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UNIVERSITY *of York*

Issue 38 | Summer 2015

FORUM

ENHANCING LEARNING AND TEACHING



One size does not fit all:
ensuring all students reach their potential

2015 Learning and Teaching conference overview

A distinctive York pedagogy Exploring diversity Effective group work

FORUM

Forum is published termly by the Learning and Teaching Forum
www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/groups/forum

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Editorial

A key component of my own training as a teacher (of languages, originally) was how (on earth) to meet the diverse needs of all of the students in the class at once. This may sound like a tall order, but the goal of ensuring that all students reach their potential is one we can all sign up to, no doubt. This edition of *Forum* magazine hosts a range of perspectives on where our priorities might lie in this endeavour, as a taster for the Learning and Teaching Conference in week 9 (Wednesday 10 June).

Some of the articles in these pages preview the content of individual workshops to be offered at the conference, and these articles are not intended to be the last word on each issue. This is a *forum*, and we invite your responses: i) all of the articles will also be published on www.yorkforum.org, so please post comments; ii) better yet, sign up to the conference to make your point in person in June <http://bit.ly/1tYHdWJ>.

In issues of equality and diversity there are – by definition – a range of perspectives that need to be heard, and one of them may be yours (or that of your students). Please make use of the 2015 conference as an opportunity to hear (or put forwards) some of the other sides of the story.

Sam Hellmuth

Guest Editor, Chair Learning and Teaching Forum

P.S. This is the last edition of *Forum* magazine for which Paola Zerilli (Economics) has served as Editor. We are grateful to Paola for all her work in the last three years, and also to Claire Hughes (Environment) who will be taking over the role of Editor of the magazine in 2015-16. If you have suggestions for the future content and scope of the magazine let us know: learning-and-teaching-forum@york.ac.uk



Lecture capture: discussing learning and teaching impact at York

Open to all teaching staff, Week 5, Tuesday 12 May, 11.00, Harry Fairhurst building

Whether you have experience of Replay, are new to lecture capture or you are just exploring its implications, participating in this workshop will give you a clearer understanding of the pedagogical debates and considerations for practice. We will draw upon lecturers' experiences and research with students at York to inform discussion. To register your interest please contact: matt.cornock@york.ac.uk.

NEWS

Employability Tutorial users have 'stronger' graduate destinations

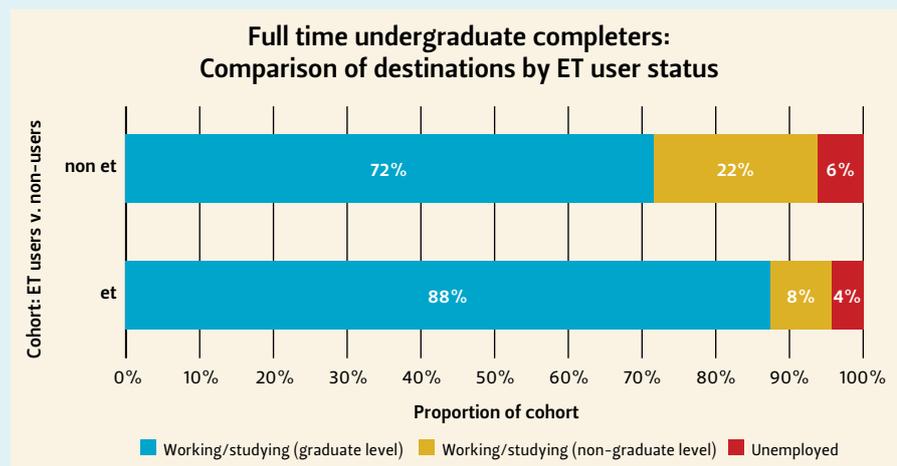


Figure 1: Comparison of graduate destinations between Employability Tutorial (ET) users and non-users

Students who use the Employability Tutorial (ET) are more likely to gain graduate-level work/study and less likely to be unemployed than non-users, based on data gathered for the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey, for full-time undergraduates, six months after completion (2012/3).

We found a higher proportion of ET users were in graduate-level work/study than non-users (88 % versus 72%). Also, fewer were in non-graduate-level work/study (8% versus 22%). The proportion in unemployment was lower, although the numbers involved were too small to be significant. All differences in percentages reported here are significant ($p < .01$).

Together with previous findings, the picture of the ET's impact is positive. We have seen that non-users of Careers who use the ET are more likely to then access events, appointments and queries than those who do not, which suggests that it is not just reaching 'the converted'. Furthermore, where departments achieve high levels ($\geq 80\%$) of ET access among first year undergraduates, those students are twice as likely to access it in year two.

In 2014, the ET won a Blackboard Catalyst Award for Student Impact. The ET is available to all students/staff through the Yorkshire VLE, and can be tailored to departmental needs.

Postgraduate Research Integrity Tutorial

The University is in the process of developing the Postgraduate Research Integrity Tutorial. This tutorial will replace the Academic Integrity Tutorial as the compulsory progression requirement for all postgraduate research students starting from 2015/16. The tutorial has been developed by the ASO with support from the Research Strategy and Policy Office, Researcher Development Team, Departmental Ethics Committees, Research Support Team and E-Learning Development Team and will be subject to approval by the York Graduate Research School Board.

The tutorial is tailored to the specific needs of postgraduate research students and has been designed to familiarise them with the University's policies and procedures in relation to research integrity and ethics. It is hoped that completion of the tutorial will help to cultivate the highest standards of rigour and integrity in the University's postgraduate research community.

Further information concerning final procedures related to the implementation of the tutorial will be distributed to all departments in July 2015. In addition, during 2015/16 academic year there will be a number of orientation sessions organised for staff relating to the tutorial.

For further information on the tutorial, please contact integrity@york.ac.uk.

For further information on Research integrity and ethics go to: <https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/research-integrity-and-ethics/>.

Funding opportunities 2014/15

Rapid Response Funding is available this academic year, in the form of grants of up to £3,000 in support of small-scale short-term projects, initiatives or purchases to enhance the quality of learning and teaching by addressing a clearly-identified need or issue. Funding is limited, and grants will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Departments in a stronger financial position may be asked to fund initiatives from their own resources. Although there is no limit to the number of submissions a particular department may make, consideration will be given to the equitable distribution of funds within the University. Proposals should promote cross departmental sharing where relevant. All members of staff involved in delivering or supporting learning and teaching are eligible to apply. There is a short application form which can be submitted electronically at any time, and decisions will be made within two weeks. For further information, see www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/funding-and-resources/funding.



One size does not fit all: how to ensure all students reach their potential

*The University of York Learning
and Teaching Conference 2015*

The University of York Learning and Teaching Conference will take place on Wednesday 10 June 2015 in the Exhibition Centre on the Heslington West Campus. This is the University's annual event to celebrate, showcase and disseminate the wealth of good practice in teaching and learning across the University. This year, the main conference theme is based around addressing inclusivity, diversity and equality within the classroom and curricula.

The programme will begin with an introduction by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Students, Dr Jane Grenville. Conference themes will then be addressed in detail within five parallel workshop sessions. During lunch there will be a poster session

for colleagues and students to share their own educational innovations in any field, as well as plenty of opportunities for discussion and debate about the issues raised. Following lunch the keynote speech will be given by Christine Hockings. This will be followed by further parallel workshops. The conference will conclude with a structured group discussion over drinks on conference themes.

Keynote theme

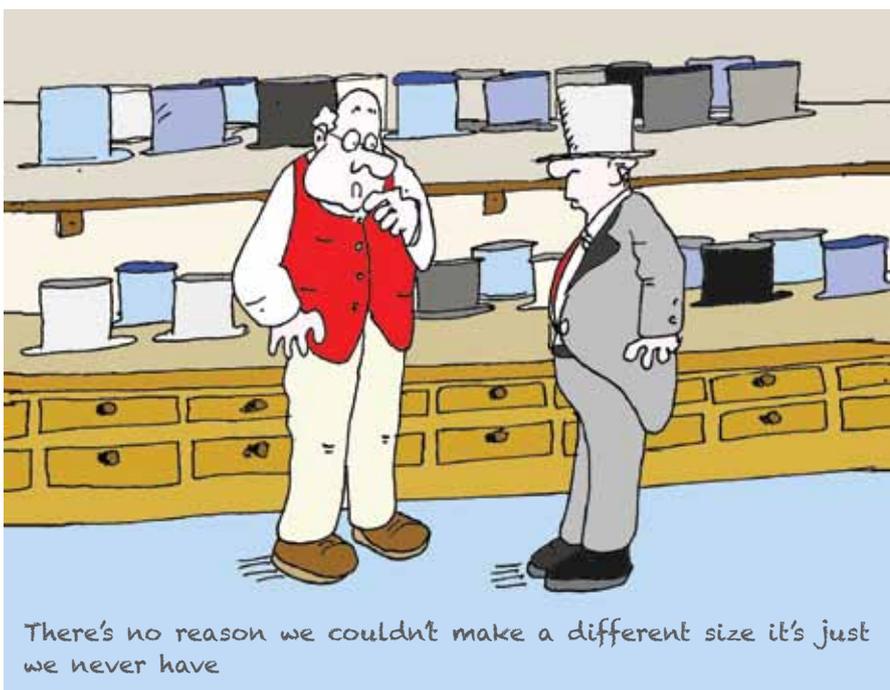
Christine Hockings, Professor of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education at the University of Wolverhampton, will deliver the keynote speech. Christine has conducted a significant amount of research into the pedagogy of widening

participation and student diversity. She recently completed a project to develop Open Educational Resources for the Higher Education sector designed for the enhancement of inclusive learning environments that has been accessed widely both nationally and overseas. Her main area of teaching includes the innovative Teacher as Academic module on the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice at the University of Wolverhampton. Christine will draw on her experiences and will share these resources, describing how they have been used.

The need to ensure inclusivity and equality within the classroom and curricula is articulated in key objective 2 of the new University Strategy. Students come to the University of York with different expectations, different learning styles, different needs, and different ambitions. It is essential to enable these students to benefit from our research-led teaching, our outstanding student support, and the opportunities for personal and academic fulfilment. Our programmes must allow students to develop to their full potential, academically, professionally, and personally. This can be achieved through careful management, design and delivery of learning, teaching and assessment.

Inclusivity

Higher education continues to evolve to meet domestic and international socio-economic drivers. Recently this has included widening participation of higher education for under-represented social groups through Access Agreements. The strengthening of regulation and legislation





in the form of the Quality Assurance Framework and the 2010 Equality Act are prompting universities to reflect on how equality and diversity are embedded in the curriculum and integrated within teaching, placing an explicit duty on institutions to be anticipatory regarding issues affecting inclusivity. The role of the supervisor will be considered within a workshop session in the context of responding to the needs of the students.

