Forum
Learning and Teaching Committee

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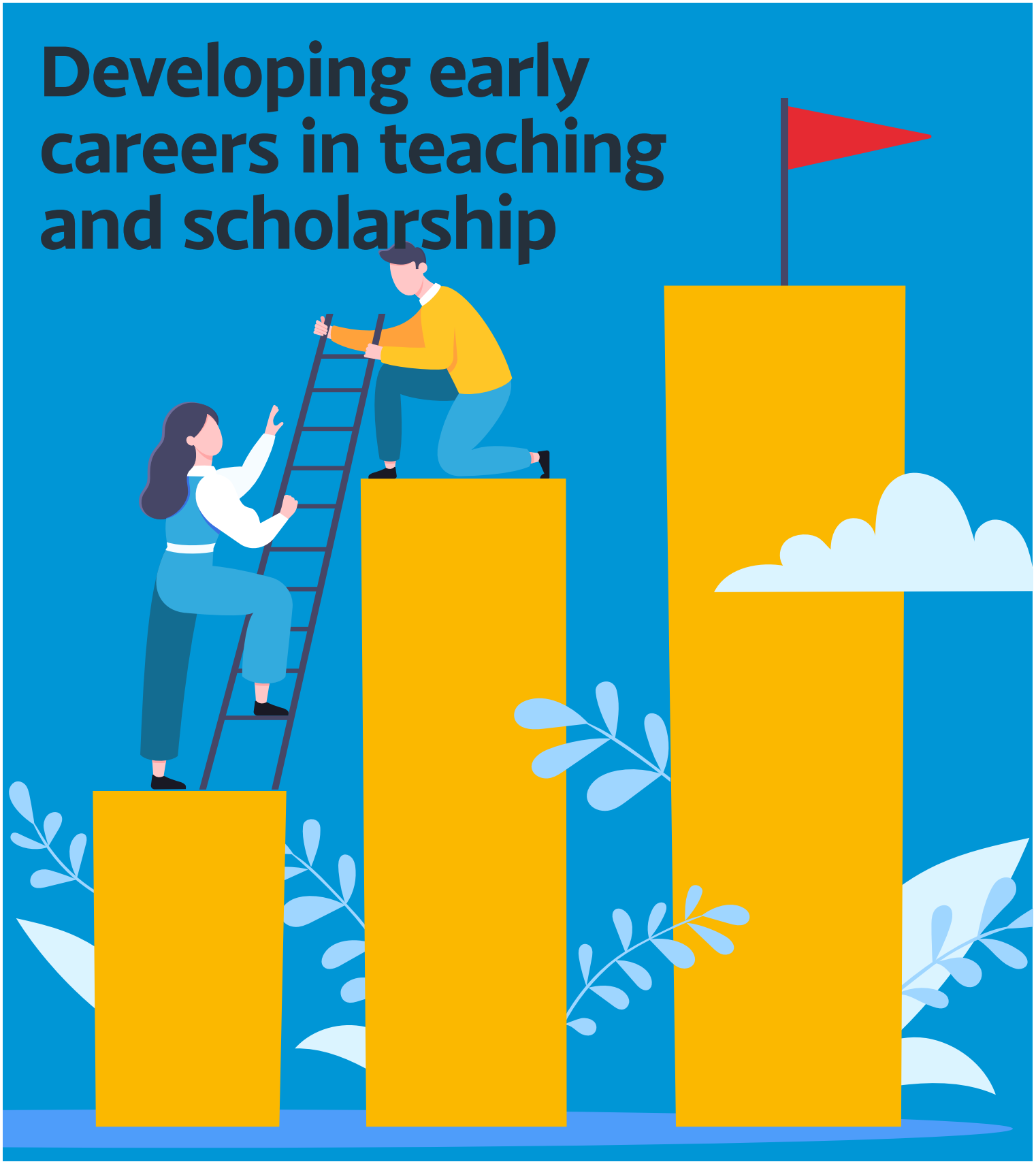
Developing early careers in teaching and scholarship



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Editorial

Dear Reader
Welcome to the Autumn 2022 edition of *Forum* magazine.

As we reach this 50th issue milestone it makes sense, like all good educators, to reflect on our practices with the aim of improving. This, I feel, is a laudable attitude that helps maintain a keen 'situational awareness' regarding important or ongoing issues that need to be navigated. For our part here at *Forum* magazine we have tried to couch things in a temporal perspective. In issue 48 we looked to the past to understand the lessons learned from the challenges wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic. In issue 49 we looked to the future, from technology to pedagogy, to outline the numerous ways we can adapt and best 'future-proof' our practices. The present issue offers a combined approach: here we reflect on how best to support early career educators who are the future of teaching and scholarship.

Although I am personally (and tragically) starting to strain credulity by referring to myself as an 'early career' professional I nevertheless identified with this term for a long time. Out of principle I think it is both conscientious and prudent to be mindful and supportive of the individuals developing their careers on the path behind you. I fear once we are established it can be easy to forget how difficult developing a career is. In academia, due to the prolonged qualification process, there is often a delay in obtaining career security relative to peers in other sectors. Moreover, in this formative period you are still getting a handle on so many things - best practice, your own preferences, and even your own identity as part of a sometimes inscrutable and monolithic academic system.

In the spirit of both supporting, and celebrating, our early career educators this issue takes a two pronged approach. Firstly, we have invited a number of junior members of staff to write articles for this issue to support their career development directly. This includes articles on student-teacher interactions by Smriti Safaya, accessibility in mathematics by Cordelia Webb, and 'outdoor teaching' by Andy Needham and Steph Piper. These articles highlight an important way early career educators can help us stay 'on-the-ball' regarding best practice. When developing their own teaching styles they are well-placed to experiment, reflect, and (very usefully) pass on advice to the rest of us.

The second approach we have taken has been to generate content that provides advice for, or ideas that support, our early career educators. This includes our first ever submission from CITY college, Greece, by Maria-araxzi Sachpazian on how to support 'budding teachers' through mentorship. Additionally (and pleasingly) many of the articles conferring advice to early career educators are written by people who also identify as such. Two articles, written by Olivia Walsh and Alex Hudson and Sophie Brown respectively, highlight strategic ways careers can be developed through roles that confer highly relevant experience. We also have a collaborative article written by our Early Career Committee which provides a fantastic selection of tips and advice to those starting out on their career journey in teaching and scholarship.

As always, I wish to sincerely thank all our contributors for this issue who took the time to write for us. My gratitude extends to our outgoing Chair of the Learning and Teaching *Forum* Glenn Hurst, and Administration Coordinator Gemma Wheeler, for their invaluable support of this publication. A huge thanks also to the *Forum* associate editors for their contributions: Rebecca Hudson-Tandy, Colleen Morgan, and Jane Neal-Smith, and our Sub-editor, Phil Robinson-Self. Alex Hawes from Design Solutions also deserves enormous credit for her hard work on the graphic design and formatting for this issue. Thank you everyone.

With all my best wishes for the future, both ours, and for the people who come after.

Alexander Reid (Psychology)
Editor

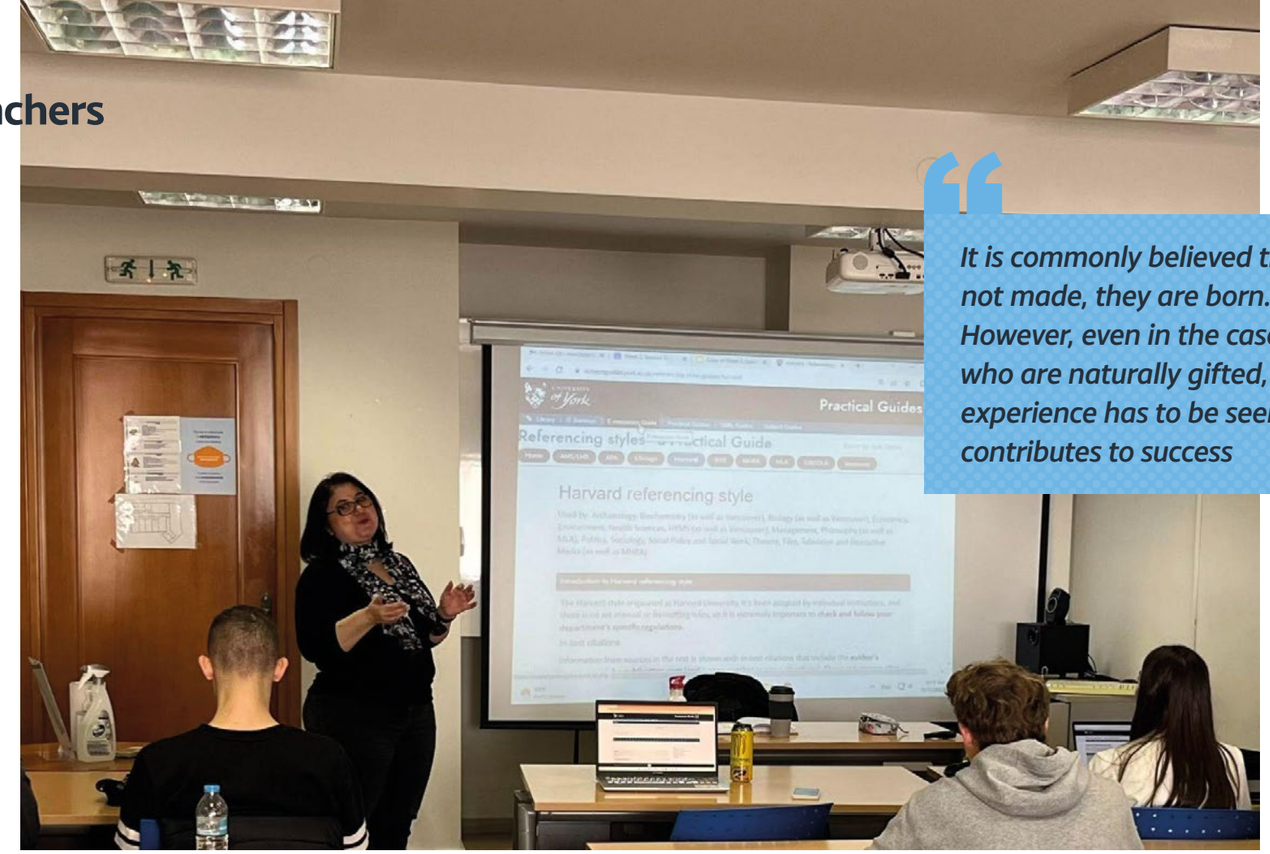
Supporting English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers in getting their first job: How Higher Education Institutions can help budding teachers find their voice

By **Ms Maria-Araxi Sachpazian**, *Lecturer CITY College, University of York Europe Campus*

Once graduation is over, education graduates (henceforth 'budding teachers') often realise that the safety of the 'Ivory Tower' has been removed and they are now qualified professionals who need to start searching for jobs and conduct themselves accordingly. Transitioning into the job market is therefore a formative period for new English Language Teachers (ELTs). As such, it is important to appreciate that the transition from Higher Education to first employment is often not straightforward, with graduates frequently feeling "less well-prepared" for the demands of employment (Lore and Little, 2010, p. 13). The process is not self-explanatory either, which necessitates a discussion on how Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can best support their graduates. For example, there are sometimes considerable discrepancies between the initial reasons young adults decide to become teachers and the reasons they ultimately remain in the profession. According to Ikupa et al. teacher retention numbers are low in many developing and developed countries of the world, possibly because assumptions about "good career opportunities" become increasingly tenuous once exposed to the job market (Ikupa et al., 2017, p. 446). A first placement can therefore motivate budding teachers to secure positions that ensure their continuing professional development and employability. Conversely, a lack of support for new teachers during this transitionary period may result in demotivation, stagnation and potentially even the abandonment of the career path entirely.

