Looking to the future in teaching, scholarship and professional practice
Dear Reader

Welcome to the Spring 2022 edition of Forum magazine.

In the wake of COVID-19 the last two years have been difficult. In terms of teaching and scholarship, accessing asynchronous communication and the ability to give peer feedback on writing. The module (and programme in general) develops English language and academic study skills, mostly for students about to start PGT (with some aiming at UC and PGR). There were 100 students on this particular module (STEML), and the programme was compulsory. Students were shown how to give and receive feedback, and then practised these skills on a piece of weekly informal writing that they uploaded to Panopto, a real-time collaborative web platform, which they then shared with a peer. Tutor and student feedback was gathered to help inform future rollout.

Research question: What are the perceptions of using Padlet for peer feedback on writing skills by pre- and postgraduate students and their teachers?

There were two main anticipated problems with conducting feedback exercises in this way:

1. Student reluctance and engagement with peer feedback. The constructivist/ Westerns approach to individualism and student ownership of the curriculum often differs from the experience of students from collectivist education systems, which may create a passive approach to peer interaction (Loh and Teo, 2017). Students may also feel vulnerable in the area of academic writing in the unfamiliar culture of UK Higher Education (Maringe and Jenkins, 2015).

2. Unfamiliarity with the Padlet platform (for both tutors and teachers). A peer writing activity; for example, small discussion in the live sessions for tutor feedback.

The pie charts below show the positive reactions from 32 students on both programmes to the focus on peer feedback. When asked if peer feedback had helped students’ communication skills, over 80% stated that it had, the most common reasons being that it enabled them to rehearse and improve what they wanted to say first, increasing the opportunity for communication and the chances to learn from peers.

When asked how peer feedback had helped their writing skills, the most common answers were that it helped focus on mistakes (and avoid them in future) and also on academic language. When asked about the usefulness of Padlet for peer reviews of writing, the following descriptions were used:

- dynamic
- clear interface
- recording function
- shows views intuitively
- more interesting after adding pictures
- share ideas
- convenient

The main aims of the collaborative feedback approach should continue, with more comprehensive scaffolding initially.

Future improvements

- Exchange modelling and training materials: include sample Padlets with ‘mock’ student peer feedback; focus more on team building to build confidence.
- Implement feedback from the surveys, and work out ways to transfer to 2022 materials and syllabus (e.g., enhanced language practice for delivering positive and negative feedback with confidence).
- Link peer feedback more to credit-bearing assessment-focused input in future.

References

Due to space limitations the full references for this article can be found in the pre-optimised version of this magazine at https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/design/forums/magazines/

Alex Dawson works in the International Pathway College as a teacher and coordinator in Language and Study Skills on the Pre-Sessional Programme. His interests are materials development and learning technologies. Email alex.dawson@york.ac.uk

Enhancing student peer feedback using Padlet

Alex Dawson, International Pathway College

Padlet for other materials and tasks to help familiarisation, and created Panopto guides on how to use the software upon request.

Teaching phase

The first course that the peer writing materials ran was a 10 week pre-sessional course running from June to September. A second course started in August; this overlap enabled us to survey students and teachers on the 10 week course about the approach to peer feedback and Padlet, and then share the results on the five week induction. During induction and team meetings there was discussion on how to approach the student peer writing activities; for example, small discussion groups, students looking at each other’s work in advance and preparing positive comments and questions about how they approached the writing etc.

Student responses

The pie charts below show the positive reactions from 32 students on both programmes to the focus on peer feedback. When asked if peer feedback had helped their writing skills, the most common reasons were that it enabled them to rehearse and improve what they wanted to say first, increasing the opportunity for communication and the chances to learn from peers.

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Enhancing student peer feedback using Padlet
To blend, or not to blend?

Blended learning is on the agenda of every institute, but the concept is often misunderstood. Is it really a matter of choice whether to start blending?