Recent changes to the Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) will impact students applying for DSA for the first time on or after the 1 September 2015. These changes look to rebalance responsibilities between government funding and institutional support, compelling universities to introduce changes which can further reduce reliance on DSAs. The effect of these changes and the ways in which teaching staff can better support disabled students will be discussed in a workshop led by the Manager of Disability Services.

The embedding of equality and inclusivity creates a higher education environment in which all students are equal, but in addition equips them with vital intercultural and diversity skills to enhance their employability in an interconnected globalised economy. The University actively recruits on an international level and it is therefore essential that programme design celebrates this cultural diversity. In attempting to ensure equality, it is however important to avoid inadvertently reinforcing traditional stereotypes regarding the manner in which a group may be expected to participate within traditional teaching activities. This topic will be considered within a workshop in conjunction with a discussion exploring the ways in which effective group work within a multi-cultural classroom can be achieved.

Programme design

The conference will also explore the implications of diversifying delivery of programmes and how students are engaged during their studies and supported in the process of achieving their potential. A key theme will be the way in which programme design can address the range

of student ability and levels of student engagement. The temptation to make assumptions about the ways in which students learn, and therefore to opt for a 'one size fits all' approach to programme design and delivery is strong. Often time pressures are perceived to preclude any departure from lecture-centred teaching practices that focus on information delivery rather than student-centred learning. Teaching practices that place the student at the focus of curriculum planning and programme delivery are more likely to result in effective support, deeper learning, greater inclusivity and higher levels of student participation. This individualised learning provision addresses the unique needs of the learner, rather than those of the teacher. A workshop will consider the ways in which a programme might be adapted to cater for variety in ability, exploring learner autonomy and collaborative learning.

Flexible learning

The ultimate extension of a student-centred learning strategy is to allow the student to choose how they will be assessed. It has been well established that the mode of assessment can have a powerful influence on the learning behaviour of students. Offering a variety of assessment methods is often recommended as good practice in comparison to the over-reliance on traditional examinations. Assessment methods could be designed to more appropriately cater for differences in students' learning preferences and styles. A workshop will discuss how more choice regarding assessment fits with the University's assessment principles and will consider the different ways students could be given a greater choice related to assessment.

The growing popularity and increased use of distance learning, flexible learning, computer-based learning and multimedia resources has driven the development of a wide range of individualised learning techniques. Adoption of similar practices within traditional university teaching, such as the provision of e-learning materials to supplement a module,

better management of collaborative work, increased flexibility and variety in teaching and assessment, allow a more personalised approach to learning, such that all students can engage with an equal chance of success. A workshop will consider the potential benefits which can be gained from the use of video recordings of lectures to facilitate a personalised learning approach. It will also consider how online learning and teaching need to adapt to the demands of the format. A further workshop will consider the value of personalised video feedback and will question the balance between formative and summative assessment, exploring the challenges imposed by the current assessment regime.

Different learning preferences should be reflected in the design and delivery of the curricula, and inclusive practice should be embedded within all programmes. The University aims to strengthen its commitment to ensuring equality for all students. This year's Learning and Teaching Conference provides an opportunity to reflect on how best to achieve these objectives, providing an opportunity for sharing best practice across disciplines.

This magazine edition explores the themes of the conference with contributions from colleagues delivering sessions at the conference. The full programme and how to register can be found on the website: <http://bit.ly/1tYHdWJ>.



NEWS

For the attention of supervisors – opportunities for PhD students

Do your PhD students have opportunities to teach in your department? Are your PhD students missing out on opportunities to develop skills beyond their PhD studies? Every year, the Learning Enhancement team offers a range of paid opportunities for postgraduates to engage in academic skills teaching outside their department. These opportunities include:

- **Realising Opportunities:** working one-to-one with A-Level students supporting them in writing an Academic Assignment. (Applications open 13 April)
- **Next Step York:** working one-to-one with A-Level students supporting them in writing an Academic Assignment. (Applications open 13 April)
- **Turnitin:** presenting workshops on using Turnitin to develop students' academic writing. (Applications open 20 April)
- **Skills for Schools and Colleges:**

presenting interactive skills workshops to sixth-form and college students who visit the university. (Applications open 20 April)

- **Maths Skills Centre:** working one-to-one with students needing assistance with maths and statistics. (Applications open Sept/Oct)
- **Writing Centre:** providing one-to-one guidance to students using the Writing Centre 'drop-in' service. (Applications open: TBC)

Please encourage any interested PhD students to watch out for these opportunities being advertised. Students should regularly check the link on the Graduate Research School website: <http://www.york.ac.uk/research/graduate-school/pgwt/>; the RDT website http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/researcher-evelopment/pgwt/pgwt_adverts.htm#tab-2; and the GSA Weekly Update emails.

If you would like more information, please contact tamlyn.ryan@york.ac.uk.

Considering placements?

Placement and work-based learning achieves results for students both in terms of positive career outcomes but also by improving academic performance¹. Students who have been on a placement are less likely to be unemployed and more likely to be earning more six months after graduation; 8% more in 2012². To an increasingly cost conscious audience of prospective students (and their parents) these may look like strong reasons to opt for courses at institutions where placement learning is at least an option. York currently offers a range of placement style activities ranging from the classic 'sandwich year' through to much shorter work related programmes such as the three week volunteering projects available through the @Work programme in the Departments of Education, English, History of Art and Politics.

All work-based learning comes with a range of practical and pedagogical issues that are constantly emerging and changing. Fortunately for anyone considering the potential of work-based learning as an addition to their Department's offer there are a number of sources of assistance available. Firstly, through the Academic Support Office that has also recently completed a new institutional Placement Learning Policy that captures good practice in the field. Secondly, there is a Departmental Placement Co-ordinators' Group which meets twice a year to discuss issues that impact on the area across the institution. In the past the Group has addressed common approaches to supporting disability and insurance for students working abroad as well as providing a focus for interactions with bodies such as the QAA. If you are interested in joining or sitting in on the group please contact andrew.ferguson@york.ac.uk.

1. Driffell N., Foster C. and Higson H. (2011) Aston University: 'Placements and degree performance: do placements lead to better marks or do better students choose placements?'
2. Following up the Wilson Review of business and university collaboration', BIS 2012

Distance Learning (DL) Forum

For a couple of years the Distance Learning Forum has held CPD workshops on campus to enable those of us who teach on, manage and/or design distance learning programmes to learn from each other's experiences (successful or otherwise). The events have been well attended so we'll be holding another this year:

Distance Learning at York – 'What are the problems you are trying to solve and how have you addressed them?' Tuesday June 23 2015, 12.00 – 16.30 (including lunch), ARC Auditorium

DL practitioners from within the University will present short case-studies and there will be time for questions and discussion.

We will be using Blackboard Collaborate for this event, so you can attend online if you wish.

Please email Alison.Mackay@york.ac.uk if you'd like a place (please also indicate any dietary requirements).

The University of York Professional and Academic Development Scheme

Maeve Pearson and Duncan Jackson describe a new opportunity for staff engaged in teaching and student learning

The York Professional and Academic Development (YPAD) scheme is a new opportunity for all staff members who teach or otherwise support student learning to engage in structured personal professional development. The scheme is on course to be launched in October 2015.

YPAD has a dual purpose. It aims both to give individuals a means by which to have their experience and expertise recognised against a national framework for teaching and the support of student learning in higher education, whilst also providing an opportunity to work in interdisciplinary groups to explore particular questions in learning and teaching practice. The approach draws inspiration from the University's *Peer Support for Teaching* policy and is underpinned by a belief that open collegiality and genuine investigative and intellectual exploration of issues are important and effective ways to develop and improve practice.

YPAD is designed to complement and extend the opportunities that already exist through the University's formal credit-bearing programmes such as the *Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice* (PGCAP) and *Preparing Future Academics* (PFA). It is also designed to allow other development, for example, attendance of Learning and Teaching Forum workshops, E-learning Development Team workshops or through on-the-job experiential learning, to be used as evidence towards achieving personal recognition for teaching and learning support.

Action learning

Individuals who choose to engage with YPAD will work in Action Learning Sets (Revans 1982), facilitated by an experienced academic, to critically engage with particular questions that have arisen

in their teaching. These questions can focus on challenges and problems, or be based in "appreciative enquiry" into the strengths and virtues of current teaching practice in order to "share such knowledge and stimulate learning [...] leading to the potential of designing new action possibilities elsewhere". (Gold, 2014) Each learning set will meet three times and will provide support and critique, the intention being that through a process of peer-



This may not be the way you want to learn but it is the way I want to teach

questioning and enquiry, individuals will be able to better understand the challenges they are facing and how to develop practice to meet those challenges.

The YPAD scheme is aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework and we are looking to have secured Higher Education Academy (HEA) Accreditation by the summer of 2015. Depending upon role

and the range and scope of teaching / learning support activity, this will mean that individuals can apply for recognition as Associate Fellow, Fellow, Senior Fellow or Principal Fellow of the HEA. Applications for recognition will take the form of a composite assessment, comprising reflections on practice, a report on the development undertaken through the action learning-set process and identification of future development priorities.

Although the first run-through of YPAD will operate on a pilot basis, it is intended that the scheme once fully implemented will be available to all staff at York who teach and/or have a definable role in supporting student learning. This will include postgraduates who teach.

In addition to YPAD, we will also be launching a course for Programme Leaders in the Autumn term 2015/16. The programme will be underpinned by the principles of the York Pedagogy (Robinson 2013) as outlined in the latest University



Strategy (2014), and which will be further developed in the forthcoming Learning and Teaching Strategy in 2015. It will cover a range of topics: from learning and teaching approaches for which there is evidence of learning gain, curriculum design and organisation at programme level, to developing leadership and management skills.

Details of the first YPAD Information Workshop will be announced in due course, and all staff are welcome to attend to find out more about the scheme. The first deadline for applicants to the scheme will be Friday 11 September 2015. Please contact academic-practice@york.ac.uk for further information.

References

- Gold, J (2014) "Revans reversed: focusing on the positive for a change", *Action Learning: Research and Practice*. Volume 11, Issue 3. pp. 264-277.
- Revans, D.W. (1982) *The Origins and Growth of Action Learning*. Bromley: Chadwell-Bratt.
- Robinson, J (2013) "York Pedagogy" *Forum* Issue 33. Autumn 2013. pp. 6-7.