The issue of graduate employability, especially in the field of teaching, concerns us deeply at CITY College, University of York Europe Campus, and we welcome additional thoughts on the matter from the University of York and the broader international community. For example, in the past six years, the CITY College Humanities Department has a programme in place which allows our stage three students, who are studying to become EFL teachers, to teach in conditions which are guided but also realistic. This is a first (still safe and guided) context in which students can see the reality of teaching and its challenges. This public engagement scheme equips the EFL students with some portfolio experience which they can use when applying for work (Papachristou, 2021). The present article explores the reasons of how, and why, HEIs need to support their ELT graduates who enter the job market. In this context the special nature of the teaching profession is considered and will ultimately inform a proposal of how HEIs can offer budding teachers practical assistance at the start of their career.

Supporting new teachers



The first job as a reality check and a crucial landmark

It has been found that graduating from a prestigious university tends to raise expectations regarding future employment prospects (Jasiński et al., 2017). For example, young graduates equipped with ELT qualifications may expect a higher salary starting from their first appointment, which in the case of my country Greece, is not always forthcoming. Additionally, these graduates will expect to see some kind of career development which in the context of Foreign Language Schools (FLS) is hard to find. At the same time, most graduates may also feel that they need to have a clear plan in mind regarding how to start their employment journey. Budding teachers are faced with job interviews, most of which often focus on their lack of experience, alongside the practical need to start earning money as soon as possible. Feeling demotivated they are often left with two choices: either to seek a non-teaching job or to become a private tutor.

The first option is an obvious threat to the smooth construction of the budding teachers' career path as it may lead an otherwise promising teacher away from classrooms, in theory *just until a suitable teaching job is found*, but in reality this is often for a much longer period of time (Sachpazian and Papachristou, 2019). The second option, private tutoring, although still related to teaching, may not necessarily contribute as much to ongoing professional development or career growth (Sachpazian and Papachristou, 2019). In addition to these factors, budding teachers might lack the confidence to negotiate with willful parents of students who might impose coursebooks, dictate methodologies and push them into the kind of teaching that is deficient in terms of the type of professional development they can subsequently leverage in the job market. Indeed, given the limited options, budding teachers are sometimes known to delay entering the job market to pursue a Master's programme as it can provide a degree of temporary security and 'hides' their lack of ongoing employment (Jasiński et al., 2017).

Shaping teachers as professionals and the reality of the job market

It is commonly believed that "good teachers are not made, they are born." (Harmer, 2007, p. 23). However, even in the case of budding teachers who are naturally gifted, it is undeniable that experience has to be seen as a factor that contributes to success (Thompson et al., 2004). This is of particular relevance as many countries (Greece among them), where languages are taught at private FLS, there are no teaching assistants or mentorship programs that might help structure such an experience. Indeed, the term 'appraisal' is often synonymous with new teachers getting admonished for what they did, or did not do, in a non-constructive fashion.

It seems that in countries where ELT is a private sector 'industry', school owners and Director of Studies (DoS) within a given school placement, are looking for the seemingly unattainable in new staff. They want graduate entrants who have developed independence to the extent that they need minimal guidance from their DoS, yet are simultaneously capable of conforming with whatever institutional vision or direction the school takes. They are looking for young teachers who have already transitioned from the student to professional sphere and have a sufficiently developed set of practices regarding their ethical conduct in relation to their teaching provision (Little and Lore, 2010; Ferreira et al., 2006). At the same time, in some instances, there are concerns that a given DoS may inadvertently confer bad habits regarding teaching practices, potentially blunting the lessons learned from four years of preceding training in terms of lesson planning, observations and self-reflection.

In many respects being a good teacher is like being a good surgeon. It is hard to give one general description to adequately cover everyone in this vocation because different types of specialists are effective in different situations (Harmer, 2007; Thompson et al., 2004). Surgeons, much like teachers, need to develop confidence in how they approach problems, and performance needs to be embodied through the real world application of learned skills beyond a theoretical context. Despite this, teachers, unlike surgeons, are often not given a period of guided internship, which is exactly what our public engagement scheme at CITY College tries to do (Papachristou, 2021). This highlights what is needed most: a period for budding teachers to be employed and teach under supervision as part of a mentorship programme.

As paid teaching assistants in such a programme trainees have the opportunity to build experience directly through accumulated teaching hours and develop a rapport with their class. In parallel with these experiences they would have the opportunity to observe how experienced educators operate, and reflect on how their mentor handles different situations, for example in cases of students misbehaving or being unwilling to participate. Therefore, this period would allow budding teachers to use their first year of employment to develop their (self-) reflection skills, a characteristic often considered essential to effective teaching (Whitaker, 2004). In this way HEIs can offer graduate job market entrants a safe network of employers within which their skills are appreciated and knowledge utilised (Little and Lore, 2010). More importantly, this safe network of professionals seeking to employ budding teachers will understand the importance of not stifling young teachers' creativity or their exploratory behaviour regarding this role (Ferreira et al., 2006).

> *It is commonly believed that "good teachers are not made, they are born." (Harmer, 2007, p. 23). However, even in the case of budding teachers who are naturally gifted, it is undeniable that experience has to be seen as a factor that contributes to success*

How can Higher Education Institutions contribute to the building of the safe network?

In sum, the suggested plan in this case is for HEIs to cooperate with FLS in a two-way internship program which will start by offering the school insights into how teachers need to be supported, introduce them to the mechanics of mentoring, and hone their institutional skills in giving appraisals without overwhelming their budding teachers. The next step would be for the budding teachers to be given a class which they would co-teach with an experienced educator who acts as their mentor. If, by the end of the year, the young graduate has proven their worth then the school can move on to hire them full time.

The benefits from such a programme are potentially tangible. Firstly, budding teachers are spared the ordeal of repeated unsuccessful interviews which focus on their lack of experience. Secondly, the FLS become better employers through cooperating with HEIs, and get insights into the way mentorship, training and feedback can help foster their employees' professional development. On the downside, this proposal requires like-minded professionals who may or may not keep their word regarding their obligations, and may not be able to commit to multiple years in the programme. Despite this caveat the greatest motivator for such an effort is that HEIs would more adequately bridge the gap between academia and employment for the benefit of all parties involved.

Concluding thoughts

On a personal level I believe a goal for all of us teaching in Tertiary Level Teacher Education is not to attract a calabre of professionals who think teaching is a good "fall back" option, or some form of second rate profession. Rather, we want what Ikupa et al. describes as individuals who are *committed passionate* (2017, p.451) in terms of their work ethos. This type of professional is no doubt far more likely to weather the storms of early career development without opting out of this vocation.

However, in the complex socio-economic context of the 21st century it is questionable whether any Bachelor's degree can ensure employability in its own right (Little and Lore, 2010). It is also unrealistic to expect budding teachers to develop a full set of employability attributes and work ethics without workplace experience. It is also important to stress that during the first year of employment, it is the quality of employment, not the volume of teaching hours, that counts. Programmes that encourage the cooperation of HEIs and FLS can ensure that budding teachers are given an emotionally safe career start,which will act as a springboard for future growth. It is important that HEIs actively equip their graduates with the life-long abilities for conscious career construction and, hopefully, committed and passionate teachers as a result.

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Facing and overcoming challenges as an early career member of staff

The *Learning and Teaching Forum* aims to bring together colleagues involved in teaching and supporting learning from across the University. It provides opportunities to exchange ideas, celebrate and disseminate good practice in teaching and learning, and facilitates the connection and development of teaching-related networks. The Early Career subgroup of the Forum is a relatively new endeavour, and as a group we have been working on defining our aims and remit. This includes thinking about the range of staff that might fall under the "early career umbrella" and the key actions we can take in both the short and long-term to help support the diversity of early career staff involved in teaching. We aim to be inclusive and encourage staff to self-identify as early career staff, encompassing teaching in a range of roles: for example in T&S, ART, PSS and GTA or Postdoc roles, including staff with experience not only at York but also other institutions.

The early career stage can be an exciting time to build an identity in teaching but of course it may also include uncertainty and challenges. Our own discussions highlighted a multitude of questions we've had over recent years, from "How do I connect with other people doing similar things to me?", or "What does publishing in the pedagogic literature involve?" through to "How do I manage wider life alongside teaching?" or "Are there opportunities for career progression in teaching?". These are some of the types of questions we hope to support early career staff with via this subgroup, whether in guiding colleagues to current resources, or looking to create such resources or opportunities where they may not currently exist. This article contains reflections of members of the Learning and Teaching Forum Early Career subgroup with the aims of highlighting just a few of the types of challenges early career staff may encounter, starting further conversation in this field, and signposting to resources and opportunities that we've found helpful in our careers so far.

Personal Challenges – Rebecca Hudson-Tandy, Lecturer in Midwifery, Department of Health Sciences

Juggling caring responsibilities is a challenge at whichever stage of your career; however, a particular challenge I have personally faced recently is that of managing my own career expectations and my upcoming maternity leave.

Naturally, whichever field we are in, we all engage in differing degrees of reflection and consider ways in which we can better our practice. Pregnancy is a time in life when many people reevaluate their life choices and considerations are given as to how a new baby is going to impact these choices. As an early career member of teaching and scholarship staff, I have spent a great deal of time considering my career and what I would like to achieve throughout that time for myself and for my family. I have spent the past 20 months in higher education developing my own teaching style, engaging in activities and attempting to establish myself within my team, my department and in the wider university. To take a break from doing this has felt a little disconcerting. There have been opportunities that have presented themselves which unfortunately I cannot take up due to timing which again feels unsettling; however, I am reassured by colleagues that other opportunities will arise when the timing is right.

I am currently part way through the University's postgraduate certificate of academic practice (PGCAP), which is challenging from a time management perspective with teaching commitments and also from a personal perspective with a young family. I have made the decision to continue with the PGCAP course whilst on maternity leave, in part due to my own motivation to complete the course and also in part as a way to manage my own workload on my return to work with my expanded family! I don't expect this to be an easy task, but I feel this is the right decision for my individual situation and to manage my own expectations of what I would like to achieve. For now, other aspirations are on hold for a short time, but by reflecting and evaluating what is important from a career perspective, I feel that I can still achieve – just on a modified timescale!

The Challenges of Career Development; Reflecting on the YPAD Programme for Advance HE Fellowship – Rachel Hope, Lecturer in Biology, Department of Biology

Career development as an early career member of staff can feel like a lot of "unknowns" in terms of how to reach long term goals, and the short term nature of contracts in academia can present an extra layer of complexity in this process. The first five years of my teaching career involved short term contracts of between 3 to 10 months at different institutions across the UK, which highlighted the challenges of becoming integrated into staff groups and collecting meaningful longitudinal feedback from students on my teaching. There were fewer opportunities to bounce ideas off like-minded colleagues for career development beyond the scope of my contract length, but I was keen to develop my teaching and build my employability over the longer term. I'd heard about the Advance HE Fellowship scheme during my time at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) but wasn't able to apply. On spotting the York Professional and Academic Development (YPAD) scheme in a newsletter at the start of my 10-month initial contract at York, I applied, knowing that completion within this contract length was possible and that the Advance HE fellowship to which YPAD leads would be a useful indicator of my experience in my longer-term career progression.