Introduction

In the past 2 years, the whole of education has been turned upside down. In this period of crisis, teachers worldwide have learned many lessons through the shift to emergency remote teaching and learning. To sustainably embed these lessons ‘blended learning’, the blending of traditional face-to-face classroom activities with online or digital media, is often presented as the solution. New visions and policy documents about implementing blended learning pop up like daisies. I see phrases like “The future is blended” and “Blended learning is the new normal”. Then I wonder, is that the right way forward? Is blended learning really that new? Is “to blend, or not to blend?” even the right question?

A little thought experiment

Imagine that you are a teacher that is going to teach on a desert island (after Norberg 2011). All you have is a tree, four students, and your knowledge. No textbooks, no pencils, no internet, nothing… How will you teach? Well, you’d probably gather the students below the tree and start talking about your subject matter. After your explanation, you might ask them some questions or start a discussion. That is about the only thing you can do in this situation!

This goes on for a couple of days, until one day a small boat arrives. A boat filled with pencils and paper - we are in fact still in the 20th century! What a relief! Everything becomes easier: students can work on assignments, make notes, formulate ideas, answer questions… they can create! What now changes in your role as a teacher? Will you still explain and ask questions? Or will you start using these new tools? By the way: is it really such a relief? With thousands of tools and possibilities for communication, creation and interaction, how will you teach? Well, you’d probably do exactly the same thing you would do in a normal classroom.

The real revolution

Time to return to the question from the introduction of this column: Is “To blend, or not to blend?” the right question? Not as far as I am concerned. What I have tried to show is that it is not a matter of choosing between online or face-to-face education, but a combination of both. The world has been a blend for many years. Technological advancements have existed since the invention of the wheel. Our education was, and is blended.

Therefore, my final message is simple: I think we should stop presenting blended learning as the future or the new normal, or as yet another new form of digitization that could lead to the holy grail. As long as we continue to present it as “new” or the “future”, it will always feel somewhat intangible and hard to grasp. In my opinion, it is much more important to focus on educational design: where we use technology only if it adds value, aligned with the intended goals.

The added value of blended learning and the revolution we need is not hidden in yet another great new technological advancement, but in its effective use. Technology is not by definition good, and everything in between: That is why I hope that in a few years we will no longer be talking about blended learning, or whatever synonyms are out there, but rather about great education. And what is great education? It is education that achieves all goals, both written and unwritten, within any given context. Because what teacher does not want that?

References


Barend Last (1966) started his career in primary education, where his love for innovation surfaced. He was particularly interested in the question “Why do we do what we do?” and therefore moved into the educational world. He works as a blended learning expert at Maastricht University and has his own business in educational consulting. Barend is the author of the book “Blended learning and educational design: from theory to practice” published in 2021. This author can be followed on Twitter: @barendlast Email: barendlast@maastrichtuniversity.nl
Shouldn’t our undergraduates experience different taste sensations?

Broadening our student’s curriculum, in partnership with industry, could enrich the student experience and aid employability and recruitment.

Take your pick

How do we pick our favourite things in life, such as a chocolate bar? Often, I suspect it will be a case of trial and error. That is, gradually working through a large selection (in my case, of bars and then narrowing it down to the absolute favourite. This approach is like how students select their degree courses – they get a ‘taster’ of different subjects at school or college – but there are, of course, important differences.

To put chocolate bar selection into more of an educational setting, imagine, as time goes on, that each time you go to the supermarket the selection of chocolate bars that you can pick from rapidly shrinks. Soon you must select your favourite bar and can no longer try any of the others. After a while, you may realise that even though you still enjoy munching on your favourite bar, there are no other chocolate bars to try. This is more like the International Baccalaureate Diploma, of which I am a fan, because it allows students to keep the breadth for longer, to cement key skills.

New taste sensations

But even if more college students had a broader pre-university syllabus, shouldn’t UK universities offer undergraduates more opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge in different areas? As well as munching on their favourite chocolate bar, shouldn’t undergraduates have more opportunities to nibble on other bars, and so experience new taste sensations? I believe so. Not only would a wider choice of learning opportunities help to motivate and enthuse students, but I believe it could also help better prepare them for their chosen career and in doing so, move attractive to future employers. With these points in mind, it will be interesting to see how the interdisciplinary teaching and learning activities, highlighted as part of the university change programme, develop.