Duncan Jackson is an archaeologist by background. After breaking briefly from academia to teach in the secondary sector, he returned to join the University of Sheffield as an Educational Development Adviser and became Programme Director for the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching. Duncan joined the University of York as Programme Director for PGCAP and Senior Academic Staff Developer for Learning and Teaching in 2009. duncan.jackson@york.ac.uk

Maeve Pearson joined the University of York as an Academic Practice Adviser in July 2014. Her background is in English Literature. She began teaching in HE as a contract tutor in 1998, and has taught widely across programmes in English Literature, American Studies, Media and Cultural Studies, and Film. maeve.pearson@york.ac.uk

NEWS

A distinctive York Pedagogy: implementing

A new University Strategy was launched last year to define our direction through to 2020. Key objective 2 outlines a commitment to offering outstanding teaching and learning and to implementing a distinctive pedagogy, informed by research evidence on the best approaches to promote effective learning.

The following paragraphs provide further detail on the framework of principles and expectations which underpins this new pedagogy.

Programme design

Programme design and student work are at the heart of the approach, meaning that we must focus clearly and consistently on students' experience of their programme as a whole, rather than as a collection of modules. The York pedagogy will not change the rules of the University's modular scheme, but it does require some reflection and fresh thinking about our programmes.

Under the York pedagogy, every programme will have clear and distinctive objectives with carefully designed student work to ensure progress towards these objectives. 'Student work' includes scheduled contact events and independent study, with the latter making up the majority of the time in many subjects.

Currently, programme specifications typically include 20-30 learning outcomes. Departments will be asked to identify a small subset of these which really capture the distinctive features of the programme. In turn, these will help to articulate how the programme's main concepts or professional competences are introduced, practiced, applied to other situations and assessed.

This way of working aims to:

- improve communication to students and applicants of programme learning

Defining a York Pedagogy (as outlined in the Strategy 2015-2020 document)

We will articulate a University of York pedagogy and apply it to all our programmes.

- We will apply the best evidence on effective teaching and learning to define our institution's learning culture and set expectations for our programmes.
- We will put programme design and student work at the heart of our pedagogy.
- Every programme will have distinctive and clear objectives, and each stage of study will be designed to offer progress towards those programme objectives.
- Carefully-designed student work will enable students to make progress.
- Students will understand the work they are expected to do and how that work will contribute to the achievement of the programme objectives.
- Interactions between students and staff will be designed to encourage, inform and propel students' work. Students will receive the guidance, support and feedback they need to make progress, and they will understand what they can expect from the University in support of their learning.
- The design of programmes and student work will support the students' development as autonomous learners.
- All new programmes will be designed in accordance with our pedagogy. By 2017-18, all programmes in the University will comply with the principles of the University pedagogy.

outcomes and of the 'route' through the programme: the progression of concepts and competences within and across modules, the role of formative and summative work, and the expected pattern of student work

- improve student perceptions of the coherence and organisation of their programme, and how the design of content and assessment helps them to achieve these outcomes progressively and in the most effective way
- help students to build their capability to apply concepts and competences to different situations, including in preparation for future employment
- improve students' learning by enabling them to plan their work more effectively in relation to the defining features

- help to improve the design and availability of resources to support students' work in relation to key concepts and skills.

Assessment and feedback

Assessment and feedback are key drivers of student work, and contribute prominently to student engagement and satisfaction. It is important that they are designed at programme level:

- to maximise their contribution to programme coherence
- to assess key concepts and programme learning outcomes at the most appropriate points to reinforce and capture genuine learning
- to provide timely and useful formative work in an efficient way

One size does not fit all staff either

Rosie Hare introduces the new E-Learning Development Team website

The theme of the upcoming Learning and Teaching Conference in June really resonates with us in the E-Learning Development Team. When it comes to providing support to staff there is no 'one size fits all' approach to how we encourage the use of the VLE and the other learning technologies available at York. The support we provide depends very much on the context of the department and the learning objectives of your modules, from facilitating online discussion activities with your students to implementing online assignment submission.

The work of our team and the wider Academic Support Office empowers staff to develop their practice, and in turn, has an impact on how students experience their course and their university experience.

Two new online spaces

We've been hard at work over the last couple of months to revamp our website, which you can find at <https://elearningyork.wordpress.com/>. We've updated our old blog, and will continue to post about our work and activities, but have also added more permanent web pages containing information on our research and the key areas of our work such as lecture capture, e-assignment and mobile learning.

We've also moved the pedagogic guidance materials that were held in the 'Yorkshire HQ' site (<https://vlesupport.york.ac.uk>) and have incorporated them into our website, along with enhanced support materials for essential workflows such as online assignment submission and using Replay lecture capture software. Yorkshire HQ will soon cease to exist, so if you have links to it on your department intranet you can replace them with a link to our website.

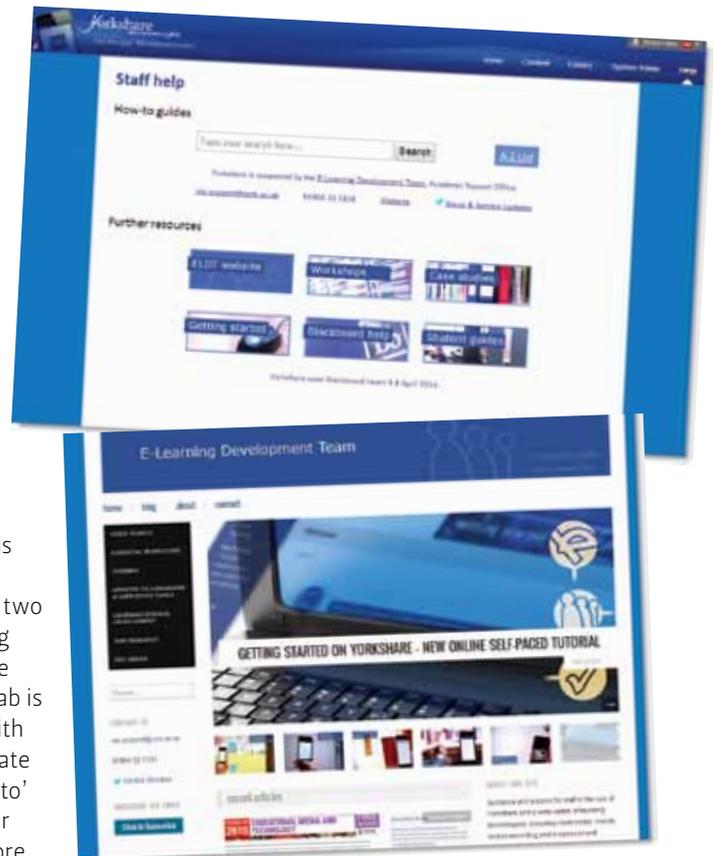
You may have also noticed that we've updated the staff 'Help' tab inside the VLE, where you can search for guides on how to use the various VLE tools and browse through an A-Z list of our Yorkshire guides. The 'Further resources'

section links out to our website and the Blackboard Help for Instructors guides.

The rationale behind the changes we've made is to streamline our support resources and guides into two distinct spaces. Everything contained within the guide search on the VLE 'Help' tab is for when you get stuck with the VLE and want immediate help with practical, 'how-to' button clicking guides. Our external website takes more of a holistic and strategic view of using learning technology in your course. It draws together the collective professional experience of the team and how we can help realise your ideas by providing technical knowledge and expertise to pedagogic practices. We appreciate that different members of staff need different kinds of help and in separating out our online support resources we are hoping that it will be easier to find what you're looking for. What fits for one person or department might not be suitable for another.

Get in touch

Both of these online spaces are still evolving and we will continue to update and improve them, so your suggestions and feedback are welcomed. All our website pages have comments functionality, where we would encourage you to share your thoughts and examples of your own practice. Our online materials have by no means been designed to replace the 'in person' support we provide, however. We do some of our best work with the departments we have built relationships with over the years and we relish the opportunity to provide more bespoke support to fit departmental contexts. We can arrange face-to-face sessions for individuals or groups if you want to know about specific tools or workflows, and we can also arrange more informal



meetings if you're still fine-tuning your ideas and would like our input on the 'techy stuff'. I am fairly new to the E-Learning Development Team, having joined in October 2014, and as well as being at the end of the phone and the vle-support email service, it is my job to point staff in the direction of our E-Learning Advisers or to our online support materials so that they can find the best fit for what they need.

We hope you enjoy exploring our website and, as always, you can contact us at vle-support@york.ac.uk.

Rosie Hare is an E-Learning Training and Support Assistant in the E-Learning Development Team.



She is a qualified librarian who has worked in libraries across a number of different sectors in Middlesbrough, London and York and made the transition into working in E-Learning in 2013. Rosie provides end user support to staff and students with VLE related queries and contributes to strategic projects in the ELDT. She has a particular interest in Digital Literacies and the relationships between education, equality and social justice.
rosie.hare@york.ac.uk

Student mental wellbeing: Developing policy, practice and considering future directions in HE

Jenny L Lawrence, on behalf of the UUK working group for the promotion of mental wellbeing in HE¹, explores student mental wellbeing guidance

Universities across the four nations are duty bound (by the Equality and Diversity Act 2010, and the QAA) to ensure inclusive environments, this includes removing barriers to learning. It is time for institutions to think smarter about access and inclusivity. There is a moral imperative, but also a motivating business case. This issue of the University of York *Forum* magazine is especially prescient given the proposed changes to Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) for students with specific disabilities and pushing out of responsibility for disabled students' access to learning to institutions. Although institutions will receive funds in replacement of DSA (though much reduced when compared to the millions currently spent on disabled student support and only available to spend on specific activities) they will be unable to replicate the current system of support in place today. Judges have agreed the pushing out of responsibilities to institutions can be challenged at the high court, but the change is imminent. BIS are listening to the sector and have recently (March 2015) announced they will continue to consult before finalising their plans stating that deferring planned changes from 2015 to 2016 'will help give institutions the time to review the services they offer to disabled students and make appropriate improvements to meet their needs', but their goal is for key modifications to be phased in from 2016-17.

The key questions for all institutions are: how can they best break down the barriers to learning for their disabled students? How can they support these students in realising their potential?

Embedding equality and diversity competence in everyday institutional activity offers a cost saving, efficient solution for HEIs, this can range from enhancing learning, teaching and assessment practice using accessible pedagogies to refining the management of administrative systems, and revising training for all (academic, support, administrative and auxiliary) staff. This approach has the added value of benefiting all students (not just those with disabilities) and all staff; in my experience, diversity competent members of staff who are aware of their role and responsibility with regard to disability, experience less stress, anxiety and expansion of workload when working with disabled students than less well-trained individuals. In this short piece I look at how refinements to current systems can successfully create an inclusive environment with specific focus on mental well-being and mental health difficulties.