The structure of the system at York grouped me with colleagues at a similar level of experience in other departments, along with a senior mentor. The group meetings allowed me the opportunity to get to know other teaching staff outside of my department and the chance to reflect on how my teaching methods related not only to theirs, but also to the dimensions of the UK professional standards framework (UKPSF) and to the wider body of pedagogical literature. This approach provided me with a more structured and evidenced way of thinking about how I taught, which built on my prior experiences of trying a new approach in a lecture and evaluating how I'd felt about

it afterwards. Writing the final report helped me to consider the ways in which I'd progressed in my teaching and the breadth of techniques I'd been able to amalgamate from teaching in different contexts across my contracts, allowing me to frame the short term nature of my appointments as a strength in my application. Whilst initially joining the YPAD scheme as an opportunity to reflect on my teaching and gain Advance HE fellowship, its wider impacts in building my connections in the T&S field across the University were an unanticipated positive to come away with too.

The YPAD scheme, run by Academic Practice, has two cohorts each year, open to staff with varying levels of experience in teaching.

The Challenges of a Place to Talk; Opportunities for Self-reflection and Development via Mentoring – Rachel Hope, Lecturer in Biology, Department of Biology

Mentoring allows staff across the University to be matched with more experienced staff to benefit from their knowledge and experiences. Mentees can choose to be paired with a mentor either within or outside their own department. Whilst being lucky to have a large group of supportive T&S staff in my own department, I felt that working with a mentor outside of my department could be helpful in providing insights into how other departments worked and, in turn, it might expand the types of teaching methods I could learn about.

My mentoring sessions focused on three main objectives. After a 12-month extension to my first contract at York I wanted to learn more about career progression in the T&S route and how a long term career in the field might be feasible, as my searches prior to coming to York had provided few examples of where this was possible. Finding balance between work and my wider life was becoming a priority, given that in my early posts I was looking to get as much as possible from each contract to build my CV and experience, focusing predominantly on work. An overarching goal connecting to both of these areas was to build my confidence in my teaching and in taking on new tasks and roles in the area.

The sessions provided welcome opportunities to reflect, and to discuss my thoughts; my mentor was welcoming, positive and encouraging. They prompted me to challenge myself in a way that felt approachable and supportive, and provided practical support in signposting to relevant resources, as well as sharing their own experiences in maintaining a work-life balance. The experience was wholly positive and the way the mentor helped in prompting me to consider steps I could take to answer my own questions helped me to understand the extent of my own experience, and was one I hadn't expected coming into the process. The mentoring experience was a key influence in my decision to work towards promotion over the next few years and provided me a place to work out my next steps in achieving this, with guidance from supportive colleagues from my own department too.

The *University mentoring scheme* runs on a biannual basis and is available to members of staff with a range of levels of experience.

The Challenge of Publishing – Jess Hargreaves, Lecturer in Statistics, Department of Mathematics

An early career member of staff may be interested in undertaking and disseminating their own scholarly projects on teaching and learning. There are various motivations for wanting to publish in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL):

1. Posterity: Innovative practice and worthwhile investigations into the practice of teaching and learning should not be lost (for example, you may have undertaken a project as part of the PGCAP). Writing up and disseminating such projects increases their longevity and impact.
2. Development: Reflecting on teaching practice via publications helps to order our thoughts in relation to that practice and consider ways in which it can be developed. This also aids in our own professional development as educators.
3. Promotion: Publication can play a part in developing a profile as a departmental expert in teaching and learning and hence assist in career progression.

Whatever motivates somebody to publish in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, it can be a difficult landscape to navigate. Here are some of our top tips:

- The *Learning and Teaching Forum* provides opportunities for staff to disseminate their SoTL projects, which can be a gateway into the world of publishing in SoTL. For example, you could publish an article in *Forum Magazine*! Furthermore, you could contribute a talk, workshop or poster to the *University of York Annual Learning and Teaching Conference*. In both of these areas, look out for special opportunities for early career staff! In particular, both the Forum magazine editorial team and the conference organisers are very supportive, offering mentoring and support for your contribution.
- The *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Network* (SoTLN) developed by Academic Practice brings together resources, professional development, discussion and dissemination opportunities focused upon looking at teaching and student learning in a scholarly and research-orientated way. In particular, the *SoTL Journal Club* is designed to engage staff with key and emerging literature in the field of learning and teaching. Discussing and critiquing selected papers from published research into learning and teaching is a great way to get an insight into this field, which can then help you to envisage how you could contribute.
- Furthermore, the *SoTL Writing Group* meets termly and aims to support staff to develop a scholarship strand to their work. Whether you are just starting out, have a draft of an article ready to submit, or are somewhere in between, you can get support to help move your SoTL project to the next stage.
- There are routes to dissemination within the SoTL Network such as the York SoTL Journal. These opportunities also aim to improve your project by encouraging reflection and discussion as an integral part of the process.
- Following on from the above, consider collaborating with other (more experienced) SoTL practitioners. Not only could they contribute to developing your project, they could also share valuable experiences of publishing in SoTL.
- Consider publishing in special issues of particular journals and then be on the lookout for calls for papers. This can be a good opportunity to disseminate your work if it fits the remit of the special issue and can offer an alternative path to publication.

Although it can feel challenging to enter the world of publishing in SoTL, hopefully the above has given you some useful starting points. Finally, remember there are lots of opportunities at the University of York to disseminate your work, with support and advice as an intrinsic part of the process.

Overcoming early career challenges

> *Whether we face challenges with networking or grappling with technology, it's important to remember that you're not alone.*

Networking challenges and tackling technology – Arielle Redman, Digital Scholarship and Engagement Manager, Library, Archives and Learning Services

Sometimes, our work can feel a little lonely. So, how can we pinpoint the right people to extend our limits and facilitate new opportunities? Although social media can bring some benefits, it simply isn't the best way to genuinely connect with other professionals. It is far better to find a place online or in person where there is some clear common ground to elicit richer conversation and collaboration.

Meet peers at York by joining different special interest groups and keeping your eyes peeled for interesting University events and training through Wednesday's Staff Digest email. Make connections beyond York: no matter how niche your interest, you're likely to find a lively *Jisc mailing list* in just that area. This is a way to share your own reflections, questions and participate in productive, topical conversations which can be interdisciplinary, depending on the focus.

Whether you're new to York or to your profession, grappling with emerging digital tools and technologies in your work is inevitable. Fear not! York has an exceptional offering of support to help us all. Delight yourself with the *Skills Guides*; your one stop shop for bespoke guidance at York. Use the search bar to find help with all York's central tools (and some of the more niche ones) from Google to Microsoft and beyond.

We're part of a University which even offers many opportunities for *synchronous digital skills training*; this includes Digital Wednesdays, which are often an opportunity to experiment with emerging technologies. And if all else fails, you can contact *itsupport@york.ac.uk* for help.

Whether we face challenges with networking or grappling with technology, it's important to remember that you're not alone.

Clinical Teaching Fellows for nursing:

A viable route for early career nurse academics?

***Olivia Walsh**, Clinical Teaching Fellow in Nursing, Department of Health Sciences at the University of York and York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHSFT*

This article aims to outline the role and benefits of the clinical teaching fellow within the nursing arena for aspiring nurse academics.

Throughout nurse education students are exposed to a broad range of careers, and whilst there is effort made to present a range of 'traditional' and less traditional roles within nursing, many registrants may have misconceptions regarding the route into nurse academia. It is here that the role of the Clinical Teaching Fellow (CTF) may help to build a structured pathway between traditional bedside roles and those within education.

The role of the CTF is one that was generated through recognition of the need to forge stronger links between higher education institutions and the practice providers that routinely host placements for student nurses throughout their programme. The idea that academia and practice are viewed as harmonious, and not isolated requirements, is one that the Council of Deans of Health (2021) has supported, encouraging the use of partnerships between organisations. The CTF position is one that adheres to this vision; inspired by the role that is well established and growing in number within medical education, nurse education is still yet to follow suit in most institutions.

It is here that both the University of York and York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHSFT initiated a partnership to develop this role, and in doing so provided subsequent benefits to the organisations, students, and two appointed CTFs involved. These positions were appointed in February 2021 and, unlike more traditional roles, they had no predecessors to facilitate their initiation or from which to receive a handover. Instead, the focus of the role has since been to explore the gaps in service provision from a student nurse perspective and to consider creatively how such gaps can be occupied.

Both of the assigned CTFs initially took on this role as their first academic appointment in 2021, following a background in Critical Care nursing upon qualifying from the Masters in Nursing programme here at the University in 2019. Though it can be expected that moving quickly into an academic appointment may raise some challenges, there is a wealth of benefits highlighted in the literature around the use of recent

experience can aid teaching and provide a deep and contemporary understanding of the challenges faced by students (Woodfield and O'Sullivan, 2014; Van Heerden et al., 2020).

A source of inspiration for the work undertaken has come from personal experiences, speaking to students and staff, and also considering the literature around the use of CTFs within medical education. Though there is a great deal of literature on the medical CTF role, there is little uniformity within the activities undertaken in posts according to a review by Wilson et al. (2008). There was, however, an overarching theme of involvement in curriculum design and delivery from a higher education perspective, with a focus on organisation and delivery of teaching from a hospital perspective (Furmedge et al., 2013). Nursing roles, such as traditional lecturer-practitioner roles and nurse educators, have also been considered both for their similarity but also their differences; namely that the CTF role has a shared focus between the university and practice provider to achieve the shared goal, and that this roles remit does not extend to qualified staff.

There are many similarities in what work has been undertaken in the first seventeen-months when compared to the literature around medical CTFs. At the University of York, the CTF is expected to be involved in curriculum design, module development, academic assessor roles, as well as delivering teaching from the curriculum. The work within the trust has so far focused mostly on student experiences, with regular wellbeing walk arounds, listening exercises, a focus on recruitment and retention of student and newly qualified nurses, and the development of clinical skills workshops to help improve confidence and competence of undergraduates.

The work completed so far has not only been of benefit to the respective organisations, through having additional teaching staff, but also to students and the CTFs themselves. For example, the evaluations from students at the University of York has been overwhelmingly positive in how the role has impacted their nurse education with staff mirroring this view that, although they had not realised it was required before appointment, now the role is in place it has improved student and staff experience and workload (Walsh, 2022).

Though the CTF role was created to improve students' experiences, and this remains its primary focus, it is undeniable that there are also huge benefits for the appointed staff to reflect upon. From a personal perspective, since being a student at the University of York I had always aspired to work within my department as an educator, but at that time the path I would take to arrive there felt unclear. The foundations of my experience in teaching were built upon supervising students within my clinical practice which subsiquently allowed me to build confidence in seeking out educational roles. Since being appointed to this role I have worked at developing my personal interests in not only teaching but also academic scholarship in order to begin to build up a portfolio for future progression. An area of interest that I have been able to explore has been around retention of student and newly qualified nurses, with a particular attention to the emotional demands of the nursing profession.