Student life could be like a box of chocolates

I would like to see a broader curriculum tackled throughout a campus-wide swap of elective modules. A situation where departments offer bespoke optional courses, just for students outside of their departments, with few, if any, prerequisites. These courses would not only attract students about areas of current importance to their subject from cinematography to climate change, computer systems and criminal justice, but also allow learners to develop valuable employability skills. From a chocolate perspective, the opportunity to create the ultimate selection box! Who could possibly object to that?

For my subject, Chemistry, giving non-chemists from every department the opportunity to study an option module, the ultimatum case study (how do they create just the right gloss, hardness, and snap in the chocolate?), and follow this up with a workshop to help students to appreciate and develop the skills required for working in the chocolate industry, whether it’s in sales, manufacturing, or in the supply chain (why does the price of chocolate fluctuate?). Taking the teaching online would ease the time and cost burden on industrial partners and offer opportunities for real-time factory tours and interviews, Q&A sessions with different members of the workforce. Not only could such coursework make student employability, but they could be seen as an attractive USP to prospective employers.

In my world, it is not just me who thinks this. It is not just me who thinks this. Towards the end of 2020, Dame Nancy Rothwell, the current Chair of the Russell Group, said that many young people missed out because they specialised in subjects too early (Woodcock, 2020). Dame Rothwell supports the idea of restructuring A Levels so they are a bit lighter, allowing students the opportunity to take a broader range of subjects giving them a more balanced education, and in her view, to be better prepared for university. This is more like the International Baccalaureate Diploma of which I am a fan, because it allows students to keep the breadth for longer, to cement key skills.

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Nurturing the ‘person’ in the professional

Kate Rudd reflects on early experiences of running Schwartz Rounds with health and social care students and looks to future opportunities within professional programmes

Schwartz Rounds (Point of Care Foundation/Schwartz Centre) have been running for staff groups in NHS settings for over a decade. Rounds are optional, confidential, facilitated forums where a small panel of staff share stories about their professional practice with an audience. Facilitators then create a non-judgemental climate in which the audience can share reflections that resonate with the stories, and in which discussion is steered away from clinical case related problem-solving. This allows the social and emotional challenges of health and social care practice to be explored, providing voice to the ‘person in the professional’. Rounds are highly valued and have a positive impact on staff psychological health and wellbeing (Maben et al., 2018). Increased insight and appreciation for interprofessional practice helps to strengthen the relational and human aspects of caring, leaving staff feeling supported and better able to deliver compassionate care for patients and families.

Currently, we are part of a Schwartz North Project with the University of Liverpool to build capacity for Rounds in higher education institutions (HEIs) so that health and social care students can be supported to deliver compassionate care and develop a holistic insight into their future interprofessional roles. Learning how to embed the model, a small group of us have undertaken Point of Care Foundation training to facilitate Rounds. Attendance at Rounds is increasing and evaluations show that students value hearing other people talk openly about their personal feelings about practice, and that they are more aware of care and compassion in caring for patients. For facilitators, the opportunity to engage in Rounds has proved restorative, reminding us of our professional values and identities which in turn strengthens our support for students to develop professionally.

Urges to teach

However, Rounds in HEIs may have unique challenges. In NHS Rounds, facilitators steer discussion away from ‘fixing’ the clinical situation; in contrast, shared reflection with other HEIs running Rounds illustrates how, as teachers, we may have an urge to ‘teach’ about the clinical situation. Resisting the offer of a ‘teachable moment’ in a Round and instead creating an atmosphere for reflection on the emotional aspects of experience is a key facilitation skill. Although Rounds are not intended to be a teaching activity as such, they may nonetheless act as an informal curriculum, what Raso et al., (2019) describe as interpersonal interactions sitting outside of formal teaching that shape what students learn. Careful crafting of themes for Rounds and preparation of the panel to share the emotional, more personal story behind their practice is needed so that students experience exemplary professional values. Even though attendance is optional and Rounds are extracurricular, students may still limit what they share for fear of being judged. This is particularly so given that those academic staff facilitating Rounds may be involved in students’ clinical assessments (Clancy et al., 2019). These findings speak to the existence of power relationships in student–teacher interactions and serve as a reminder of the need to establish psychological safety in Rounds and maintain fidelity with the Schwartz model. With each Round, we are further enhancing our facilitation skills so that panel members and audiences feel emotionally safe and are able to share their experience and to surface personal meanings about their practice through reflection.

