifery case promotes a good balance of realistic expectations for student midwives about a fitness to practise hearing at the NMC, but without increasing students' anxiety levels unnecessarily. As with many professional programmes, it is essential that a safe learning environment is encouraged so that student midwives can feel comfortable sharing the observations and experiences they may have gained from the clinical setting.

### The benefits

The main aim of the session is for it to be an informative, interactive and creative way for students to consider the process a midwife may be involved with when they are qualified. Due to the nature of the content of the session, the facilitator should approach the session with sensitivity. The session is undertaken in the 'moot' court room in the Law School on the Heslington East campus (see photos). 'Mooting' is the oral and written presentation of an argument on a legal issue or problem against an opposing counsel and before a judge (York Law School, 2019). It is one of the closest experiences that a student can have whilst at university to appearing in court, and can be characterised as a legal debate.

All of the students (approx. 25) in the cohort contribute to the session, and are allocated a variety of roles to consider. One student may for example role-play the midwife who is being investigated; another may represent their employer. Students can work in pairs or small groups and are asked to examine an 'actual' midwifery case and consider the possible sanctions which the NMC could give to the midwife who is being investigated. Latest hearings and sanction decisions are regularly published and available to the public on a month by month basis on the NMC website; identifying current cases enables the students to consider the circumstances in context. This exercise is an opportunity for creative thinking but also a chance for students to build on their existing knowledge in relation to the four spheres of accountability and how this knowledge can inform the decision they make during the simulation. The session is also an opportunity for students to develop skills and knowledge for life-long learning which they can draw on in the clinical setting. The decision they make for the case can be compared and contrasted with the outcome for the 'actual' case.

### What do the students think?

The module has been consistently well-evaluated for over a decade by student midwives at the University of York. Positive comments made by students regarding the value of this particular session are also frequently made when the module is evaluated. Students have reported that this session aids in their personal and professional development and encourages an understanding of the function of the Nursing and Midwifery Council. It is often reported as their most enjoyable session in the module.

*'Very engaging, especially the court room'* (Student 1, 2017/18).



*'Court session, fun and informative'* (Student 2, 2017/18).

*'The court room session was also great for learning'* (Student 3, 2017/18).

*'Really enjoyed the court room simulation'* (Student 4, 2017/18).

*'The court room exercise sounds innovative and exciting. I would be interested to hear more about this and to attend if possible'* (External Examiner, 2017/18).

### Summary

Referral of a midwife to the NMC fitness to practise committee is not a common occurrence. Although the referral of a midwife for investigation does not happen on a regular basis, student midwives still require an understanding of the processes and functions of the professional regulation of the profession they are going to embark on.

The NMC are currently looking at a new approach for Fitness to Practise. One element of this will include new processes designed to resolve cases for midwives promptly. It will also consider more closely the importance of the context of a case for registrants (NMC, 2018a). It is anticipated that this innovative learning opportunity for student midwives will continue and any changes the NMC are planning to make will be reflected in the session accordingly.

For further information in relation to the NMC fitness to practise processes, please visit: <https://www.nmc.org.uk/concerns-nurses-midwives/dealing-concerns/what-is-fitness-to-practise/>

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specifically the support of women during labour gave her a particular interest in the professional regulation of midwives. Helen has been the module leader for a number of years for 'The Professional and Legal Frameworks Regulating Midwifery Practice' module, which is taught in the second year of the midwifery programme. Helen also has experience of supporting midwives and facilitating women to make informed choices in her previous role as a Supervisor of Midwives. [helen.recchia@york.ac.uk](mailto:helen.recchia@york.ac.uk)

# York Archaeology students get hands-on experience with ancient technologies

*Aimée Little, Lecturer in Archaeology*

*Figure 1 Replica flint projectile hafted with birch bark adhesive*

Stone tools are one of the most ubiquitous artefact types found on archaeological sites. Such artefacts mostly date to prehistory although it is not unknown for them to be found on historic sites too. Thus, for anyone wanting to pursue an archaeological career, having a basic ability to recognise a natural piece of flint from one that has been worked and therefore an artefact is fundamental.

It was this critical gap in our current curriculum that I wanted to fill when I applied for Strategic Learning and Teaching Funds. The application was successful, and as a result, Archaeology has now developed an extensive reference collection of replica tools that are being used for practical teaching sessions (Fig. 1).