Undoubtedly, pursuing this role has allowed me to get exposure to, and develop proficiency in, many aspects of student nurse teaching that may not have been possible without this opportunity. Whilst working within higher education may have been a personal goal, the benefits of the CTF role expand further than this. The role itself allows the appointed to work between two different organisations, with traditional academia in one side of the role, and the remaining 40% of time employed by the local hospital; meaning that the CTF is able to develop professionally in a clinical setting alongside their academic work.

For many aspiring nurse academics, a role such as this may be an ideal balance between clinical and non-clinical teaching roles for a long-term post, or like medics, to be used to develop skill sets for future positions. As well as striking a balance between components of nurse education, it can also help develop skills in university settings, allow opportunities for clinical development in advanced roles, or perhaps even to inspire nurses to take a traditional nurse educator position within the NHS trusts.

Nursing is a wonderfully diverse profession with endless opportunities that can nourish and develop people personally as well as professionally. With this in mind, it is important for educators to be transparent with students about the opportunities to develop in traditional areas, such as leadership positions and advanced practice, but also in research and education roles too. For nurses early in their career development, a role such as the CTF is one that can help develop the nurse academically as well as clinically. Having positions such as this is hugely important, not only for nurse education and students, but also for those registrants that want to explore ideas around alternative development.

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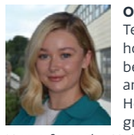

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Student-teacher interactions

Student-teacher interactions… it fuels our craft

Co-Creating Learning Through Participatory Action Research With Students, **Smriti Safaya**, *University of York*

We did not know exactly how to do it, but we knew what we wanted to do: conduct and publish research driven by the youth voice about climate change education. None of us had done anything like this before nor did we know, at the start, that we were embarking on 'participatory action research' (Jacobs, 2016). This term, which was not initially part of our vocabulary, describes how researchers and participants conduct collaborative research to investigate a question and implement actions to bring about change. What follows is our journey into unfamiliar pedagogic and academic territory with student and teacher reflections highlighting what we learned along the way. I hope this story can encourage other educators and researchers to try new approaches even if all one has to go on is their gut feelings about creating quality learning experiences.

In response to a call for papers from a peer-edited journal shared by my co-supervisor, Dr Lynda Dunlop from the University of York Department of Education, I built an 18-member strong team including 12 secondary school students (15-18 years old), two university students (20-21 years old), three science teachers, and myself, a humanities teacher and PhD researcher. Despite our lack of experience in such academic endeavours, we agreed upon three key tenets that laid the foundation of our collaborative research strategy: (i) a flat structure, (ii) thorough organisation, and; (iii) opt-out options (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Our three strategic research tenets.

How the tenets guided our process

With youth voice being paramount, the teachers and I reiterated the importance of student perspectives and contributions in every email communication and Zoom meeting. Having a good rapport with their teachers meant the students settled in fairly quickly to guide the research design and implementation process. They felt comfortable to constructively critique the development of the online survey and interview questions, give feedback on how to conduct the interviews, lead the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data and ultimately co-author the paper with our research findings and implications (Safaya et al., 2021). Since we could never meet as a team due to the prevailing Covid-19 restrictions in Hong Kong at the time, and because one of our team members was attending university 12 time zones away in New York City, we used a variety of youth-chosen digital collaborative tools to organise ourselves.

In order to respect team members' availability and desire to play to their strengths and interests, prior to and during each phase of this journey, we all were offered 'opt-out' options. This flexibility to participate meant each phase had different combinations of students and teachers involved. Each group had a teacher playing two roles: firstly as a facilitator for online and offline group discussions and work and secondly as a time manager to ensure we stayed on track using our co-developed calendar with phase deadlines. This adventure culminated in a successful publication in the December special issue of 'School Science Review' (Safaya et al., 2021), which proudly featured student analytical perspectives and a call to action for pedagogical shifts in the form of six practical implications.

What students and teachers valued from this experience

Despite the intensity of this 2.5 month learning journey, students and teachers alike spoke of its value. Student reflections highlighted how they developed skills in critical thinking, real-time problem-solving, managing bias, practising self-reflection and collaborating cross-generationally. They recognised how this unique co-created learning opportunity "introduced [them] to the level of research at a higher education level" and how advantageously it may "look quite good in a university application". In this project's "open space", students appreciated the "opportunity to listen to the different opinions" and how "different people are approaching this [climate change] issue based on their cultural background" which prompted them to "reflect on [their] own actions and [their] education and how it has built and lead to [their] position now".

> *As a teacher this experience rooted me. During the pandemic there were few opportunities that actually did that.*

I want to close with a reflection from a teacher who, despite having a challenging school year due to Covid-19 restrictions, opted to participate in this journey during their summer holidays. "As a teacher this experience rooted me. During the pandemic there were few opportunities that actually did that. One thing that has become apparent to me is how vital these opportunities are for teachers. We can't underestimate the importance of student-teacher interactions on the creativity of teachers – it fuels our craft and it's been drained from the profession over the last few years". I think this sentiment sparks a powerful invitation to try new initiatives that feed our raison d'être as educators – to create symbiotic learning engagements that not only benefit our students, but ourselves.

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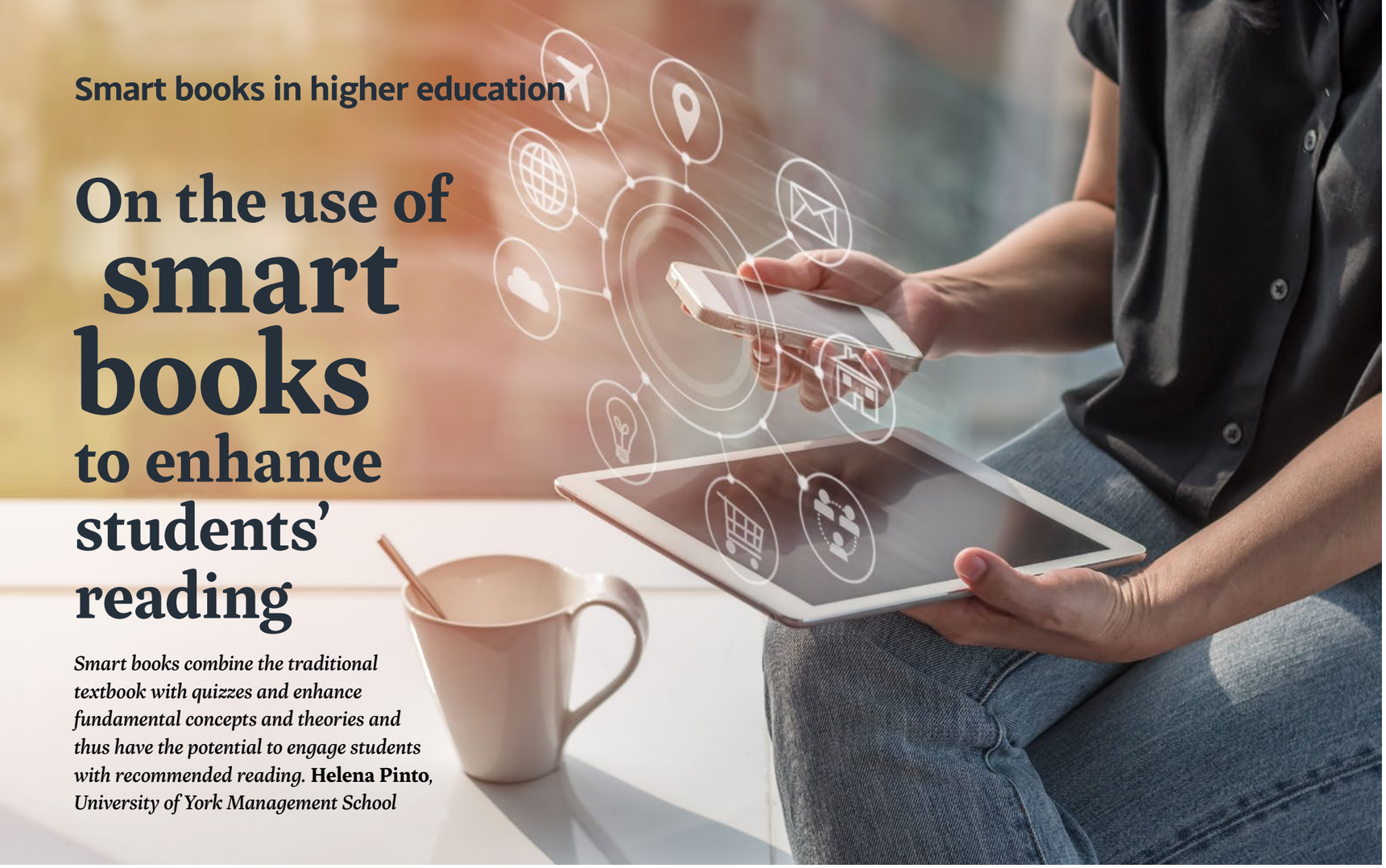
On the use of smart books to enhance students' reading



Smart books combine the traditional textbook with quizzes and enhance fundamental concepts and theories and thus have the potential to engage students with recommended reading. **Helena Pinto**, *University of York Management School*

Reading is typically regarded as a crucial component of students' learning in higher education. Reading lists are therefore an integral part of university degrees and students are expected to engage with the reading in their subject areas, either in preparation for teaching and learning activities, or to consolidate and extend knowledge (see e.g. Altalouli, 2021).

Academics advocate the importance of reading to students, and evidence suggests a strong relation between students' reading and their performance (Palani, 2012 and Pecorari, Shaw, Irvine, Malmstrom and Mezek, 2012). However, anecdotally and in the literature, academics are convinced that students do not complete the recommended reading. Pecorari et al. (2012) and Brost and Bradley (2006), for example, show that not all students read outside of the classroom. Burchfield and Sappington (2000) found that fewer than 25% of the students on a psychology degree completed assigned readings. Moreover, Hoeft (2012) shows that of the 46% of students who said they completed reading assignments, only 55% were able to demonstrate even basic knowledge of their reading, which may indicate that fewer than 46% did read the assignment. So, an important question arises: how do we properly engage students with the reading material of our modules?

Hoeft (2012) and Pecorari et al. (2012) suggest that instructors should give clear signs to students that reading is important, since some students believe reading is unnecessary and unrelated to assessments. Also, some students perceive attendance and reading as substitutes and thus do not understand that reading has a complementary function to other sources of learning. Clear signs of the importance of reading can be achieved through strategies like allocating reading assignments more clearly and frequently (Pecorari et al., 2012) and associating quizzes to reading assignments (Hoeft, 2012).

Incorporating smart books in teaching

Smart books are a digital learning tool with the potential to highlight the importance of reading and thus may help towards student engagement with recommended reading. The digital smart book uses technology to direct reading and consolidate learning. Instructors design reading assignments by selecting the relevant book chapters and learning objectives. This results in reading material which clearly highlights and identifies for students the relevant threshold concepts, theories and topics. After students complete the required reading, the smart book provides prompt questions and students are required to both answer the question and indicate confidence level in their answer. This, together with immediate feedback on the answer provided, allows students to quickly assess their own understanding of the topic. Students are therefore required to think about and apply the concepts they are learning, thus promoting active learning and a deeper understanding of the material. The smart book can also help identify gaps in knowledge, and can be set up so that students are prevented from progressing in the associated quizzes following submission of an incorrect answer, and are instead redirected into the reading of the relevant concepts before making a subsequent attempt. Thus, the smart book can potentially create a path in reading and learning which is unique to each student and tailored to their individual needs. Once the student completes the reading and associated questions, the reading assignment can be submitted and is from then onwards available for reviewing at the student's own pace.