Looking to the future, we are building a local Schwartz community through our Steering Group and are making connections with interested colleagues across the University who see the potential for using Rounds with other professional groups. Our contribution to a new national Schwartz Network for HEIs provides opportunities for continued involvement in Rounds.

Whilst professional practice has always presented challenges, the Covid-19 pandemic means that the students we are educating now will need to respond to ever growing complexity with resilience and compassion. Our experience is that Schwartz Rounds can create a meaningful forum for teachers on professional programmes to nurture the ‘person in the professional’ which may play an important role in student experience and their professional development. Furthermore, engagement with the Schwartz model may be mutually beneficial and offer us as teachers an opportunity to restore our own ‘person in the professional’; this opens up a question about the potential value of Rounds for academic staff to reflect on the emotional impact of their professional practice.

Acknowledgements

We are running Schwartz Rounds in collaboration with the Schwartz North Project at the University of Liverpool, and in cooperation with The Schwartz Centre for Compassionate Healthcare and with the support of The Point of Care Foundation. Thanks to co-facilitators Prof. Lima Gago, Rose Hârleock, Prof. Joe Reidy, Polly Bykes, Olivia Walsh and Paulo James (Administrator) for their support in running Schwartz Rounds.

References


THEMES OF OUR SCHWARTZ ROUNDS

‘A patient I’ll never forget…’
‘In at the Deep End…’
‘What keeps me going to work…?’
‘I’m new to this…!’

Kate Rudd is a Lecturer in Nursing in the Department of Health Sciences. She is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (AHE) and has interests in psychosocial issues in nursing and professional development. Email: kate.rudd@york.ac.uk
Leading by example: decarbonising fieldwork teaching in an age of climate crisis

Dr Adrian Gonzalez and Dr Chris West

Implementing “sustainable fieldwork” is an important way for the University of York and the wider Higher Education sector to reduce the environmental impact and carbon footprint of this teaching activity, ensuring that we lead by example.

Sustainability at the University of York

Whilst the international community has been focused on the coronavirus public health emergency, the climate crisis continues to deepen, and there is still a growing need for global society to reach consensus on an ambitious agenda that can match the scale of this emergency. However, it is also imperative that other actors and institutions, such as businesses and universities, commit themselves to tackling this global challenge by improving their sustainability. The University of York’s recently published University Strategy 2020-2030 identifies environmental sustainability as one of the core principles that will underpin its activities throughout the remainder of the decade (University of York, 2021a). To support this, a new Sustainability Plan 2021-2030 has been launched which, guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), will embed sustainability in a teaching and research context to ensure carbon neutrality by 2030 (University of York, 2021b).

Embedding sustainability in university teaching

Quality Education (SDG4, University of York, 2021b) is the foundational basis for the University’s sustainability initiatives in relation to teaching. With an overarching aim to ‘ensure all students of the University of York are equipped to become leaders of change, able to take action on the most pressing global issues, including sustainability and climate change’ (p-10), three strategic goals have been identified. One of these flags the need to:

**TABLE 1: DEG INTERNATIONAL FIELD STUDY VISITS CARBON EMISSIONS AND OFFSETTING COSTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEG FSV (international)</th>
<th>Number of passengers</th>
<th>Estimated distance, return (km)</th>
<th>Emissions (kg CO2 per passenger per km)</th>
<th>Emissions (kg CO2 equivalent)</th>
<th>Offset sub-total (£)**</th>
<th>Carbon Dioxide (CO2) in kg CO2e sub-total</th>
<th>Offset sub-total (£)**</th>
<th>Number of nights</th>
<th>Carbon Dioxide (CO2) in kg CO2e sub-total</th>
<th>Offset sub-total (£)**</th>
<th>Total (50 person trips x 3)</th>
<th>DEG FSV (international)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coach (York-Leeds Bradford)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>0.0333</td>
<td>3.5298</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>Long haul (to/from UK)</td>
<td>6240</td>
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<td>0.0333</td>
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<td>1621.6</td>
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<td>0.0333</td>
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<td>0.11</td>
<td>Short haul (to/from UK)</td>
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<td>176.49</td>
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<td>27486.77</td>
<td>870.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sub total (50 persons x 3 trips) | 98465.43           | 3119.38                      | 7952.5                                | 251.93                     | Total (50 person trips x 3)                | 106417.93              | 3371.31                 |

*default = £26.40 + VAT for EAUC Carbon Coalition offsetting
** Domestic: to/from within UK Short haul: up to 3,700 km Long haul: over 3,700 km International: to/from non-UK countries
to ‘lead our students by example through global citizenship’ therefore. This strategic goal has formed the basis of research into the sustainability of the Department of Environment and Geographies (DEG) teaching programs, with a specific focus on the carbon emissions generated by fieldwork. DEG is part of the University of York’s sustainability strategy. An article article

![Image](https://www.rgs.org/research/principles-for-higher-education-institutions.pdf)

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For the creation of a carbon emission and offsetting cost table, it was used here to assess and calculate the travel and accommodation emissions generated by the three international field study visits which make up the bulk of DEG’s teaching opportunities (see Table 1 below). The table shows the carbon emissions on a per person and per trip basis. Each of these trip types has either required or used return flights (thereby also involving a coach to Leeds Bradford airport) which has generated significant levels of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) as measured in kg equivalent (kg CO₂e) and large potential of offsetting costs. If we combine the travel and accommodation CO₂ emissions for the three trips for 50 persons, this generates identity: 104648kg CO₂e for 105 imperial tonnes rounded up; equating to a carbon offsetting cost of £3,371 for the Department on an annual basis.

There are several key issues that emerge from these calculations. Firstly, it is striking to highlight that a 50 person 3-night trip to Prague (22332kg CO₂) has almost the same level of emissions as the 7-night Ireland trip (2012kg CO₂). This not only raises important questions about where educational fieldwork takes place but also how long these trips are for and the way in which field trips maximise their trip duration. Clear discussion based on these trade-offs is therefore paramount.

Secondly, it is useful to understand what the above CO₂ figure equates to in relation to other activities and scenarios. The Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) provides a powerful example. SEI is an ‘international non-profit research organisation that tackles environment and development challenges’ (SEI, 2020). Headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden, it has several international regional centres in Columbus, Estonia, Thailand, United States and the United Kingdom, and employs over 270 staff. The 2020 annual report indicated that SEI’s air travel emissions are almost 550 tonnes CO₂ (in 2019). In other words, these three DEG international field trips alone make up the equivalent of almost 20 per cent of the total air travel emissions of a major international environmental think tank.

A different comparative example can be considered if one examines carbon footprints (the total of greenhouse gas emissions generated by our actions). According to data developed for the WWF UK Carbon calculator, the average UK carbon footprint, per capita, for a ‘full consumption’ perspective was 10.8 tonnes CO₂ in 2019, on average, per person, this is comprised of:

- 1.36 tonnes from food consumption;
- 2.82 tonnes from personal travel activities (including commuting);
- 2.4 tonnes from emissions from household energy and those related to personal accommodation;
- 1.88 tonnes from consumption of personal effects (‘stuff’) and recreational activities;
- 2.25 tonnes of emissions from the delivery of public/governmental services on behalf of individuals (WWF, 2022).

Therefore, a vegetarian who doesn’t eat takeaway, sources locally, and avoids food waste is estimated to have a food-linked footprint of around 1.1 tonnes over the course of a year, which is roughly equivalent to the emissions of one person going on the Tenerife field trip (1139 kg CO₂ or 1.1 tonnes).