Mental well-being, for example

Mental wellbeing is of great importance to every student's academic outcome and experience of university life. There are indications that the numbers of students suffering from mental health problems are increasing. Therefore there has never been a better time to explore best practice when considering policies and procedures for student mental health and wellbeing.

The Mental Wellbeing in HE working group has produced for UUK 'Good practice guidance for student mental wellbeing in higher education'², originally published in 2000, now rewritten to take into consideration changes in law, policy and practice within today's institutions and across the four nations. The guidelines are written by senior student support and academic staff with many years of experience dealing with students' mental health and how mental ill health can impact their ability to study and function within a closely managed and rigidly structured environment such as a university. The

guidelines offer a supportive road map for action based on best practice and legal requirements, taking a student centred approach throughout. This is a delicate balance that takes time, patience and advanced expertise. The working group has these qualities and has done this founding work for institutions to build on.

The guidelines will equip readers to review and refine current strategy or consider building new or reviewing current systems to support students in their institution with mental health difficulties. The overall aim of the guidance is to enhance the equality and diversity competencies of university systems, services and communities.

The guide includes chapters on: International and national policy; developments within HE since 2010; policy development; legal implications; support and guidance structures; raising awareness and training and an accessible mental health framework to guide and support the building of institutional practices.

The guidelines are of interest to anyone with strategic responsibility for student wellbeing and support, or working on developing policy and practice in support of students with mental health difficulties.

1. www.mwbhe.com
2. www.mwbhe.com/news



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Inclusive postgraduate teaching

In order to enhance the learning experiences of our undergraduate students, the Department of Chemistry provides many opportunities for our postgraduate students to contribute towards teaching. Such teaching predominantly occurs in our state-of-the-art undergraduate laboratories. Teaching enables our postgraduate students to maximise their potential to become world-class researchers by developing some of the attributes that constitute the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF)¹. Such skills development may include communicating science more effectively, working well in a team and managing their time efficiently.

With the aim to facilitate excellent postgraduate teaching in the Department of Chemistry, we provide a bespoke internal training course for our postgraduate students as part of our innovative Doctoral Training in Chemistry (iDTC) programme². The postgraduate teacher training course is led by Glenn Hurst and Rob Smith. As well as providing our trainees with the necessary pedagogical theory to understand and cater for a diverse range of students with multiple learning styles, the course is specifically designed to meet the demands of students studying chemistry and related subjects. This course is split into five stages.

Stage 1: Introduction

The learning outcomes of our training programme are clearly stated together with a summary of the course and a description of how we will assess the trainees. A vitally important part of our training is enabling our postgraduate students to become reflective teachers. To this end, we ask our trainees to create a personal teaching portfolio, where they reflect on the teaching, assessment and feedback that they provide during their training. This allows them to identify and develop skills that are directly aligned with the RDF.

As most of the teaching our postgraduates will undertake occurs in the practical laboratory, it is necessary that our trainees are familiar with all safety procedures and the layout of the laboratory. Trainees are provided with a tour of the teaching space and they complete a quiz based on the safety



information disseminated to them. Finally, trainees are invited to attend a meeting held by the organiser of the course they will be teaching on, where learning objectives, expectations of postgraduate teachers and assessment are discussed.

All trainees are assigned a personal mentor who is a trained postgraduate student that teaches in the Department of Chemistry. Trainees will initially shadow their mentor in order to observe and record good teaching practice. The trainee should focus on how to give experimental briefings to our undergraduate students, how to provide effective feedback, lab management and both in-lab and out-of-lab assessment.

As part of our customised training, stages 2 and 3 comprise of trainees attending two workshops devoted to “Communication Skills” and “Assessment and Feedback”. A large emphasis is placed on actively training

our postgraduate students how to act in common learning scenarios.

Stage 2: Communication

Trainees are divided into small groups (three or four) in order to foster active participation and are subsequently asked as a group to consider various key questions with regard to communication in teaching. Groups subsequently draw their “ideal postgraduate teacher”, identifying positive characteristics. As well as this being an activity to demonstrate working as part of a team to consider the subject based on previous experiences, it is useful to the facilitator of the session to determine the base understanding of a group of trainees and adjust the session accordingly. The pedagogical reasoning that forms the basis of the relevant teaching activities the trainees will undertake is clearly articulated.

in the Department of Chemistry



“Made me more enthusiastic towards teaching and highlighted some skills development I would never have considered.”

explaining to the trainees how active teaching can help reduce the difference between surface and deep learning. We feel that in doing this, the trainees can more easily understand why we want to teach our undergraduates in a particular way and subsequently aspire to teach in a way that facilitates high quality learning.

The importance of Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-Focused and Time-Bound (SMART) learning objectives is highlighted. They are subsequently linked with assessment criteria. It is then explained to the trainees how we aim to achieve constructive alignment throughout our teaching in the Department of Chemistry in order to facilitate deep learning. The trainees are recommended to make the learning objectives clear to our undergraduate students during teaching sessions. This includes defining how they will be achieved and, finally, how they will be assessed. Using the Kolb learning cycle, trainees are asked to decide what type of learner they are. This outlines to our trainees that our undergraduate students all possess different learning styles and that the teaching they provide must be inclusive.

Individual groups of trainees engage in microteaching whereby they construct and deliver a scientific briefing to another group (as they would be expected to do with our undergraduate students in our teaching laboratory). Groups then receive feedback from one another. By specifically performing a briefing in the workshop, we hope that our trainees will be better equipped to communicate with our undergraduate students than if a passive learning activity had been utilised. Finally, protected characteristics are discussed and the

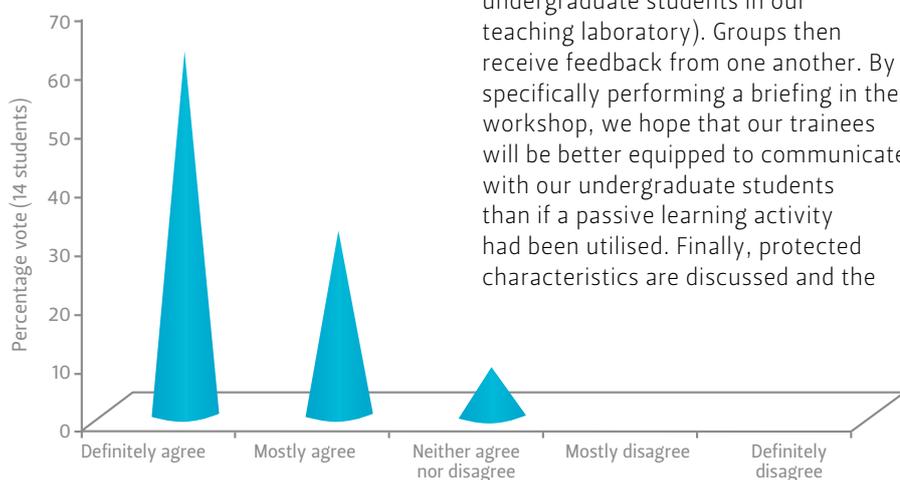
trainees are each provided with a common teaching scenario where they are asked to discuss how they should behave in order to create a diverse and inclusive learning environment.

Stage 3: Assessment and feedback

By engaging in activities to facilitate active learning, we hope that our trainees can appreciate why consistent and fair assessment that is aligned with our learning objectives is crucial throughout our teaching in the Department of Chemistry. We discuss with our trainees how we assess undergraduate students, linking this practice to the pedagogical literature. Trainees then consider the expectations of our undergraduate students regarding assessment and to what extent this contributes to postgraduate teaching.

In order to highlight the necessity of consistent assessment, trainees are initially asked to provide a grade for a chemical mechanism containing a mistake without being given any marking criteria. Trainees move around the teaching space to stand in a location that coincides with the grade they would like to provide. As expected, a large range of grades is generated depending upon the interpretation of the chemical mechanism. As a related point, by asking our trainees to move around the teaching space with specific tasks to complete, it is hoped to contribute towards the development of an active classroom, whilst specifically catering for an “activist” learning style. The trainees are subsequently provided with a “real” undergraduate lab manuscript together with marking criteria and asked to assess the report individually without discussing this with their colleagues. The assessment grades are collated. The concept of table marking is subsequently introduced where following a group discussion of the manuscript and the marking criteria, the trainees agree a mark based on this. Finally, students are provided with a new manuscript and asked to assign an individual mark based on previous discussions. All students found the table marking exercise very useful.

We believe this contributed to the high level of engagement observed from our trainees. Bloom's taxonomy is introduced (a good discussion is provided by Biggs and Tang³), whilst



The marking and table-marking exercises (including giving feedback) in the assessment and feedback workshop were useful to help you prepare you for marking undergraduate work.

Our trainees are taught how to give constructive feedback that allows our undergraduate students to learn from their comments, feeding forward to future assignments. The importance of providing students with positive feedback is specifically highlighted. Trainees provide written feedback on the manuscript they previously assessed. This is disseminated to the class and discussed. By physically giving written feedback within the workshop, the trainees are able to see how the fundamental principles of providing excellent feedback can be specifically applied to the teaching they will encounter. Finally, students are taught how to give oral feedback in their teaching sessions. Trainees observe a role play between Glenn and Rob simulating an in-lab student-postgraduate teacher assessment and feedback experience. This is recorded as a video and made available on the Yorkshire Virtual Learning Environment for further analysis.

Stage 4: In-lab teaching

Following the workshops, trainees go into our teaching laboratory with their mentor and put what they have learned into practice. Trainees are required to give one briefing, teach undergraduate students in the laboratory, assess student manuscripts and deliver a feedback session. The manuscripts the students assess are table-marked and double-marked with their mentor to maintain a high level of consistency of assessment. Throughout this process, their mentor will provide oral and written feedback, allowing our trainees to improve. During this time, our trainees complete their personal teaching portfolio, prompting them to reflect and develop the teaching they provide to our undergraduate students.

Stage 5: Reflection

The personal teaching portfolio is utilised to identify the skills the trainees have developed throughout the training course and align these with the RDF. Trainees work in pairs to identify and discuss a recent activity they performed and the associated skills they developed. This is conducted in order to enhance their interview skills by drawing upon relevant experiences. Trainees are informed how to construct a Situation, Task, Activity and Result (STAR) answer to an interview question and subsequently repeat the aforementioned activity in pairs, detailing



“Very enjoyable and interesting. Surprised at how much I enjoyed it all.”

an occasion where they struggled and how they managed the situation.