> *Smart books are a digital learning tool with the potential to highlight the importance of reading*

Smart books were used in a University of York, first year undergraduate module with 122 registered students. The module uses Blackboard as the main virtual learning environment and as well as the repository of lecture videos and other module material, Blackboard is used to communicate with students outside of the classroom and to assign seminar tasks and reading. In the 2021/22 academic year a smart book version of the main adopted textbook was used for the first time and all students had access to the textbook through the Blackboard page of the module. Every week for eighteen weeks, following the lecture, students received an announcement reminding them that their reading assignment was available through a link on the VLE: they would then have five days to complete and submit their reading assignments. Embedded in the reading assignment was a set of questions for which students would get immediate feedback. If a set of questions related to specific concepts was answered incorrectly, students were automatically redirected to the relevant part of the reading to revise the relevant concepts. Reading assignments were therefore clearly designed and frequent (Pecorari et al., 2012), and were allocated with associated quizzes (Hoeft, 2012). The general engagement of students with their reading assignment was below the desired level of 100% but well above the 25% reported by Burchfield and Sappington (2000). On average, every week 44% of the students attempted part of the reading assignment and 42% completed the reading assignment. Perhaps not surprisingly, the level of engagement with the reading assignment was higher in the first weeks of the term, with 72% engagement in the first week.

Conclusion

This article suggests that by combining reading with quizzes and by frequently and clearly outlining the necessary reading, smart books' reading assignments can be a relevant aid to student engagement with module readings. We detailed an example of a University of York module that uses smart books in its teaching strategy and outlined some evidence of students' engagement with module readings. In the first weeks in particular, the level of engagement is very high. A potential way to address drops in students' engagement throughout the term could be to incorporate reading assignments into a module's assessment.

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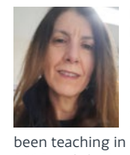

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Archaeology and the outdoor classroom: exploring the efficacy of outdoor teaching for new year one undergraduate students

Andy Needham *and* **Steph Piper** *from the Department of Archaeology discuss the integration of outdoor teaching in tertiary education, using an Archaeology year one undergraduate module as an example*

A place for outdoor teaching in supporting the studies of new undergraduate students?

Studying at university level can be challenging, especially in a subject that is being studied for the first time, which is common for archaeology. Over the last two decades changes in primary, secondary and further education have impacted the level of knowledge prospective archaeology undergraduates have about the subject. The loss of archaeology at GCSE and A-level, and from mainstream media – such as the popular television series *Time Team* – has created a gap in knowledge and understanding amongst students currently entering university education. The recent introduction of the Stone Age to the Iron Age topic in UK Key Stage 2 history is encouraging, but there remains limited support available for teachers to deliver this aspect of the curriculum. This knowledge gap compounds challenges many students face when beginning their studies at university, including moving to a new city, living away from home, arranging a new job, and making friends.

Creating an inclusive learning community is therefore important to support student engagement with unfamiliar teaching methods and a new subject matter. This presents pedagogic challenges in the delivery of introductory modules during the first year of Undergraduate study. For introductory courses in general, how can pedagogy support student wellbeing, the development of friendships and peer-groups, and inclusive learning communities? For archaeology specifically, how can deep learning of humanly made objects (*artefacts*) – fundamental to archaeology – be facilitated in students unfamiliar with the materials, working techniques, and cultural settings in which they were made and used?

Outdoor teaching may be one solution. Outdoor learning has seen successful integration into foundation level education in the UK in the form of Forest Schools (e.g. Knight, 2013; Maynard, 2007; Waite et al. 2016). It has also been increasingly identified as an important method of delivering module content in a host of disciplines at tertiary level (e.g. Lugg, 2007; Wonowidjoyo, 2022). Within archaeology, established uses of outdoor teaching include field trips, field skills training and excavations. Diverse positive benefits of outdoor learning have been identified across the range of contexts in which it has been employed. This can include specific knowledge retention (Harris and Bilton, 2018), the development of psychological resilience (Gray, 2019), and student retention (Pennazzi et al., 2022). We discuss observations surrounding the development and implementation of a year one undergraduate course in archaeology with the novel approach of utilising outdoor learning to support the understanding of artefacts.

> *The outdoor component of the module, run at the York Experimental Archaeology Research (YEAR) Centre (Fig. 1), provides students with hands-on experience of materials and their properties, scaffolding the academic literature introduced during lectures, seminars and formatively assessed presentations.*

Integrating outdoor teaching into a year one undergraduate archaeology course

Artefacts and Materials is a year one undergraduate course developed in 2019 that aims to introduce students to aspects of material culture from different cultures, geographical regions and time periods. Students are exposed to familiar objects made from synthetic materials such as mobile phones, to unfamiliar objects made from stone, organics, ceramics, and metal that could date to tens of thousands of years old. Some of the ways in which archaeologists study and interpret such objects, including theoretical approaches and scientific techniques, are also explored. Teaching is delivered via lectures, and small-group seminars and outdoor practical workshops.

The outdoor component of the module, run at the ***York Experimental Archaeology Research (YEAR) Centre*** (Fig. 1), provides students with hands-on experience of materials and their properties, scaffolding the academic literature introduced during lectures, seminars and formatively assessed presentations. Workshops are situated within problem-based learning scenarios utilising experimental archaeology – a method of replicating (pre)historic archaeological objects to enable testing and understanding of their production and function. Each week the module focuses on a particular material and students attempt to make and use an object about which they have read, or which aligns with the reading and material. This includes the creation of stone tools from flint, string from plant fibres, figurines from clay, and rings from copper. The successful creation of an object is unimportant, instead the focus of each workshop is process. Students are encouraged to think through materials, their affordances, processes of production and use, facilitating a deeper understanding of (pre)historic craft, skill, and social and cultural dynamics.

Figure 1: Teaching in progress at the YEAR Centre. Credit: Andy Needham.

Educator observations and student feedback

After delivery of the course over the last three years, outdoor teaching has proven efficacious in addressing identified challenges for first year undergraduate students new to Archaeology. Educators observe that integrating experimental archaeology in an outdoor space appears to support students in a number of ways, which resonate with Maslow's hierarchy (1987). First, the less formal setting engendered in outdoor working has a positive impact on community building and team working, where students feel comfortable to discuss and share ideas as they work. This supports the development of community and friendships, which was observed particularly in individuals that were less comfortable communicating in traditional classroom settings. Second, the flat structure between educator and students fostered during outdoor working reinforced the relaxed learning environment. Student learning is partly peer-supported, with students collaboratively finding solutions to complete the task, rather than passively transmitted from the educator. Third, students show a deeper understanding of ideas and concepts presented within assigned academic papers related to the activity. This is based on the integration of firsthand experience working with the materials, tools, and techniques discussed within papers they have read. Fourth, when moving into a more formal seminar environment, the students build on this experience to more confidently articulate their ideas, and with greater capacity to critique the academic papers and concepts.

The benefits of an outdoor classroom

Themes raised in student module evaluation are consistent with educator observations. Students have commented on how outdoor experimental production in conjunction with handling of replica artefacts allowed them to appreciate objects, and the materials and processes used to make them, in a more critically reflective way. This resonates with published findings regarding the positive impact of object-based learning: the use of archaeological objects in teaching (Hannan et al., 2013). Furthermore, students positively reported feeling included – getting to know each other and forming peer-groups during their first terms at university, perhaps linked to the use of peer-supported learning during outdoor activities. Students also commented on perceived benefits to their learning, noting that the blending of theoretical concepts with practical and outdoor activities facilitated greater understanding of each element in relation to the subject matter. Finally, students noted the importance of working in an outdoor space. The YEAR Centre is situated on Campus West in a grove of trees by the lake, and features replica prehistoric structures and a camp, in addition to bespoke teaching structures. Students noted that working in this space can promote wellbeing while reducing stress and anxiety, and promoting sociality, the positive effects of which have recently been recognised (e.g. Mann et al., 2021 and references therein).

Challenges presented by outdoor teaching

Whilst educator observations and student feedback support the use of outdoor learning within archaeology, and perhaps support the case for its use in Tertiary education settings more widely, this type of teaching can present logistical challenges. Outdoor teaching can be limited by pragmatic considerations such as prevailing weather and the time of year. As a result, greater planning is required when compared with other types of teaching, such as seminars or lectures. This can extend to the need to create replacement activities that could be carried out in a traditional classroom in the event of the need to cancel a planned outdoor activity. There can also be cost implications, which can include the purchasing of materials and equipment, arranging of transport, or increased staffing to ensure a safe working environment. Outdoor teaching can also be challenging to convert to an online format, requiring additional staff

time and equipment to achieve. Careful planning of activities is also essential to meet health and safety and ethical obligations, and to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion is fully considered to maximise participation for all students.

Summary

The use of outdoor teaching to support students new to archaeology and to university education has proven to be an effective addition to archaeological pedagogy in this case, based on educator observations and student feedback, both of which resonate with published findings of the benefits of the use of outdoor teaching in other contexts. As with any pedagogy, outdoor learning can present challenges, largely related to logistics and resourcing. However, on balance, the positive impact on the student experience in the Artefacts and Materials module lends support to the case for continued exploration of the use of outdoor teaching within archaeology, as well as high potential for application to other disciplines in tertiary education.

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Early Career development: the benefits of being a College Life Coordinator

Alex Hudson *and* **Sophie Brown** *share their experiences as recent University of York graduates going into the professional world, and the benefits of being a College Life Coordinator*

What is a College Life Coordinator?

Starting employment after graduation can be daunting, especially for those who were high flyers at university. Learning different skills, working with new people, and figuring out the next steps in your career can be difficult. Graduate roles are often tailored to specific fields such as marketing or finance. However, a good way for recent graduates to find their feet in their early career are 'platform roles' such as a College Life Coordinator (CLC) position at the University of York.

The CLC role was first created in 2021 to provide wellbeing interventions and deliver student experience projects. The majority of CLCs are assigned to two colleges and split their time between them. They also work with senior colleagues to deliver university wide projects such as ***Welcome and Orientation***, ***College Sport*** and ***Student Connect***.

What makes CLC a platform role is the wealth of experience that can be gained from it. There are many ways for recent graduates to develop transferable skills in a supportive and friendly environment. It also helps with the transition from being a university student to a full time professional in the working world. CLCs are encouraged to work collaboratively and network with senior colleagues, both in support teams and academic departments, particularly through project work. Platform roles are great for developing new skills but can be daunting at first. We've put together some tips to make starting a new role a bit easier.

Tips for getting started

Nervous but excited, confident but clueless! These are all normal feelings when starting out on your career journey. Here are out eight top tips to make that transition smoother:

1. **Embrace the challenge.** It's normal to feel overwhelmed and to not know what you're letting yourself in for when you start a new role. Try not to worry, stay positive and embrace the challenge – it will get easier as you gain the experience.
2. **Don't be afraid to ask questions.** Even if you graduated with a first class degree, the working world is very different to academic study. You should never assume you know everything, keep asking questions as there is always more to learn.