Thirdly, these international fieldwork teaching activities have fulfilled important educational and learning opportunities for students but there is a clear need to decarbonise these activities given the wider climate crisis, RGS-IBG principles, and the University of York’s sustainability strategy. An alternative option Adrián has been exploring is through running low carbon field trips by making use of the UK and mainland Europe rail network. Table 2 sets out one example of these low carbon field trips during the Faculty of Sciences and beyond to fieldwork, as interrail field trips, should be explored further as they could enable positive synergies between low carbon sustainable travel, international cultural enrichment, and global citizenship.

The trip itinerary outlined in this article has been designed as an exemplar to reflect carbon emission distinctions rather than specific student activities and learning in each locality. It also does not consider the higher travel costs that a low carbon option, such as interrail, would entail. However, there remain important environmental and social benefits. Environmentally, designing a trip that utilises rail travel ensures significantly smaller emissions are generated in comparison to air travel. For example, a student, a multi-destination interrailing field trip would provide sustainable opportunities to learn about the impact that their activities, as interrail students, a multi-destination interrailing field trip would provide sustainable opportunities to learn about the impact that their activities and global citizenship.

Table 2 shows the trip itinerary for an interrail-travelled student who has included the cost of a short trip to Rome, for the journey to and from the University of York, and personal travel activities (including commuting).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flights and coach***</th>
<th>Rail***</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 passenger</td>
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<td>1263.09722</td>
<td>58789.6266</td>
<td>164.84926</td>
<td>46.480.566</td>
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* Accommodation is based on (3) assumed double occupancy 1 room (1) two nights in Paris, Milan and Venice 2** 2** 2** 2** 2** 2** 2**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) in kg CO₂e</th>
<th>Offsetting cost total (£)**</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1263.09722</td>
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Table 2: Interrail vs air travel European trip (York-Paris-Milan-Venice-Rome, return) Carbon emissions and offsetting cost

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<tr>
<td>1263.09722</td>
<td>£3,371</td>
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<td>58789.6266</td>
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<td>46.480.566</td>
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Table 2: Interrail vs air travel European trip (York-Paris-Milan-Venice-Rome, return) Carbon emissions and offsetting cost

The trip itinerary outlined in this article has been designed as an exemplar to reflect carbon emission distinctions rather than specific student activities and learning in each locality. It also does not consider the higher travel costs that a low carbon option, such as interrail, would entail. However, there remain important environmental and social benefits. Environmentally, designing a trip that utilises rail travel ensures significantly smaller emissions are generated in comparison to air travel. For example, a student, a multi-destination interrailing field trip would provide sustainable opportunities to learn about the impact that their activities and global citizenship.

Table 2 shows the trip itinerary for an interrail-travelled student who has included the cost of a short trip to Rome, for the journey to and from the University of York, and personal travel activities (including commuting).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flights and coach***</th>
<th>Rail***</th>
<th>Flight (including bus)</th>
<th>Rail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 passenger</td>
<td>50 passengers</td>
<td>1 passenger</td>
<td>50 passengers</td>
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<tr>
<td>1263.09722</td>
<td>58789.6266</td>
<td>164.84926</td>
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* Accommodation is based on (3) assumed double occupancy 1 room (1) two nights in Paris, Milan and Venice 2** 2** 2** 2** 2** 2** 2**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) in kg CO₂e</th>
<th>Offsetting cost total (£)**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1263.09722</td>
<td>£3,371</td>
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From small acorns grow mighty oak trees: the use of a tree metaphor to stimulate creative course design

Dr Jane Neal-Smith and Dr Nathan Page

How the University of York Management School Master’s in Business Administration (MBA) adopted a useful metaphor for their programme development

The University of York Management School is introducing an online Master’s in Business Administration (MBA) this year. This article outlines the use of a useful tree metaphor that not only stimulated much creativity in the design and conceptualisation of our new course, but also helped us ensure that valuable elements, such as sustainability and employability, were kept in mind from the offset. We created this particular metaphorical tree and its uses during initial discussions about the online MBA.