Pending satisfactory session attendance, mentor feedback and completion of their personal teaching portfolio, trainees will have passed the training course. They can then engage with teaching our undergraduates in the Department of Chemistry. If a trainee is found to have particular difficulties with teaching our undergraduates, further training is provided by Glenn and Rob (this may be in the form of further in-lab experience with their mentor for instance) until both the trainee and staff are satisfied with their teaching practice. Our postgraduate students are able to contribute towards undergraduate teaching in other ways besides teaching practical skills such as assisting in workshops and aiding towards the development of current/novel teaching experiments. This training course (or aspects of it) could serve as a model to train postgraduate students how to teach undergraduate cohorts in other departments or institutions.

Future work will comprise of enhancing the quality of training provided to our mentors, to ensure the mentoring and the feedback they provide is to a consistently high standard. This will hopefully further improve the quality of our postgraduate teaching training course, enhancing the learning

experience that they facilitate for our undergraduate students.

We would like to thank Sue Couling, whose earlier work in training postgraduates who teach in the Department of Chemistry served as the foundation for the programme reported here.

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Enhancement of lectures with video recordings. physics pilot project



Martin Smalley and Matt Cornock discuss a pilot project creating lecture recordings to support student learning

The limitation of lectures

One of the main ways in which we teach our students is through lectures. This seems a classic 'one size fits all' approach with maybe over a hundred students, sitting together in a lecture theatre attempting to interpret and distil the lecture content into their own notes. However, students are taking away quite different, individual experiences from the same lecture, due to personal learning approaches, impairments to note-taking (including undisclosed disabilities) and language barriers, requiring additional time to interpret subject context and new terminology. Without jeopardising the value of lectures as a way to creatively deliver course content and inspire student interest, how do we cater for different students' learning needs to ensure that all reach their potential?

Enhancement with recordings

One straightforward answer is that we record the lectures. Lecture recordings offer all students the opportunity to supplement their lecture notes, recap misheard or misunderstood concepts, improve their revision practices, and act as supplementary resources for disabled students and students with English as a second language¹. Not forgetting that students may miss a lecture through illness, family commitments, competing academic work or even a night at the pub (!) and wish to catch up before the course moves on.

A simple audio recording in conjunction with slides may be sufficient for certain types of lecture, but particularly in physics and mathematics, which still largely employ the 'chalk-

and-talk' approach, this may not be fit for purpose. The use of chalkboards within these subjects is necessary, for example when delivering a long derivation with many equations, to ensure that the students have time to follow the structured thought processes underpinning the content and are able to take meaningful notes². If recordings aim to be of use to these students, they should capture what makes a lecture unique.

Physics video pilot project

Bringing this together, the Department of Physics has been involved in a pilot project to create video-based recordings of lectures, supporting the delivery of one of the central modules, Electromagnetism & Optics. Unlike the automated capture of audio with slides through the *Replay* service, the pilot recordings were created using a video camera operated by students to follow the chalkboard content and lecturers' explanations.

Initial findings

For our preliminary report, 70 of 154 students from the module responded to a survey on their use of recordings.

Our initial findings suggest that recordings support individual students' chosen approaches to study and revision, with 100% saying that the recordings assisted their learning and understanding in the module. The motivations for using recordings fell into three broad categories:

- to gain a deeper understanding of the course content (including preparation for problem classes) (n=43)
- to compensate for absence (n=29)
- to support study practices (eg controlling the pace of the lecture,

note-taking) (n=26).

These reasons emerged from term-time use and do not reflect the anticipated benefit during revision. With this module, the fast pace (three lectures each week) requires students to keep up with the content, and this may have been a driving factor in their use.

Additional results show that students value video recordings over lecturer-provided notes or audio-only recordings, which reiterates the contribution of visual explanations to students' understanding of mathematical concepts.

Recordings for all?

This pilot has highlighted how recordings have been used to support students' understanding of the module content, overcome barriers to note-taking and contributed to further study for problem classes. Yet without the infrastructure and recognition of the value of video-based recordings to student learning, such a resource-intensive pilot may be difficult to replicate at a greater scale.

This project received Rapid Response Funding and is supported by the *Replay* service team (ELDT and AV Centre).

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Hearing silent voices:

Diversity in seminars and group work

Victoria Jack, explores why students might be reluctant to contribute to groups and how we might address this

Teaching staff often report frustration at student reticence to participate in seminars/group work or that these interactions are frequently dominated by a small number of students. The aims of this article are: (i) to present an insight into the reticent student experience with reference to findings from current research projects associated with International and Intercultural Communication (IIC) courses run by The Centre for English Language Teaching; and (ii) to present an approach to seminar/group work which could serve to address this issue.

Overseas students attending IIC courses express a strong desire to participate in seminars/group work but report a sometimes overwhelming frustration at their failure to do so. They consistently provide the following explanations for their reticence:

1. Fear of making grammatical or lexical errors
2. Affective factors regarding the “native speaker”
 - a. Fear of being judged as inferior intellectuals if their English is not “native speaker” in style
 - b. Inability to “fight against” the dominance of native speaker student argument
3. Lack of native speaker conversation strategies ie interrupting, expressing strong disagreement
4. Fear of a lack of understanding of subtle points made through use of idiomatic language or cultural references

The lack of confidence that these

students experience in seminar/group work is clearly a barrier, not only to their own learning, but also to the potential knowledge the more confident students could gain from hearing other ideas and experiences.

Insights into the reticent student experience

The fear of making mistakes (the first explanation for reticence) is a known phenomenon¹ and could be said to stem from an English language education which – because of the apparent need to assess and grade students through examination of fine points of grammar or vocabulary – generally focuses on accuracy to the detriment of fluency. The IELTS exam, which universities use to judge English language ability, is similarly accuracy-focussed and, therefore, those international students with a high enough IELTS score to enter the University have possibly been trained to focus on their mistakes. This seems to serve as a gag when these students attempt to participate in seminar/group work activities where fluency is valued over accuracy.

Affective factors regarding the native speaker (explanations 2–4 above) would seem to indicate that the confident ‘native speaker’ occupies a position of linguistic and cultural superiority in the minds of these students. The reasons for this are far beyond the limitations of this article; however, it may be worth considering whether that superiority is implicit in the nature of some seminar/whole class discussion activities:

- Is the way in which the more dominant students express

themselves or communicate with the facilitator somehow demonstrative of a tacit superiority belief?

- Does the facilitator, by responding to this dominance with extended interaction, somehow emphasise and confirm its existence?
- Or does the facilitator make it clear that everyone’s contribution, regardless of the style it is presented in or the cultural background it refers to, is valid, welcomed, celebrated or, at the very least, considered?

Finally, awareness of what some scholars^{2,3,4} in the field of intercultural communication have alluded to as “The Native Speaker Problem” may provide an understanding of the issues outlined in points 3 and 4. This refers to the argument that native speakers, even when participating in intercultural interactions continue to make cultural references and use idiomatic language and vocabulary or sentence structure which is complex or obscure.⁵





In addition to all the above points, the influence of the seminar/classroom environment itself may also be an element worthy of consideration. Littlewood⁶ focusses on the beliefs of international students about the authority of the teacher and the flow of knowledge, and suggests that the classroom environment itself may represent a barrier to the equal participation of students. It could be that if there is a classroom full of students with a “teacher” at the front, this is sufficient to discourage some students from contributing.

Addressing the issue

The evidence around the five points above could indicate that a holistic approach to teaching small groups is appropriate: it cannot just be a case of “fixing” the students who do not participate. Rather, it is perhaps necessary to consider all aspects of, and stakeholders in, this scenario.

Firstly, since this is the teacher’s (facilitator’s) domain, it could be

considered to be her/his job to address these issues and initiate changes in the classroom. The facilitator could develop strategies to create an environment of trust and a supportive learning community within the classroom. Perhaps spend some time at the beginning of the course to encourage the establishment and later maintenance of effective working relationships between students in group situations. The facilitator may also need to adopt techniques to encourage information sharing at pair or small group level before moving on to larger group discussions and to ensure all students have a level of competence as successful group participants. Perhaps Departments could develop a means of assessing these skills formatively, and incorporate them into student and teacher handbooks.

The students themselves can be encouraged to take responsibility for the success of group interaction, in addition to the management of their own contributions. They could perhaps be encouraged to participate in pre-seminar study groups to ensure that the subject knowledge and background has been built up and discussed prior to participation in the seminar situation. This would therefore ensure that the group discussion in the presence of the tutor could serve its purpose to further construct knowledge with an “expert” on hand to direct and enhance this process.

More dominant students may benefit from developing awareness of other students’ experiences in group work and be given an opportunity to reflect on their skill as communicators, sharers of knowledge and team members. This may serve to improve their performance, not only in student-to-student interactions, both social and academic, but also perhaps in future employment. The development of effective cross cultural communicative competence is highly valued by employers across industries and national boundaries.

The development of effective cross cultural communication skills also benefits the less confident students. The opportunity to share experiences or at least to reflect on the issues they face in international seminar and group work situations has proved extremely valuable for IIC students. They report that simply identifying and sharing issues served as a catalyst for change and encouraged them to consider how to address problems of

confidence which they had previously felt to be insurmountable. Through their IIC experience, they were able to develop communication strategies and improve generally as communicators both in and outside the classroom.

By recognising the issue of “the reticent student problem” as one that all stakeholders in the academic environment are complicit in, and responsible for, strategies emerge which could restore the seminar situation as one of the rare opportunities in the University setting allowing for a real opportunity for the shared construction of knowledge with diverse participant voices.

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For further information on this article, see the website <http://yorkforum.org>.

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entitled *Hearing Everyone’s
Voice: Techniques for Ensuring All
Students Participate in Seminars
and Group Work*. The workshop
aims to offer the opportunity to
experience an inclusive approach to
seminar work with a mix of home
and international students. This
approach develops an atmosphere
of trust and ensures more active
participation of all group members
regardless of their background.
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EFFECTIVE group work in the multi-cultural classroom

*Chris Copland
explores group
dynamics and how the international
classroom can be advantageous*

Working in groups is one of the most productive forms of active learning. It maximises opportunities for each class member to play a part. Skills can be shared and concepts examined from a variety of perspectives. Moreover, learning becomes a social activity and a base from which to develop broader life skills: collaboration, leadership, decision-making, trust building, conflict-management.