3. **Get to know your work colleagues.** Make an effort to get to know your colleagues, not just your immediate team, but your wider network as well. It's important to establish good working relationships and value the people around you.
4. **Get yourself organised and into a morning routine.** You might check your emails first thing, write a to-do list or make a cup of coffee. Whatever works for you, try and stick to it and start the day like you mean business.
5. **Ask for feedback on your performance.** Don't be afraid to ask your line manager for feedback. Use it to reflect and develop your skills for the future. Take constructive criticism as a positive to push you in the right direction.
6. **Look after your mental health and wellbeing.** Starting a new role can be tiring, so ensure that you are taking breaks from work and not burning yourself out. If you are feeling overwhelmed talk to your line manager or seek professional advice.
7. **Speak up and share your own ideas.** It's important to contribute to group discussions and develop your confidence in sharing your own ideas. They hired you for a reason – they must like what you have to say.
8. **Take on new opportunities that come your way.** Even if you think a task will be a challenge, give it a go anyway. It's important for your development to use your skills on something new, and explore different aspects of the role. Even responsibilities outside your grade can be great opportunities to learn.

Applying your academic skills to the professional world

University degrees allow for the development of transferable skills such as problem solving, time-management and communication. It's important to find roles which allow you to further develop these 'soft skills' in a professional environment. A CLC position is a good example of a platform role which allows you to develop a range of soft skills, namely attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people, which can be taken forward into lots of different career paths.

One skill you will have learnt in your degree is working with others, whether that be through group projects, lab partners, or working with your dissertation supervisor. In short: teamwork is a skill that you will need to utilise throughout your professional life. CLCs work in two teams

> *A CLC position is a good example of a platform role which allows you to develop a range of soft skills*

of five across their college pairs. Balancing the demands and working styles of two teams is a challenge, and it allows CLCs to develop their adaptability and experience working with a wide range of different personalities. Additional pressures of the dual college structure include conflicting priorities and deadlines, however working in high pressure environments like this is great for enhancing your ability to work under pressure. Just as it is often with essays and exams, diamonds are made under pressure!

You'll be able to utilise the skills learnt in your degree in ways you might not otherwise expect. For example, most (if not all) degrees encourage creative problem solving and critical thinking. As a CLC you are often faced with a range of student welfare concerns without straightforward solutions. Problem solving and critical thinking skills are essential when coming up with new and innovative ideas to help students. Taking time to reflect on the soft skills you developed in your degree is useful when starting out in the professional world. You'll be surprised at the variety of situations where those skills will come in useful.

Making the most of new opportunities

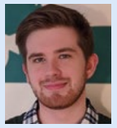
Finding development opportunities outside the normal scope of your role is a great way to enhance your skills and experience at an early stage in your career. Just because it's outside your day to day responsibilities, doesn't mean you shouldn't give it a go! This is a driving principle of the CLC role.

All CLCs are given at least two projects to work on throughout the academic year. Some of these projects involve supporting College Managers, but others allow CLCs to take ownership and oversee their workstream. The projects cover many areas of the college offer including: College Sport, College Music, Student Connect and Student Wellbeing. CLCs are encouraged to pursue their individual areas of interest through these initiatives. For example, working on internal reviews and writing reports, or organising large scale events such as ***College Varsity***.

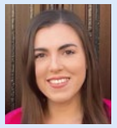
Alongside the project delivery skills developed through these opportunities, another benefit is being able to work with senior members of staff across the university. This gives CLCs the opportunity to network at the start of their career, and also gives a preview of what it is like to work in these senior roles. The opportunity to gain insights into a variety of career paths is invaluable for those in their early career. The variety of routes for CLCs is exemplified by the diverse career paths subsequently taken by the first five individuals initially hired to these positions. One moved into policy and campaign coordination for a students union; two were promoted to higher grades within University administration; one is doing project delivery in the Civil Service; and one is going into marketing in the private sector. Finding platform roles such as CLC is really useful for those in their early career to reflect on what their passions and skill sets best align to, enabling them to make the most of their experiences.

Conclusion

Platform roles, such as College Life Coordinator, are useful for recent graduates to experience a wide range of responsibilities, developing essential soft skills, and gaining a deeper insight into a variety of career paths. Not knowing what you want to do at the start of your career is okay! Finding broad roles which align to your skill set, and which have some stretching opportunities, are an excellent way to figure out what direction you want to take your career in the future.



Alex Hudson was a History and Politics student at York, and during his postgraduate studies worked as an office assistant for Goodricke college. In 2021, he took on the role of College Life Coordinator for Goodricke and Anne Lister. Alex has used the skills he developed at York to start a job at the Department of International Trade. ***A link to Alex's LinkedIn profile***.



Sophie Brown studied BA English Literature and Politics and MSc Global Marketing at the University of York. Upon completing her postgraduate studies and her role as a College Tutor at Constantine College she started as a College Life Coordinator of Alcuin and Vanbrugh College. Sophie is keen to use the transferable skills she has developed in her future career in marketing and communications.
A link to Sophie's LinkedIn profile.

Using MOOCs to facilitate international lifelong learning for prehistoric archaeology

Andy Needham, **Iain Barr**, **Don Henson**, **Becky Knight**, **Andy Langley**, **Nicky Milner** *and* **Steph Piper** *from the Department of Archaeology and Centre for Lifelong Learning discuss their experiences developing and using MOOCs as an outreach tool to reach international learners of all ages*

Introducing Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are large scale teaching courses typically targeted at members of the public to satisfy their curiosity (Christensen et al., 2013). Platforms and methods of access vary, but they are usually free, with an option to upgrade at cost. In this case, our MOOC entitled ***Exploring Stone Age Archaeology: The Mysteries of Star Carr*** was built in collaboration with the commercial company FutureLearn, the University of York's Centre for Lifelong Learning, and Archaeology Department. MOOCs can be a powerful way to reach a large and diverse audience of learners of varying age groups, backgrounds, and from different parts of the world.

Why a Stone Age MOOC about the site of Star Carr?

The creation of a MOOC focusing on Prehistoric Archaeology provided the opportunity to fill a gap in outreach. The Stone Age has recently been incorporated into the Key Stage 2 curriculum in the United Kingdom, although concomitant support on how to deliver this subject matter is lacking. Conversely, the removal of Archaeology as a dedicated A level subject has reduced access in Further Education. The level of knowledge amongst the general public and support available for educators to deliver curriculum material is therefore variable.

The MOOC was designed to promote Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) archaeology, focusing on the globally important site of Star Carr (Figure 1). Its importance encourages wide appeal, yet its location in North Yorkshire ensures a good fit with UK school curricula. The MOOC assumes no background knowledge of archaeology and acts as a guided learning resource to develop subject knowledge, excavation methods, and how material culture informs understanding of past lifeways. A range of freely accessible online resources supplement the course, including a website (***http://www.starcarr.com/***) and an excavation monograph (Milner et al., 2018a; Milner et al., 2018b).

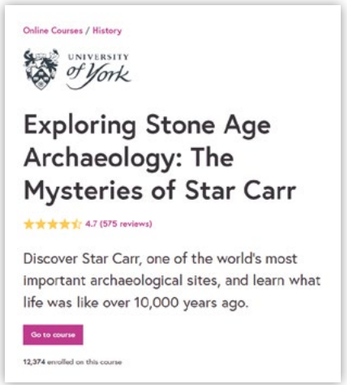


Figure 1: The landing page for the Starr Carr MOOC.

Designing the Star Carr MOOC: creating content to promote retention

The course was divided into four weeks, each focusing on a specific theme, composed of 80 steps in total. Steps included: short articles on a particular subject, such as the history of excavation at the site; open questions to promote learner discussion and engagement with one another (Laurilland, 2002); videos recorded with experts while working on the excavation itself and in the Archaeology laboratories; polls or quizzes designed to stimulate discussion; and end of week tests to reinforce retention. FutureLearn accessibility tools supported the development of content within steps, ensuring it was pitched at an appropriate level of detail. The course materials were intuitive for educators to upload and organise, with the FutureLearn platform being similar in configuration to the Blackboard VLE used across the University of York.

A recognised problem with MOOCs is high dropout rates (Stein and Allione, 2014), limiting the potential for meaningful knowledge transfer. Design and implementation heavily influence learner retention, with three key factors recognised: 1) instructor quality; 2) conceptual clarity; 3) format (Oakley et al., 2016). These were taken account of during design and implementation of the Star Carr MOOC in the following ways: 1) Active facilitation on a (bi-)annual basis

by a team of educators, responsible for updating content in response to learner feedback, sharing of expert knowledge, and addressing learner's questions to promote engagement; 2) FutureLearn tools were used to screen content for all steps, ensuring accessibility and clarity for non-specialist audiences; and 3) use of a weekly thematic design structure, integrating diverse learning tools across manageable steps, encouraging continued engagement.

Who used the MOOC? demographics and geography

The Star Carr MOOC has run on four occasions: July 2019, April 2020, June 2020, and June 2021. In total, 9763 people have taken the course, 8041 being 'active learners'. Learners came from 105 countries, primarily the UK (4893), the USA (892) and other Anglophone countries. These findings are consistent with published studies, which suggest higher uptakes can be anticipated from Europe and the USA, with lower engagement from developing countries (Glass et al., 2016). In early 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic saw restrictions in social contact implemented globally. Perhaps as a result, there was a dramatic surge in uptake (n. 3379), almost double the number of learners compared to other runs.

Demographic data suggests that people of retirement age (>65) are particularly drawn to the Star Carr MOOC, being the largest group on each run (Figure 3). This is contrary to published studies, in which the <30 category dominates (Glass et al., 2016). Speculatively, this may be related to subject matter, with Archaeology becoming an active interest for people at a different stage in their lives. However, the data does show that a significant number

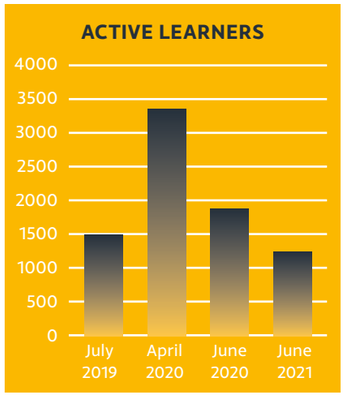


Figure 2: The overall number of active learners in each of the four cohorts of the Starr Carr MOOC run to date (2019-21).

> *Star Carr [gives] an amazing insight [in]to the way a group or community lived over 11000 years ago. The practical issues of making tools to hunt, build and carry on day to day life. To the headresses [sic] that used skill and time to make, although why is still being debated...*

of younger people (<56) did engage with the course. This included working professionals such as teachers, upskilling to aid in delivery of school curricula. It also included prospective undergraduates preparing for tertiary education. The MOOC can therefore be said to be effectively reaching key outreach targets.