We imagined learning outcomes and skills as things ‘growing’ on a tree that could be ‘picked’ and taken away (e.g. fruit and leaves), with key underlying themes and enablers as the components needed to make them grow (e.g. roots, trunk and branches).

At the time of initial programme development, the Management School was already running three fully online MSc programmes based on a ‘carousel’ model of delivery, with six possible starting points per year, and multiple pathways through. Although the current MBA has, in a sense, been redeveloped from these existing programmes we felt it was vital that we introduced our own distinct elements. This was particularly important when it came to embedding new themes, rethinking the outcomes, and ensuring all these components would be achievable.

Committed to social justice
The University of York is committed to social justice and this, like employability, underpins the MBA course design. We wanted to embed themes for social good, including sustainability, and to make ‘citizens of the world’. Ultimately we want our graduates to engage with the ‘public good’ and to use the skills and knowledge they have developed through the MBA for philanthropic purposes. A challenge, therefore, was to foster these ideals alongside the traditional content of an MBA, which is obviously very focused on business.

How could we create a programme with ‘social good’ as a core feature of its identity? How could we embed other key themes such as improved employability prospects (Scott et al., 2019) with internationalism and interculturalism as a prominent element (Hains-Weason & J., 2020)? Clearly mapping the different elements of a programme together is not a new thing, however, we found using our visual tree metaphor to be helpful with this process, not least for keeping the different elements ‘in view’ (visualised) and opening the space for creative thinking in programme design.

The adoption of metaphors in teaching is well documented (Freire, 1972; Mills, 2000; Weimer, 2002). For example, Freire (1972) described mainstream education using a banking metaphor whereby teachers ‘deposited’ knowledge into students who were passive and empty ‘accounts’. Pitcher (2014) discusses how a water metaphor can be used to teach basic electronic theory because fluid flowing through a pipe can be considered analogous to an electric current flowing through a wire.

We found our metaphor of the tree to be a powerful tool in guiding our design. Creating a course from scratch is less common within higher education than we might expect. Instead, programmes tend to be adapted and combined, with new modules frequently becoming part of an existing portfolio. Visualising a tree enabled us to strongly align the foundation of our programme starting from the bottom, the roots, and growing from there.

Whitehead’s (2009, 2013, 2019) notion of ‘living theory’ also influenced our approach. Living theory stems from Whitehead’s quest to improve his own practice, and is described as an individual’s explanation of their educational influences in their own learning. This struck a chord with us - partly due to our own life experiences of small rural schools - and specifically those formative influences on our own learning, both historically and as part of our own continuous professional development. Moreover, the more creative those influences are, the better!

We wanted the experience of the programme to be meaningful and life enhancing for learners. We know that we had to cover core fundamentals, such as the relevant Quality Assurance Agency benchmark (Category 3 masters degrees; QAA, 2012), and the curriculum content necessary for an MBA. We wanted to handle such core requirements, embed our new themes, and make the programme as interesting and dynamic as possible. To do this we needed to be creative - there was an emphasis on keeping the legs, mythology and fairies. Imagine learning about fantasy characters, myths and legends in Business Management! Perhaps this is what led us down the garden path to our tree.

As mentioned above, this approach started with a conversation about fruit. Fruit grown on a tree is influenced by environmental conditions (The Royal Horticultural Society, 2021), which led us to think about the conditions of a programme and how all of its different elements come together to create an experience, takeover skills, and points of learning. This idea is shown in Figure 1.

We saw the key themes as roots, as these underpin the whole design, giving it a solid foundation. Those fed into the programme learning outcomes (PLOs), shown here as the trunk. We imagined PLOs as the core structure, running through the middle of the programme and giving it stability. From a design perspective, visualising the key themes as ‘feeding into’ the PLOs was helpful. It enabled us to keep those key themes clearly in mind as subject-specific outcomes were written.