Given the cosmopolitan and diverse nature of the student community, this kind of interaction may involve working with learners of a different nationality, mother tongue or culture, not to mention gender, generation, social background or life experience. This does, of course, present challenges but also an opportunity to broaden outlook and to prepare for the 'global' society in which the current generation of students will live and work. Group work is thus a vital part of the HE curriculum but, ironically, as Mills and Alexander (2013) point out:

In many HEIs small group teaching is apportioned to the institution's least experienced teaching staff... This means

that some of the most intimate and complex of teaching practice... is the responsibility of those who are often least experienced and lowest paid.

What, then, are the complexities of small group teaching and how can the multicultural make-up of the average classroom be made an asset in this process rather than a liability?

Group dynamics

A shortcoming that is often identified in this area of teaching is that groups are self-selecting. A large-scale survey of UK students (Osmund & Roed, 2010)

concluded that "[they] preferred to choose their own groups and would often choose people with the same ethnic background because they felt comfortable and able to communicate well." The obvious response to this situation is for teachers to assert the right to decide who works with whom, thus ensuring a greater balance of skills, backgrounds and personalities among groups.

However, even in the most balanced groups, the more vocal, 'pushy' students may well try to dominate. Mills and Alexander (2013) suggest that this may not simply be an issue of individual personality. 'Power relations' that exist in



wider society, whether relating to gender, age and social status or language and national background, inevitably creep into the classroom.

Some educationalists, (eg Johnson & Johnson 1997) argue that, in fact, conflict in any new social structure is inevitable and this should be accepted as a normal part of class behaviour. Groups are thus allowed to move through the so-called stages of *forming*, *storming* and, once a kind of hierarchy has established itself, *norming*. If this may sound a little like an academic version of a reality TV show, there are alternative approaches, the simplest being to establish principles of collaboration and equity from the outset.

One excellent guide on establishing a cooperative ethos in the HE classroom is 'Finding Common Ground.' The author (Arkadis, 2010) advocates using class tasks 'that require students to communicate and engage with peers from diverse backgrounds... in order to consider or compare different perspectives on an issue or topic, and to then critically reflect on the group process.'

Making the most of diversity

Arkadis provides a number of examples of such activities but perhaps an application from closer to home might clarify the approach better. The topic chosen for a structured discussion in a CELT module this year was that of the voting age. Conversation focused initially on the British context: sixteen year olds participating in the Scottish referendum and the case for extending this precedent to the wider electorate. The international make-up of the groups, however, gave a scope to the discussion that would not have been possible in a class of 'home' students. Germans were able to outline the pros and cons of the system in their own country, where the voting age in local elections is lower than in federal and national polls. Brazilians related their populous country's experience of granting the vote to all citizens sixteen and above. Chinese class members, on the other hand, expressed misgivings about the 'umbrella' movement in Hong Kong where they felt that the young had been easy prey for manipulation by 'subversives.' I did not accept all the points made but, as a British voter, I found the whole conversation illuminating and one which provided a multi-faceted dimension that would have been unavailable through reflection upon the texts alone.

This task was, in fact, part of the module assessment and this underlines



the recommendation Arkadis makes: that if a commitment to group interaction is to be demonstrated, then it has to be credited in assessments. In the task on voting age, marks were awarded for both individual performance but also for how successfully the group as a whole collaborated. An incentive was thus provided for both individual performance and team work.

Using current events as a stimulus for interaction in a diverse group may be particularly appropriate in, say, Humanities or Social Sciences. However, in any discipline, the allotting of specific roles to individuals can help engender collaborative working. An example of this is the Reading Circle activity that is currently being used in CELT classes for Education students. This again focuses on the standard seminar task of preparing a reading text for discussion. However, in addition, each group member is given a specific role and responsibility: discussion leader, text summariser, connector, vocabulary expert or text analyst. This not only encourages active participation by all but also integrates reading, speaking and communication skills, all in the context of critical thinking.

These are a few ways of refreshing group work and turning the international composition that most classes now have to an advantage. At the Learning and Teaching conference, I will be showing video of different classes at the university with contrasting combinations of students, engaging in a variety of tasks. Hopefully, this will stimulate some productive discussion from colleagues about how the current crop of students can play an active role in the international classroom.

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Fitting language – but how many sizes?

Paul Roberts explains the use of International Academic English

Language is central to the academic endeavour: it is not an add-on. Learning to be an academic – and becoming one – is about people 'linguaging' themselves, using language to create for themselves an identity as a scholar or academic. And as scholarship, research and Higher Education become increasingly global, this process has become an 'English linguaging' one.

The problem, however, is that the 'English Language', as it is used in and among the 196 countries of the world, covers a huge range of 'linguaging' processes. Chinua Achebe, the Nigerian author, considered English to be the way in which all of Africa might be given a 'new voice' (Achebe 1975/1994: 433-4). A study of language use at a Berlin University found that German students' tend to connect their mastery of English with other factors, such as being "alternative Germans" or model Europeans (Erling 2008). In Thailand, English is perceived as an essential lingua franca which links Thailand culturally, intellectually and commercially with other ASEAN (Association of South Eastern Nations) countries (Baker 2012).

These linguaging processes naturally gives rise to different epithets such as 'Nigerian English', 'German English', 'Thai English', and, relevant here, 'International Academic English'. But how can International Academic English be characterised? For those who wish to use English in order to assume an international academic identity, what is and is not acceptable?

One-size English

Teachers in University English Language Teaching operations often struggle with the general vagueness surrounding this question and what Polyani (1958) called the 'tacit' nature of the knowledge required in order to use English appropriately

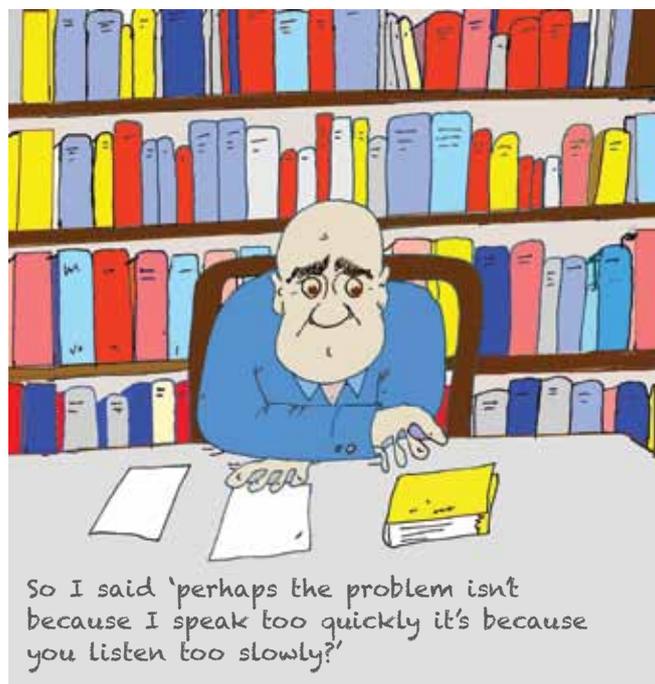
in Higher Education. In a recent article in the journal 'System', intended to help budding scholars to write for an international academic audience, J.A. Coleman (2014) acknowledges the obstacles "faced by all authors in adopting the generic norms of academic writing." These include the 'high level of acceptability' required by editorial boards who expect "international standards of academic English." Yet Coleman, inevitably, stops short of explicating these standards.

The question may be slightly easier to answer with regard to spoken English. A growing collection of scholarly and research literature suggests that there is a general acceptance of diverse forms of spoken English in the academy (see, for example, Mauranen 2012). That said, students (and occasionally staff members) at the University of York sometimes report to, or are referred to the Centre for English Language Teaching (CELT) because their spoken English is non-standard. Self-referring students are concerned that they may not be understood, while others are sent by staff members who wonder whether some

pronunciation adjustments might make for greater ease of comprehension. The fact that referred or concerned students or staff members are exclusively those with 'nonnative-speaker' accents should give us pause. In the best of all possible international academic contexts, students and academics will accept that everyone has her or his individual speech characteristics and that, in any interaction, both speaker and listener have a responsibility to make communication successful.

Navigating writing expectations

When it comes to writing International Academic English, individual characteristics are more problematic and readers are less likely to accommodate to those who write with an accent than they are, as listeners, to those who speak with one. While knowledge might be said to be work-in-progress during oral discussion, the act of writing creates a product: knowledge is constructed through and by writing. And it seems that there is only one size (or shape or form) of knowledge which is acceptable to the Academy. Any overview of the work of writers





WE
PEAK
ENGLISH

Self-referring students are concerned that they may not be understood

that knowledge, producing an academic monoculture, which, like agricultural monoculture, is reductive, limiting and eventually disastrous.

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who have 'languaged themselves' into an international academic community serves to make the point: the use of English in internationally edited academic journals, across disciplines, shows that the academic knowledge constructed there is most often disembodied, lacking in human agency, reason-based, free from emotion and narratable in a linear fashion. Grammatical accuracy goes without saying; punctuation is unobtrusive.

However, most students and many scholars and researchers come up against considerable difficulties in their attempts to join this international academic community through their writing: there are no 'native speakers' of International Academic English and the way to full membership is a hard one. Academics from prestigious universities, often leading world-class research teams, have had papers rejected by journal editorial boards because of the way they have used English. This is not simply a question of revising prose to iron out grammatical errors or stylistic infelicities: editors have often required a complete reworking (resizing?) of scripts so that they fit into expected international norms (see for example Flowerdew, 2000).

Even more than international academics having to 'relanguage' themselves in order to produce

acceptable knowledge, students find themselves struggling not just with the idiosyncrasies and shibboleths of English grammar but also with the requirement to create an acceptable form of knowledge, one which conforms to acceptable international standards. Hino (2012), for example, reports a student who claims: "What I wrote with the Japanese model was my original opinion that I really wanted to express. What I wrote with the American model was different from my own idea. Today, I was shocked to realize that I have been forbidden to express what I really want to say". Perhaps the knowledge the student wanted to construct was non-linear, or admitting of human agency, or inclusive of emotion as well as reason.

A 'one-size' approach to International Academic English, then, has at least two serious consequences. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, it serves to exclude from the international academic community anyone who, unlike the student cited by Hino, does not succeed in writing in International Academic English. This exclusion is, of course, a disappointment for the excluded but also a loss to the whole community.

The second consequence is potentially even more serious. In restricting the construction of knowledge by insisting on 'one size', there is a serious risk of diminishing the range and breadth of

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Cinzia Bacilieri, Thomas Jochum-Critchley, Maria Muradas Casas, Nadine Saupe, from the Department of Language and Linguistic Science, describe their approach to developing approaches to support a wide range of students

“A very intense yet rewarding course which has been extremely enjoyable.”