These replica artefacts have been instrumental in giving hands on practical experience for undergraduate students who are studying Material Culture and Experimental Archaeology (Fig. 2 and 3). By combining short documentaries, set readings and handling/analysing the replica artefacts, students were able to develop a deeper understanding of how

flint tools are manufactured, including the different technologies and typologies. All of which came in very handy for the exam when students were tested on their ability to recognise and record replica flint artefacts from our new reference collection!

Knowing how stone tools were made in the prehistoric past is one thing; knowing how they functioned, or might have functioned, is another. Using tools to butcher and scrape hides is not easy (or recommended!) in a classroom so classes need to happen outside. The recent development of an on-campus facility, the *YEAR (York Experimental Archaeological Research) Centre*, located in a grove of trees behind Wentworth College, is

now being used for practical teaching and research; most of which centres on reconstructing ancient techniques and processes involving different forms of prehistoric material culture.

Having outdoor classes at the YEAR Centre is providing students a unique opportunity to get hands-on experience as to how tools functioned. Knowledge about tool technology is put into “real life” application, with students using replica stone tools to work a diverse range of contact materials that would have been used in the prehistoric past, including: butchery, scraping hides, extracting plant fibres, scaling fish, scraping wood, grooving antler, grinding pigments and many other activities that would have been undertaken daily by prehistoric people. By using the replica tools themselves, students are able to gain a much deeper understanding of the potential and limitations of how different tool types functioned.

## Creative assessment

This outdoor/experiential learning, moving archaeological seminars from lecture theatres to an environment which could be mistaken as a prehistoric campsite (!), is proving extremely popular amongst students. Enrolment for this year’s Experimental Archaeology module has reached capacity. Rather than write a more conventional essay or critique, students are asked to write up their experimental archaeology research in the format of a journal article, with the best team-written article being submitted for publication. This form of assessment has also proved popular with



*Figure 2. My colleague, Dr Don Henson, teaching basic flint technology to second year undergraduate students using our new replica flint artefact reference collection*



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students in that it allows them to develop key skills in collaborative academic writing - in an article style, whilst also providing an opportunity to have their research published. With postgraduate degrees, in particular funding for PhDs, ever-competitive, graduating from an undergraduate degree with a publication is one way that Archaeology is helping students get a head start in their careers.

**Essential skills**

Learning through hands on flint analysis, thanks to our new replica collections, is another way that Archaeology is enhancing career prospects. With an increase in major infrastructural development and commercially-led archaeological projects, a greater number of our graduate students are taking up contracts in the commercial archaeological sector. Having these essential skills, which enable students to recognise flint artefacts during excavations and/or assist in their recording post-excavation, is an important way of ensuring that university leavers are equipped with a CV that gives them the best opportunity to secure a



Figure 3. Second year student, Hannah Benton, coming to grips with stone tool technology and recording methods during one of our practical seminar sessions.

job, whilst opening up a diverse range of career options beyond the classroom.

**Conclusions**

The development of these flint artefact teaching collections came at just the right time. Archaeology has opened a new facility, bringing together HYMS and Archaeology staff under one roof. The PalaeoHub facility, located in front of Wentworth College, contains several new laboratories including one for Material Culture, and a store for teaching/research collections, where our stone tool replicas are now housed. In conjunction with the YEAR Centre and neighbouring BioArCh facilities, Archaeology at York is fast-becoming recognised as a world-leading institute for the scientific study of artefacts.

We have many exciting future plans for our replica stone tool collection: including use in widening participation activities, visiting/teaching archaeology in primary schools, university open day events and so forth, as well as continuing to provide both undergraduate and postgraduate students the opportunity to literally get to grips with ancient technologies through hands-on practical experience.

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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](http://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](http://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](http://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 Advance HE (formerly 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](http://york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/develop/ypad)

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The NTFS Individual Awards form part of a nationwide, government-funded initiative to promote excellence in learning and teaching. Operated by Advance HE (formerly 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). For more information, see: [york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/reward/ntfs](http://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 Programme Design and Learning Technology 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](http://york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/support/technology)

If you are interested in contributing an article for the next or a subsequent issue of *Forum* magazine, please contact the sub-editor, Phil Robinson-Self. Our next issue will follow the theme of this year's learning and teaching conference: creating valuable learning partnerships in the contemporary university.