Right place to grow
Moving upwards, the branches are then seen as enablers of outcomes and skills. Branches are as necessary for growing fruit and leaves as the roots or trunk. Along with foundations and stability, outcomes need the right place to grow, and the right mechanisms for growing. This is only logical but, again, the tree enabled us to see these connections clearly, and to be creative when planning ways to foster the optimal conditions for leaning the chosen PLOs. As already mentioned, and completing the metaphor, we saw the leaves as module learning outcomes (MLOs) and fruit as skills, all of which can be taken away by the learner.

So how did this work in practice? Underpinning the course were few key themes drawn from the University’s strategic plan influenced, in particular, by being a university for public good (University of York, 2021). For example, if we take the theme of ‘global awareness and citizenship’, which is one of the roots feeding into PLO2 in the trunk (Develop and refine skills that make an effective leader able to facilitate a range of business operations in a professional, ethically responsible and culturally aware manner), this is then ‘enabled’ through

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participation in activities depicted on the tree branches, for example master classes. This is then assessed in a MLO (apply critical appraisals of different schools of thought concerning leadership – from across cultures and sociocultural frameworks). This is done through a MLO (apply critical appraisals of different schools of thought concerning leadership – from across cultures and sociocultural frameworks). This is done through a MLO (apply critical appraisals of different schools of thought concerning leadership – from across cultures and sociocultural frameworks). This is done through a MLO (apply critical appraisals of different schools of thought concerning leadership – from across cultures and sociocultural frameworks).
Support, development and recognition for LEARNING AND TEACHING

2022 Learning and Teaching Conference – Friday 18 March – in person and online

Registration is now open for the conference, which has the theme ‘Working together to develop a university for public good’. The keynote speaker is Professor Udy Archibong MBE, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) at the University of Bradford. The conference sub-themes are:

- Creating international education for life-long learning and impact
- Empowering students and widening participation: home and international
- Ethical practice to foster a culture of respect and appreciation
- Pandemics and the technological response.

Click this link to register for in-person attendance by Friday 11 March and for online attendance by 12 noon on Thursday 17 March.

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. 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 supporting learning technologies and activities including Replay for creating, editing and sharing videos, the anonymous assessment submission tool for online assessment, Menti for live polling, Padlet for collaborative activities, and Blackboard Collaborate for running online synchronous sessions. For more information, see the PDLT webpage.

Blended Learning Design and Delivery

The ‘Blended Learning Design and Delivery’ resource is available to all staff on the VLE aiming to support the design and delivery of integrated in-person and online teaching and learning.

The design sections of the site focus on combining in-person and online modes of delivery to best effect. They also offer support with planning assessment and evaluation of blended learning modules.

The teaching/facilitation section focuses on supporting inclusive learning communities and groups and designing and facilitating synchronous and asynchronous learning activities in-person and online.

Supported by examples, the site is targeted at module leaders and all staff who teach or support student learning, including Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA Access request form).

To access the site, staff can log into the University Virtual Learning Environment (Yorkshare) and search in the list of modules for ‘Blended Learning Design and Delivery’.

Support from the Library, Archives and Learning Services (LALS) for modularisation and semesterisation is available

Please be aware whether you are developing a new course or programme, or adapting an old one, the LALS team are here to help. Let us know what you need as early as you can so that we can support you fully. We are happy to attend meetings, provide relevant training and advice.

For all Library enquiries please contact your Academic Liaison Librarian in the first instance. They will discuss your needs with you and put you in touch with relevant colleagues.

Contact us via these clickable links:

- Academic Liaison Librarians
- The Borthwick Institute for Archives
- Digital Scholarship & Engagement team
- Programme Design and Learning Technology Team

Learning and Teaching Forum mailing list sign-up

If you would like to receive communications from the Learning and Teaching Forum, please complete this linked form. Our mailing list will keep you informed about all our workshops, our annual Conference, and any other Learning and Teaching Forum news.

If you have any questions, please contact the Learning and Teaching Forum Committee via learning-and-teaching-forum@york.ac.uk.