This is a typical positive comment, received only two years into the existence of the Ab Initio language programme in the Department of Language and Linguistic Science. These programmes were first introduced for German and Spanish in 2012/13 and this year for Italian. They were designed as an alternative pathway to the pre-existing post A Level language programmes in French, German and Spanish. The Ab Initio and post A Level pathways are brought together in the second year of study.

In addition to the fast pace and high intensity of the Ab Initio curriculum in the first year, mixed ability is the major challenge of the first and second year: different levels of pre-existing knowledge and skills – from absolute beginners to students with GCSE or even beyond – and various language learning strategies. In order to address these challenges, a number of tools and approaches are used by the teaching team to allow students to develop according to their needs, aims and potentials.



Diversity and mixed ability in modular and programme Supporting Ab Initio language students

Developing autonomy through portfolio learning

Learning portfolios are a recognised tool which effectively addresses individual needs, levels and interests and thus allows for the development of learner autonomy. Students get the opportunity to both make informed decisions about how, what, when and where they learn as well as reflect upon the process. As a result they become more able to take responsibility for their learning (Holec 1981).

In the first year, Ab Initio language students complete a language learning portfolio which consists of a number of language learning tasks and also includes short reflective essays.

The portfolio is submitted in three instalments in order to ensure that students are engaged in a regular and continuous way with the learning material. Based on these principles, two portfolios with different levels of freedom have been developed, for Italian and for German pivoting on the four skills (listening, speaking, reading writing).

The Italian portfolio comprises six tasks which are released in three instalments following a learning progression. The first task requires basic language skills to be completed; students are asked to demonstrate a more proficient use of Italian to pass the final tasks successfully. This progressive structure help students to increase their confidence and sense of achievement in their learning by giving them the opportunity to follow their progress throughout the year. In contrast, the German portfolio does not follow a linear progression. All tasks are released simultaneously at the beginning of the academic year, allowing the students to independently organise their learning and thus develop their autonomy.

Fostering a community of learning across language levels and year groups

Addressing mixed ability has to take into

Ability at the same level Students' transitions

account the learner group as a whole. A Peer Mentoring Scheme was introduced to facilitate the development of a strong learning community.

Second year students are trained in basic principles of coaching and mentoring which includes a clarification of roles and responsibilities from mentors and mentees.

Peer mentoring allows for mentors to become positive role models. It enhances the learning experience of both the mentors and the mentees. The scheme provides much needed support and collaborative learning opportunities which benefit both the students who have to acquire the language to a high level in a very short period of time but also the experienced language learners who get to share their knowledge with their mentees. The mentoring meetings thus provide a less formal space for supporting the Ab Initio students to cope with the pressure and anxiety which may arise from the high expectations and fast pace of the programme.

The scheme continues in the second year where final year students are recruited to mentor the Post Ab Initio students. The teaching on second year modules can thus build on the acquired

“A very intense yet rewarding course which has been extremely enjoyable.”

foundation in learner autonomy as well as on a strong learning community which is based upon the collaboration of students at different levels.

Student centred teaching focussed on interaction and collaboration

How to engage students with different skills and abilities in order to maximise the learning experience, is one of the key challenges of content and language integrated learning. This question leads to reflection upon curriculum design, the classroom dynamics, and teaching practice and methodology, as a way to enhance students' learning experience. Students' learning needs should be at the heart of module design (Tomlinson, 1999). In order to reach and engage the students, clearly defined aims and outcomes for each lesson are necessary, and by focussing on students' needs a flexible teaching style is beneficial. Post A Level second year lectures and seminars have been modified in order to take into account the mixed ability classroom: interactive activities, a variety of resources as well as tasks differentiated by outcome lead to a high level of student-engagement. In-class collaborative learning is promoted through group and pair work tailored to students' abilities, learning

profiles and interests, allowing each of them to reach their full learning potential.

Our experience with the Ab Initio language programme has shown that a mixed ability classroom is an asset rather than an obstacle for learning and teaching. By addressing individual students' learning needs as well as developing the learning community as a whole, we believe that we can create a more positive learning environment where our students engage and thrive. The evaluation of our tools and approaches at module and programme level is ongoing and a more detailed reflection including student feedback will be presented at the upcoming Learning and Teaching conference in June 2015.

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Cinzia Bacilieri is a Teaching Fellow in Italian and LFA Italian Team coordinator. Whilst pursuing a career in



Archaeology in the UK, Cinzia worked for several years as a teacher of Italian in the Adult Education and HE sector and as a professional translator before joining the University of York in 2011. Because of her background in the field of Art and Heritage Studies, since her arrival in York, alongside general language teaching, Cinzia has worked on developing new interdisciplinary language modules focusing on Italian Art, whose curricula features elements such as art-related or technical vocabulary and Medieval/Renaissance Italian. cinzia.bacilieri@york.ac.uk

Thomas Jochum-Critchley is a Teaching Fellow in German. Thomas has worked in a number of HE institutions across



the UK and Europe including France, Portugal and his native Austria, before joining the University of York in 2012. Over the past years, he has developed a range of language teaching projects in the areas of learner autonomy, video and technology in language teaching, and grammar in the language class. thomas.jochum-critchley@york.ac.uk

María F. Muradás-Casas is a Teaching Fellow in Spanish. Maria is a highly qualified and experienced language teacher



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Nadine Saupe is Programme Coordinator for German Degree Programmes.



Before joining the University of York in 2006 Nadine worked in a number of HE institutions in the UK, the USA and her native Germany. Over the past few years her main objective has been to design the German degree programme at York with a strong communicative and content focus teaching not only language proficiency but also cultural understanding and intercultural competence. nadine.saupe@york.ac.uk

CASE STUDY

Linking theory to practice

Using video and iPad technology to promote skills based learning in Psychology

Sophie Brigstocke received a Rapid Response Fund grant to develop case studies to show the application of theory to clinical practice

Students coming to study psychology at the University of York are often interested in pursuing careers in practitioner psychologist roles such as clinical or educational psychology after graduating. Competition to gain places on postgraduate training programmes for these careers is steep. Students must demonstrate that they have a solid academic grounding in psychology, evidenced by an excellent mark in their undergraduate studies. They are usually expected to demonstrate some practical experience working with vulnerable individuals, usually gained from voluntary placements in hospitals or support groups for individuals with learning or mental health difficulties. To offer a competitive edge, it is an advantage if students can show that they have developed some of the practical skills required for a practitioner psychologist role.

Indeed, systematic observation and assessment of behaviour are skills that form a major element of the defined core competencies for practitioner psychologist training. They are also valued in programmes as diverse as teaching, social work and medicine, as well as behavioural research. They are a key component of linking theory and practice; however, within an academic

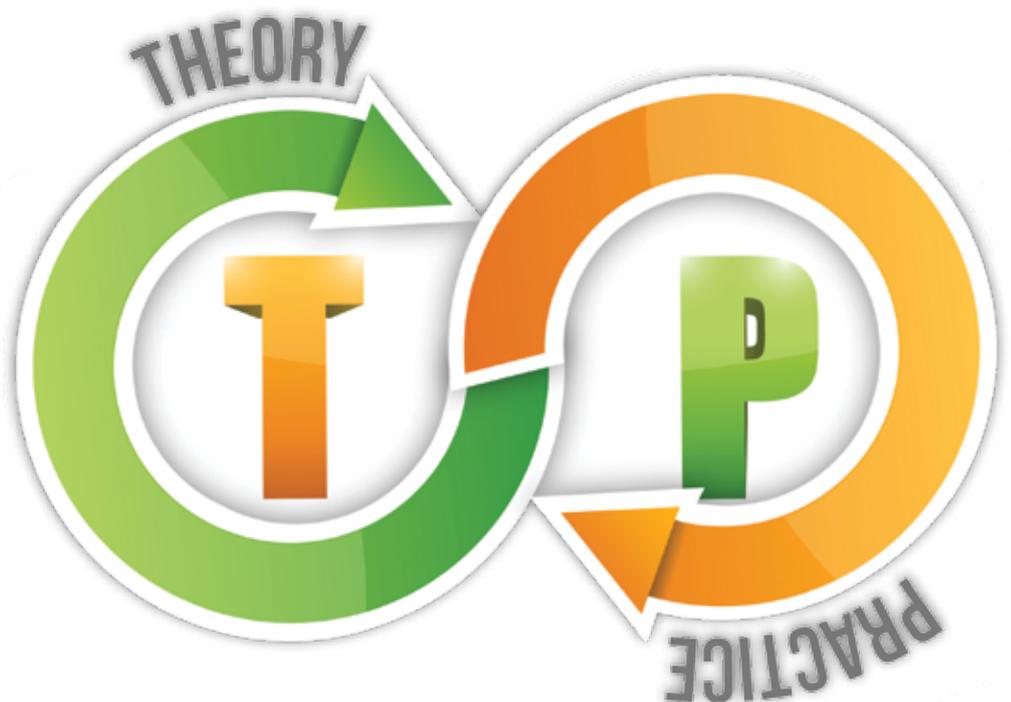
university context, it is rarely possible to teach such skills using traditional approaches involving direct observation of individuals in real time. This gap is due to the sensitive nature of the work involved in psychology, and issues such as obtaining access to and consent from individuals with developmental difficulties. Finding alternative ways of providing training that is not only intellectually meaningful but that translates into real world skills useful for employability is therefore a challenge.

Bridging the theory to practice gap

In order to attempt to meet this challenge, the Department of Psychology

applied for a grant from the Rapid Response Fund to develop videos of practitioner psychologists working with children. Informed consent was obtained from the parents of the children to use the videos of the assessments as 'case studies' for teaching purposes. These case studies seemed an ideal way to show the application of theory, learned from academic studies in the department, to clinical practice: they could provide an experience that students would not otherwise get within the current module structure of our BSc or MSc programmes. The video footage comprises clips of two practitioner psychologists employed within the department administering standardised

"Doing our own iPad videos was also a help and I learned a great deal from the practical experience and using the score sheets to then assess the videos (case studies) as if you were conducting the test."



‘Really interesting course – liked being exposed to tools to assess and the videos on the VLE’



educational test. We also asked them to film a tutorial using an iPad to present to their peers in the lecture to teach them to administer and score a particular standardised test. The tutorial would finish with the students demonstrating a full run-through of the test and the other students in the lecture would be asked to score the test, as if they were in a live assessment situation. Over the course of the term, each student had direct experience administering at least one standardised test and learning to accurately score a wide range of different tests.