Engagement and reasons for leaving

Drop out rates for MOOCs can be high (Stein and Allione 2014), even when carefully designed to encourage continuing participation. FutureLearn offers an exit survey to understand patterns in non-completion. Data from the four runs across 2019-2021 suggest around a 50% dropout rate between week 1 and week 4 of the Star Carr MOOC, with the majority leaving in week 1. This pattern suggests people may elect to try a MOOC, but leave shortly thereafter due to some incompatibility. In this case, the data suggests course difficulty (both too easy or too hard) was a negligible factor, accounting for only 4 of the total non-completions. Instead, leading causes were access expiry (239), 'other' (no reason stated, 184), and insufficient time (161). The relationship between demographics and exit survey responses was not recorded. However, it is possible that insufficient time may be linked to younger learners with employment and/or childcare responsibilities.

Learner quantitative and qualitative feedback

In addition to a non-completion exit survey, the FutureLearn platform also offers an exit survey for learners who complete the course. This provides both quantitative results based on answers to defined questions, and qualitative insights provided by free text comments. The data suggests that learner overall satisfaction was high, the course meeting or exceeding expectations for 97-98% of learners across all runs. Courses can be awarded a star rating on a five point scale, used by prospective learners in deciding which courses to join. In this case, the rating is high at 4.7/5.

Qualitative data reveals the importance of educator interaction, consistent with expectation for MOOCs generally, where educator quality has been recognised to affect retention (Oakley et al., 2016). This is reinforced by some negative feedback, attributed to learners taking the course outside of the scheduled run time. As educators are not available outside of (bi-) annual runs, learners studying outside this time can erroneously conclude that the MOOC is not supported by educators.

The feedback also provides insight into the extent of impact achieved. The desired aim was to provide knowledge and insight about aspects of Mesolithic Archaeology through the site of Star Carr. Both the exit survey and course comments reveal that the MOOC provided a means for learners to develop new knowledge and ideas about prehistory:

"Star Carr [gives] an amazing insight [in]to the way a group or community lived over 11000 years ago. The practical issues of making tools to hunt, build and carry on day to day life. To the headresses [sic] that used skill and time to make, although why is still being debated..."

Educator reflections

After facilitating the course on four occasions we have found the MOOC to be enjoyable to design and deliver, providing an exciting opportunity to interact with large and diverse audiences, and engage in simulating exchanges via comments. However, this can also be labour intensive for educators (Hone and El Said, 2016), with the scale and diversity of learners presenting challenges relating to course management (Tubman et al., 2016). Where educators are also academic members of staff, timing and frequency of educator-supported runs requires careful consideration. This is balanced against the importance of consistent educator involvement to avoid elevated dropout rates, and to ensure positive exit survey feedback to sustain the success of the course.

MOOCs in lifelong learning

Summary

In summary, MOOCs can be a rewarding and effective means of public engagement, reaching large and diverse global audiences. They are reasonably expedient to develop and implement, but require a dedicated educator team to implement and maintain successfully. From the perspective of the educator, MOOCs can be stimulating and enjoyable to run, but can add to workload. From the perspective of learners, MOOCs can be highly satisfying where courses have been carefully designed and are pitched at the appropriate level. The opportunity for learners to progress through the course together is also an important aspect, and educator promotion of community development is critical. MOOCs also have recruitment potential – especially when carefully timed – due to their emulation of the peer-supported Higher Education environment, effectively acting as a preparatory step prior to taking up a place at university. Finally, a MOOC can lead to meaningful outreach, challenging perceptions and developing knowledge in line with desired outcomes:

"I have found this course really interesting. To discover people living 11,000 years ago are not hugely removed from us, is fascinating. Their skills, for survival, creativity and culture and how they lived their lives within the environment that surrounded them, was well presented with factual articles, videos, archaeology and modern day representations of their toolmaking. The level and content of the course was perfect for me and brought an era of history to life that I had previously known very little about."

Thank you for sharing your knowledge."This course was a wonderful opportunity to find out about an archeological site in my area. It opened up the world of archeology and the sophisticated techniques used to study sites and artefacts which would have been impossible without the insight offered in this course. I have learned about the unique finds and observations and the access to published studies, videos and photos of the artefacts along with a wonderful reconstruction of how the site might have appeared 11000 years ago made the experience come to life."

Figure 3: The relative age demographics of the four Starr Carr MOOC cohorts run to date (2019-21).

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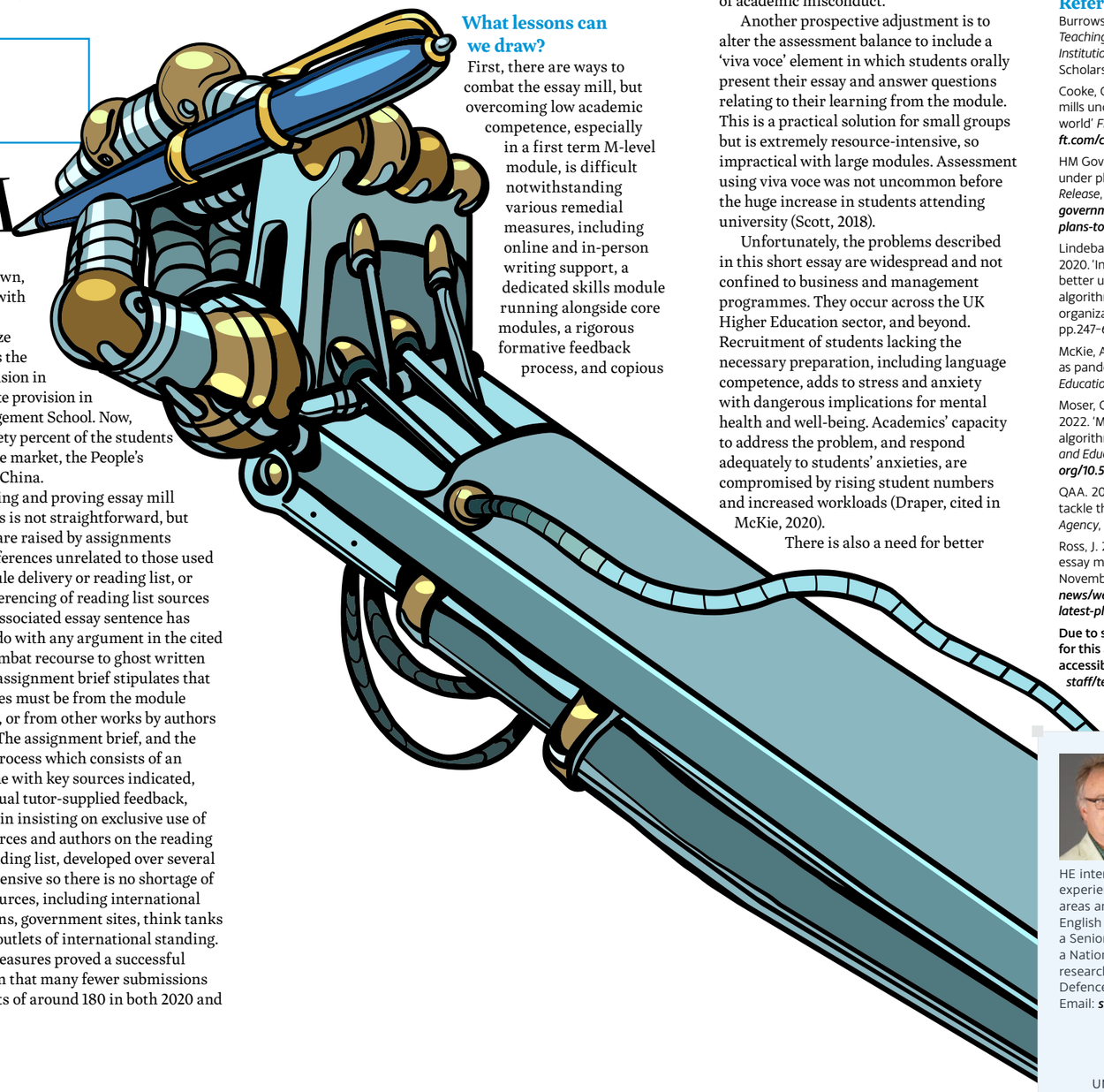
Combating the essay mill:

where does responsibility lie?

Why do some students use external providers to write their assignments for them, and what should we do about it?

LOREM IPSUM



The use of artificial intelligence (AI) and essay mills in universities has been growing in recent years (QAA, 2020; HM Government, 2021; Ross, 2021). This form of academic misconduct fits with the notion of 'disruptive technology' (Lindebaum, et al., 2020). It undermines academic standards and universities' credibility worldwide (Cooke et al., 2021). The Coronavirus pandemic, which left many students vulnerable and isolated, may have made the problem worse (McKie, 2021).

Students raise the alarm

Essay mills, and the kind of sophisticated AI tools now employed to substitute for human judgement and scholarly activity, risk a future in which recourse to devices of this kind becomes normalised practice, such that students are unable to distinguish between what is acceptable and what is unacceptable. AI and the commercial interests behind AI systems applied in HE risk subverting everything the university stands for, encouraging reckoning over judgement (Moser et al., 2022). AI allows its owners to wield power and exert control in direct and indirect ways over citizens, customers, and societies (Vesa and Tienari, 2020).

Alarm over the growing use of so-called essay mills in York Management School was initially raised by student representatives in a postgraduate staff student liaison committee meeting in 2019. Two Chinese representatives reported a growing problem of AI tools and ghost writing of assignments. They pointed to advertisements, in Mandarin, posted by local providers, on walls in the Department euphemistically offering writing services to students. Such services are widely advertised on the Internet and appear alongside universities' Facebook pages promoting their degree programmes. Students can begin their application process and simultaneously enter a relationship with an organisation happy to supply a full range of assignments, even including reflective blogs on the student experience.

Student representatives also reported that on social media in China the topic is common, and many students see ghost written assignments as how to secure a degree. The student reps said employers and officials in China are well-appraised of the issue and regard it as endemic throughout UK higher education. The reputational damage to the sector is formidable.

At the recent Chartered Association of Business Schools Learning Teaching and Student Experience conference in Belfast, I reported on an initiative to combat the problem (Sweeney, 2022). Several participants in the conference commented that they regularly encountered academic misconduct of this kind.

How to limit use of essay mills

My experience is based in an established international political economy and business module that is core on several international business-related postgraduate programmes. In recent years the failure rate has grown, coinciding with a steep rise in cohort size that reflects the rapid expansion in postgraduate provision in York Management School. Now, around ninety percent of the students are from one market, the People's Republic of China.

Identifying and proving essay mill submissions is not straightforward, but suspicions are raised by assignments showing references unrelated to those used in the module delivery or reading list, or random referencing of reading list sources where the associated essay sentence has nothing to do with any argument in the cited work. To combat recourse to ghost written essays, the assignment brief stipulates that all references must be from the module reading list, or from other works by authors on the list. The assignment brief, and the formative process which consists of an essay outline with key sources indicated, and individual tutor-supplied feedback, are explicit in insisting on exclusive use of module sources and authors on the reading list. The reading list, developed over several years, is extensive so there is no shortage of available sources, including international organisations, government sites, think tanks and media outlets of international standing.

These measures proved a successful deterrent, in that many fewer submissions from cohorts of around 180 in both 2020 and 2021 raised suspicions of ghost writing or essay mills (between 10 and 15). But failure rates remained very high, about forty percent. The fails divide almost equally between compensation territory (40-49), and outright fails (below 40). This suggests two things: only very weak students lacking adequate language skills, academic preparation, and proper engagement with module content, use essay mills. Secondly, if they do not use essay mills, they submit poor essays anyway. They are unable to meet module learning outcomes and so fail the module.