Recent feedback gathered from students on this course indicated that they had enjoyed it greatly and felt that using the iPad and watching the videos had enhanced their learning experience and added to their skills. As a result, we are keen to continue using the new technologies in relevant modules on our MSc and MPsych level courses next year. We would like to express our thanks for the Rapid Response Fund grant and to the Head of the Psychology department for their support in making the videos.

psychological tests with children referred to the York Educational Assessment Clinic due to concerns about specific learning difficulties or developmental disorders.

Students watching the footage could see the administration of different standardised tests to individuals of varying ages with a diverse range of clinical presentations. In total, eight assessments were videoed – each covering an interesting case, eg a child with autism spectrum disorder completing a play-based assessment to examine his social communication difficulties; a child with attention deficit disorder completing an educational test battery; an A-level student with general intelligence levels in the superior range who experienced severe developmental dyslexia.

Students could also develop their observations skills through repeated watching of the videos on the VLE. Importantly, the videos were edited to highlight significant behaviours in their assessments, and pictures and subtitles were used where appropriate to guide the watcher through the procedures and tests used by the psychologist. These annotations were vital in order to prevent video watching from becoming a passive experience for the students. Repeated observation of the same clip is an established method to develop accurate observation skills. Students

could also observe how the psychologists responded to challenges that arose during the assessments and the skills they used to overcome them. An important learning tool for the students was the availability of the psychologists' full written report of each case study. This allowed the students to see how the tests they had observed were scored and recorded. They could then develop an appreciation of how test scores, together with the psychologists' observations of the child during the assessment, were interpreted with reference to formalised theoretical understanding of developmental disorders. This link between theory and practice is essential for the psychologist to arrive at a formulation or 'diagnosis' of the individual's individual profile of strengths and weaknesses.

Putting theory into practice

Although watching the case studies on the video provided the students with some valuable learning experiences and exposure to a range of developmental disorders, it did not provide them with practical experience in administering standardised tests. In order to address this gap, we asked students on the MSc in Developmental Disorders and Clinical Practice course to work in small groups each week and learn to use a different standardised psycho-

Dr Sophie Brigstocke

AFBPsS HCPC, Educational Psychologist, came to work in the Department of Psychology as a research fellow on a project investigating Reading, Language and Numeracy in Children with Down Syndrome following a career change from working as an investment banker in London. She went on to complete her PhD, supervised by Professor Charles Hulme. During this time she also worked, under the supervision of Professor Maggie Snowling, conducting assessments for children with educational difficulties in the small private clinic run within the department, and gained HCPC accreditation to work as a registered Educational Psychologist. Sophie now works as a teaching fellow on the MSc in Developmental Disorders and Clinical Practice, run by Emma Hayiou-Thomas, and runs the York Educational Assessment Clinic, following the departure of Professor Maggie Snowling. sophie.brigstocke@york.ac.uk



Power to the people: student autonomy and assessment

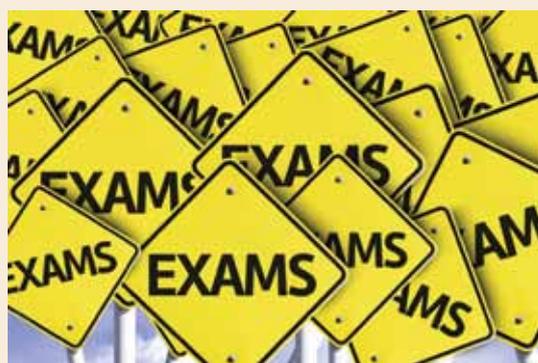
In a *Forum* workshop run earlier this year on student attendance and motivation, Ryan & Deci's 2001 article 'Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions' was used as a basis for some very interesting discussion. The authors postulate that the amount of self-determination inherent in an activity can significantly affect the manner in which we engage with that activity and therefore how successful we are at it. The paper also argues that self-determination is dependent upon meeting three basic needs: the need to feel competent (*competency*); the need to feel a sense of belonging (*relatedness*); and the need to feel in control (*autonomy*). Applying this theory to our students' level of engagement and therefore success in the higher education context, it may be worth considering if our programmes of learning engender feelings of competence, relatedness and autonomy. More challengingly, it might be worth considering to what degree our approaches to assessment do the same.

With regard to increasing our students' sense of autonomy by allowing them more involvement in assessment, some colleagues may feel that surrendering this last bastion of authority – our control over assessment – is something which should never be contemplated. However, as Boud states:

If students are to become autonomous and interdependent learners as argued in statements of aims of higher education, then the relationship between student and assessor must be critically examined and the limiting influences of such an exercise of power explored. (1995:43)

To facilitate this exploration, the Learning and Teaching Conference workshop 'Power to the people! Addressing inclusivity and student motivation through extending student choice in assessment' will consider allowing students more involvement and control with regard to assessment. Our intention in the session is to provide a space for colleagues to debate the value of giving students more autonomy over their learning, as well as an opportunity to hear from colleagues who have experimented with allowing students a greater degree of assessment choice.

Cecilia Lowe (author) Kathryn Arnold; Celine Kingman; Benjamin Poore; Scott Slorach (co-presenters) explore student involvement in assessment setting



Engaging students in assessment setting

What is meant by student control or involvement in assessment can vary considerably but to provide some food for thought before the conference workshop, here are some examples.

Assessments in which students are involved in setting goals,

ie students:

- define the specific areas for their assessment;
- define the weighting of different parts of their assessment;
- design assessment tasks or contribute to the creation of tests;
- create assessment rubrics or negotiate criteria;
- define the areas on which they would like to receive feedback.

Assessments in which students make choices,

ie students choose:

- the topic of their assessment eg the topic of a module essay or dissertation;
- between different types of format for their assessment eg a written submission or spoken presentation;
- how many pieces of their work or which pieces of their work are assessed eg portfolio work.

Assessments which encourage self-management and regulation by students,

ie students:

- assess themselves and reflect on their own progress;
- assess other students by acting as markers;
- choose when they are assessed eg when they will complete and submit different pieces of work and therefore manage their time.

Clearly, the need to design and implement assessment practices which are robust and fair for all students determines to a great extent how much we feel we can engage with such open approaches. However, if by veering too far in the opposite direction – through emphasising closed examination, one-size-fits-all assessments – we alienate our students from engaging fully with our discipline and their own learning, are our assessments serving us, or our students, well at all? Would we be better served by considering assessments which support more autonomy and therefore self-determination for our students? Why not come along to the session at the learning and teaching conference to discuss these questions further.

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Cecilia Lowe is a Senior Fellow of the HEA and Head of the Learning Enhancement Team. Before



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Registration NOW OPEN



ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL: ensuring all students reach their potential

University of York Learning and Teaching Conference 2015: Wednesday 10 June 2015

Students come to the University of York with **different** expectations, **different** learning styles, **different** needs, and **different** ambitions.

Further information about this conference and the programme is available on the website <http://bit.ly/1tYHdWJ>

The conference will explore the implications of diversifying delivery of programmes and how students are supported in the process of achieving their potential. A key theme will be the way in which programme design can address the range of student ability and levels of student engagement. The conference will also focus on these perspectives and the ways in which inclusivity and diversity can be integrated into the curricula and teaching.

Keynote:

One size fits all or the craft of the artisan teacher? Professor Christine Hockings, University of Wolverhampton will discuss her work developing Open Educational Resources which give HE teachers the tools to create inclusive learning environments.

Programme

There will be a range of discussion papers and workshop sessions exploring this topic, alongside a dedicated poster session. Sessions include:

- ◆ Power to the people: addressing inclusivity and student motivation through choice in assessment format
- ◆ Fitting Language – but how many sizes?
- ◆ Effective group work in the multi-cultural classroom
- ◆ Teaching and learning, online or not online, that is the question
- ◆ Personalising feedback: Can we bridge the formative-summative gap?
- ◆ 'Lad culture' and Higher Education: Exploring implications for inclusivity, equality and the student experience

The conference, will provide an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas, and to celebrate and disseminate good practice in learning and teaching.

All staff and students are welcome to attend and registration is now open, <http://bit.ly/1tYHdWJ>.

Learning and Teaching calendar of events: Summer Term 2015

WEEK 2 W/B 20 APRIL 2015		
Tuesday 21 April	9.00-16.00	BS008, Berrick Saul Criticality
WEEK 4 W/B 4 MAY 2015		
Thursday 7 May	9.00-12.00	Treehouse, Berrick Saul Bums on seats
WEEK 5 W/B 11 MAY 2015		
Monday 11 May	12.30-14.00	JP/003, James College Enhancing Engagement: Developing a co-operative learning curriculum
Tuesday 12 May	15.00-16.00	D/L049, Derwent Staff Turnitin awareness session
WEEK 6 W/B 18 MAY 2015		
Thursday 21 May	9.00-16.00	V/C/109, Vanburgh Assessment, marking and feedback on writing (Sciences)
WEEK 7 W/B 25 MAY 2015		
Wednesday 27 May	12.30-14.00	H/G09, Heslington Hall Key Skills in the Curriculum: Creativity in HE teaching and learning'
WEEK 8 W/B 1 JUNE 2015		
Tuesday 2 June	11.00-12.00	D/L049, Derwent Staff Turnitin awareness session
WEEK 9 W/B 8 JUNE 2015		
Wednesday 10 June	10.15-17.15	Physics/Exhibition Centre Learning and Teaching Conference 2015
Thursday 11 June	13.30-16.30	H/G21, Heslington Hall Supervision 101
WEEK 11 W/B 22 JUNE 2015		
Monday 22 June	12.30-14.00	BS/008, Berrick Saul Postgraduate taught Special Interest Group
Tuesday 23 June	12.00-16.30	ARC Auditorium (attendance also online) Distance Learning at York – what are the problems you are trying to solve and how have you addressed them?
Wednesday 24 June	12.30-14.00	H/G21, Heslington Hall Technology in practice: Impact of online assessment submission on Learning and Teaching
Friday 26 June	13.30-16.30	H/G09, Heslington Hall Marking consistency

Key to the calendar

Events organised by the Learning and Teaching Forum. Open to all staff and PGWTs. For further information, see www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/sharing/sharing-practice/workshops; to register, contact learning-and-teaching-forum@york.ac.uk. If you are unable to attend an event but would like a copy of the materials, please let us know.

Freestanding workshops offered by learning support colleagues. Please contact janet.barton@york.ac.uk for further details or to book your place.

Taught Masters Special Interest Group: for further information, see www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/sharing/sharing-practice/special-interest/; to register contact janet.barton@york.ac.uk

Academic Integrity: Staff Turnitin awareness sessions. Please contact alison.mckay@york.ac.uk for further details or to book your place on a session.

Distance Learning Forum: CPD practice sharing event. Please contact Alison.Mackay@york.ac.uk to book a place on the session.