What lessons can we draw?

First, there are ways to combat the essay mill, but overcoming low academic competence, especially in a first term M-level module, is difficult notwithstanding various remedial measures, including online and in-person writing support, a dedicated skills module running alongside core modules, a rigorous formative feedback process, and copious support through the module virtual learning environment.

Secondly, the issue of weak students can be addressed either by lowering standards – which we should not do – or by enforcing a much more rigorous selection process that guarantees that only students capable of M-level study are accepted onto M-level programmes.

A third action universities should take is to enhance supervisory support, so that weaker students are given the help and advice needed to cope with the demands placed upon them, and to minimise the risk of academic misconduct.

Another prospective adjustment is to alter the assessment balance to include a 'viva voce' element in which students orally present their essay and answer questions relating to their learning from the module. This is a practical solution for small groups but is extremely resource-intensive, so impractical with large modules. Assessment using viva voce was not uncommon before the huge increase in students attending university (Scott, 2018).

Unfortunately, the problems described in this short essay are widespread and not confined to business and management programmes. They occur across the UK Higher Education sector, and beyond. Recruitment of students lacking the necessary preparation, including language competence, adds to stress and anxiety with dangerous implications for mental health and well-being. Academics' capacity to address the problem, and respond adequately to students' anxieties, are compromised by rising student numbers and increased workloads (Draper, cited in McKie, 2020).

There is also a need for better training and preparation of academic teaching staff, to better understand diverse learning styles, needs and preferences of students from other cultures, especially from China, given the projected further increase in numbers from the region (Burrows, 2016).

The issues raised in this article should be addressed with urgency, given that the credibility of our universities and our degree programmes, ethical recruitment, and matters of student health and wellbeing, are at stake.

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Due to size limitations the rest of the references for this article can be found in the screen-reader accessible version of this magazine at: *york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/develop/forum/magazine*

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Mapping the way to accessible mathematics

We are not yet at the point where mathematical content is accessible as a matter of course but that doesn't mean there aren't a variety of solutions

Accessibility, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (2022), is the capacity for something to be 'readily understood' and 'received, acquired, or made use of'. This is fundamental to education: we must be understood for knowledge to be received and applied by any given student. Generally there is an expectation that lecturers have to make their content more accessible and, to this end, there are many tools out there to help. However, adapting materials takes time and effort and there is not yet a 'one-stop' tool that would suit everyone or every circumstance. As a consequence, in the Department of Mathematics we are ***developing a map*** to help different stakeholders find the tools that will help them the most.

Handwritten vs typed notes

Compared to straight text, typesetting mathematics is a slower process that involves not only getting the right symbols, but also the consideration of their format and layout on a page. This is a problem that only grows as the mathematics involved gets more complicated. Moreover, it is generally recognised that teaching such content in "real time" with handwritten content aids student understanding (Wakeley, 2004). It is therefore understandable why lecturers produce handwritten content, particularly in a lecture context, and why it may seem logical to share this resource with students. However, even with the nicest handwriting, scanned handwritten notes are not always welcomed by students and fail to meet the requirements of the Accessibility Regulations legislation (2018).

In recent years, the ***Digital Inclusivity team at the University of York***, with the help of interns, have supported several departments converting handwritten material into a typed format (see Figure 1). This time consuming but necessary work highlights how support can be used to make these materials more accessible for a wider audience. In addition to this manual labour, there are an increasing number of tools available which can accurately transcribe handwritten maths to digital formats such as Equatio or Mathpix. These tools can drastically reduce the time taken: a complete set of lecture notes previously would have taken up to a week to completely convert but can now be completed in a matter of days: still time-consuming but much more manageable.

PDF vs HTML formats

Increasingly, students use phones and other 'small screen' devices to access material, or may use digital magnifiers, both of which require text to rescale and reflow on screen. While a Portable Document Format (PDF) meets the minimum legal requirements for

Accessible mathematics

'zooming' in this manner, HyperText Markup Language (HTML) files have a number of advantages: they can reflow, have greater structural integrity for maths, and are better supported by many assistive technologies. Despite this, mathematics students overwhelmingly (75%-80%) ask for PDF copies of lecture notes as a downloaded PDF (i) does not depend on an internet connection, and; (ii) is more easily searchable and intuitive for students to digitally annotate (Cliffe, 2022). Given the remit of 'accessible content' we would like to provide both file formats so students can use what's best for them. As such, we ideally need a way to easily produce both outputs from one input.

At the moment, many of these PDF documents will have been produced with LaTeX, a software system used for document preparation. This input can also produce HTML files via conversion tools such as LaTeXML, ***pandoc***, or ***Mathpix*** which all work relatively well, although some adaptation of the original TeX or final corrections may be needed, particularly with more complex and diverse documents.

As explored in ***issue 49 of Forum magazine*** in an article by Alexandra Dias (2022), RMarkdown is an alternative to LaTeX which directly outputs HTML and PDF. It is a simpler markup language making it easier to learn than LaTeX, and is capable of producing lots of the same mathematical content. However, plenty of content already exists in LaTeX, and transitioning between these two tools is not always straightforward or easy. Again, support for the adoption of such tools needs to factor in adequate training for both students and staff.

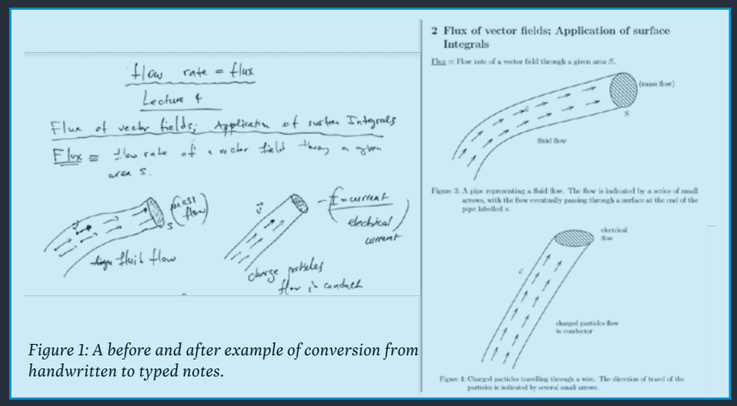

Figure 1: A before and after example of conversion from handwritten to typed notes.

Student input

It is also important that any changes do not occur without consulting students. We need to understand how they access and engage with content and what formats work best for them. We also need to be mindful that the student body is not homogeneous or static: what works for one student in a given subject, or even cohort, may not work for everyone forever.

Ongoing change is needed, and even necessary, when it comes to the application of technology in a given curriculum. However, it is important in its implementation that everyone involved has the necessary support for such changes, as well as being cognizant of the range of tools available to help them. This is why we are building on the ***current guide (which can be found via this link)*** to develop a comprehensive map of these different options and tools that will provide a common platform for both users and educators to start their journey into accessible mathematical content.

References

Cliffe, E. 2022. Getting started with accessible maths [Online] ***https://stem-enable.github.io/Getting-started-with-accessible-maths/index.html*** [Accessed 3rd July 2022].

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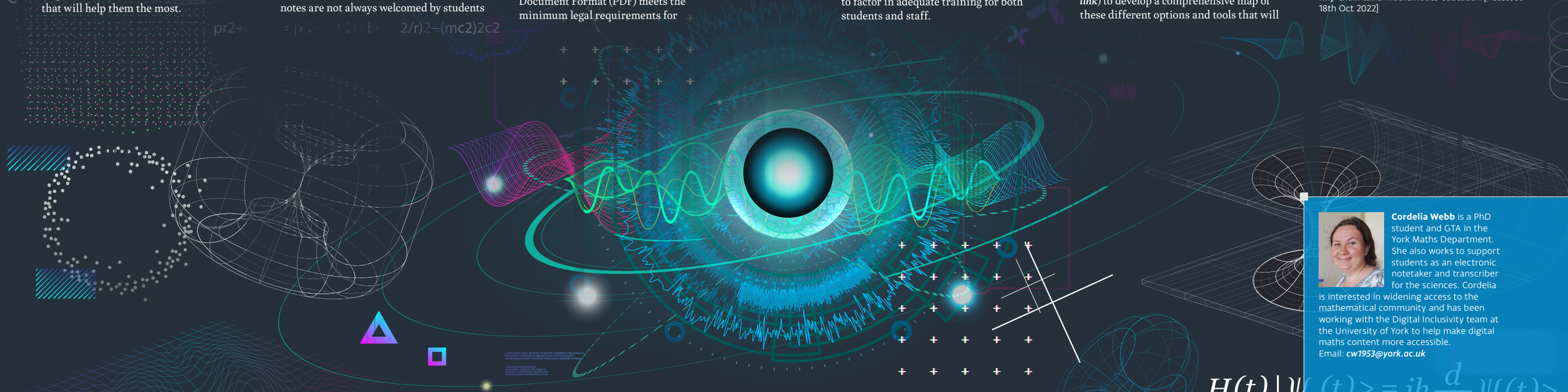
Wakeley, Paul, 2004, Why Chalk Talks in Mathematics Education. [Online] Available at: ***https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/why-chalk-talks-mathematics-education*** [Accessed 18th Oct 2022]



Cordelia Webb is a PhD student and GTA in the York Maths Department. She also works to support students as an electronic notetaker and transcriber for the sciences. Cordelia is interested in widening access to the mathematical community and has been working with the Digital Inclusivity team at the University of York to help make digital maths content more accessible.
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Support, development and recognition for LEARNING AND TEACHING

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*

NEW VLE! NEXT STEPS

The VLE has a new look and a new menu but module sites are unchanged. From September 2023, however, almost all teaching modules will be delivered through the **new Blackboard Learn** module sites.

With Modularisation & Semesterisation changes to modules, and differences in structure between Ultra and Original sites, **VLE sites will not be rolled over for 23/24**. Module leaders will receive an Ultra template site to populate with module materials.Training and guidance on using the template will be available from January 2023.

EARLY ADOPTION PROJECTS AND CALL FOR ENGAGEMENT IN ASSESSMENT PILOTING

The VLE project team is running early adoption projects to develop and test sites and templates. You can still get involved with these projects to develop an Ultra site with optional delivery to students in Spring Term. The team is also looking for academic and administrative staff to look closely at the functionality of new assessment platforms to see how well they meet our assessment handling, marking and feedback requirements. More details are in the *October e-learning newsletter.*

Click here to access the next bookable information session on the 9 November 10am

More information can be found here regarding the *VLE Transformation Project* and *Slack channel*

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.

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'.

Alternatively, once you have successfully logged into the VLE, you can click on the following direct link to the site: ***Blended learning design and delivery***

All staff should automatically have been provided with access to the site and there is also a ***GTA Access to the "Blended Learning Design and Delivery" VLE Site*** request form if needed.

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, Mentimeter for live polling, Padlet for collaborative activities, and Blackboard Collaborate for running online synchronous sessions. For more information, ***please click here to see the PDLT webpage***.

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***.

Writing for *Forum* Magazine

We are always interested in submissions. 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 (phil.robinson-self@york.ac.uk), or the Editor Alexander Reid (***alex.reid@york.ac.uk***).

Forum