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SOLSTICE & CLTR Conference 2012



Session Abstracts

Day Two

Learning & Teaching Practice Focus

14th June 2012

Papers

Session 1

University in the Forest: the benefits and restrictions of using technology enhanced learning as a means of creating innovation in teaching and learning

Presenter: Peter Shukie

Institution: University Centre Blackburn College

Theme: Leading change in the teaching and learning arena

The focus of this paper is a case study of a Digital Pioneers module in a second year module, BA (hons) Education Studies programme. The module was initially conceived to allow analysis of ICT Learning and Teaching practices, but in the last two years has taken on a more project based approach, utilising external partners, and culminating in a presentation of learning objects. The programme outcomes are non-technical, relating to educational use of existing technologies selected by students.

The University in the Forest is based on students in this module working with a local charity based in the Forest of Gisburn, offering outdoor education to primary school children from an area of East Lancashire. The project involved students using a five stage model (assessment; pedagogy; curriculum; technology; environment) of analysis and development to create technology enhanced learning for use with a range of learners. The focus was a website that was developed by the students, for the charity, to allow a range of learning objects to be created, linked to 'green craft', and other opportunities made possible by the forest location, and for these to be disseminated to a wider audience via the website, as well as in blended approaches. The aim of the module is to encourage students to consider the opportunities and limitations that different technologies can bring to educational settings.

The focus of the case study will be:

1. In what ways do students apply technology and how are these linked to pedagogical theory and practice?
2. What issues does the use of technology bring to the learning design?
3. What supporting skills are required in the design of technology in informal settings?

Session 2

Improving Quality: exchanging good practice in assessment

Presenter: Tony Turjansky

Institution: Edge Hill University

Theme: Assessment for learning

According to the Quality Assurance Agency (www.qaa.ac.uk), “enhancement is more than a collection of examples of good practice which might spring up across an institution. It is about an institution being aware that it has a responsibility to improve the quality of learning opportunities where that is necessary, and to have policies, structures and processes to make sure that it can detect where improvement is necessary, and where a need to improve is detected, that something will be done about it.”

Edge Hill University’s quality processes have traditionally been used to identify areas of ‘quality deficit’ as well as instances of good practice and to disseminate the latter via the institution’s committees. However, we have so far struggled to track, capture and evaluate the outcomes of such dissemination. Recent external examiner reports indicate both conspicuous good practice and areas of quality deficit in two particular aspects of assessment: summative written feedback, and second marking and moderation.

This project aims to enhance pedagogic practice through inter- and intra-Faculty exchange, by:

1. Using intelligence from recent external examiner reports to identify potential areas for the development or enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment across the University;
2. Brokering contacts between subjects/ departments with a view to the exchange of thinking and application of practice;
3. Conducting a longitudinal Institutional research study of said relationship(s), focusing in particular upon:
 - ‘Enablers’ and ‘barriers’ to inter-departmental working within the academic environment;
 - Transferability of practice between different subjects and application of practice within a secondary environment, with a particular focus on improvement;
 - Evaluation of outcomes with a view to informing the planning and development of future Edge Hill University CPD activity for academic staff;
 - Wider dissemination through conference presentation and journal publication (as part of the project leader’s University Learning and Teaching Fellowship).

Session 3

Effectiveness and Measurement of Technology Enhanced Learning in Higher Education Institutions of Pakistan

Presenter: Dr Shafqat Hameed

Institution: NUST University, Pakistan

Theme: Assessment for learning

E-learning is a new method of pedagogy emerging from the advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Pakistan with its limited resources, faces significant problems in extending higher education facilities to its large population residing in remote and widely dispersed areas.

The current enhancement in ICT infrastructure has presented an opportunity for the Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) to address this concern; as a result, all the universities have offered some form of e-learning.

This paper aims to study the extent of e-learning effectiveness in HEIs of Pakistan. The current literature identifies four building-blocks that require to be assessed to determine the effectiveness of online teaching and learning process namely course effectiveness, adequacy of access in terms of technological infrastructure, student satisfaction and academic satisfaction. A survey was conducted to measure these critical success factors with a view to assess the current status and to highlight areas where improvements could be made to enhance e-learning in HEIs of Pakistan.

Session 4

Will This Come Up in the Exam? Motivations for attendance amongst entry level undergraduate students

Presenter: Stu Field

Institution: Edge Hill University

Theme: Retention focused practices

Will this come up in the exam? Motivations for attendance amongst entry level undergraduate students. Patterns of class attendance amongst undergraduate students are the source of perennial debate in higher education (HE) institutions (van Shalkwyk, Menkveld & Ruiters, 2010). With retention and student progression and attainment being key performance indicators in HE league tables, institutions are keen to maintain and improve success in both areas. Whilst Muir (2009) suggests that improved attendance can lead to increased rates of retention and better academic performance, there is growing anecdotal evidence from academics

suggesting that there are declining levels of attendance at timetabled sessions as students and their environment change (Halpern, 2007).

My background in sports coaching has possibly led to me developing an elitist edge to my philosophy as an educator and I suspected that teaching in higher education would fulfil my expectations with enthusiastic students who a) wanted to be there b) were excited by the prospect of learning and enhancing their knowledge. Following completion of my PG Cert Ed, I was convinced that 'deep approaches to learning' would be the new core to my evolving teaching philosophy and that as a result student engagement would soar. After a few weeks however, I found myself asking the dreaded question 'why are they even here?' a question that is rarely voiced to the students themselves. Linked to my role as a Retention Coordinator, this led me to complete a small research project to find out just why 'students are here'.

The aim of the research was to get a better understanding of student motivations for attending and not attending timetabled sessions, ultimately to better understand if our teaching methods match our learners' expectations.

This session aims to present some of my findings and open up a discussion around student engagement and expectations.

Breakout Session 2:

11:30 – 12:00

Presentations & PechaKucha Presentations

Session 5

We've Made an eBook! Designing and publishing an ebook as a tool to enhance the development of staff and student digital literacy skills

Presenters: Susan Smith & Jakki Sheridan-Ross

Institution: Leeds Metropolitan University

Theme: Skills and information literacy

Digital literacy (DL) as a graduate attribute is being embedded in all undergraduate courses as part of Leeds Metropolitan University's current curriculum refocus activity with the aim that our graduates will be better prepared for more employable (CBI,2009) as a result of embedded DL skills in every course via the learning outcomes and learning activities.

This wholesale change is being coordinated by the University's Digital Literacy Implementation group. This staff and student group works collaboratively with Faculties to share and support evidence based practice via hubs of learning technologists, academic staff and students.

This presentation will be delivered in the form of an e book designed using the innovative free iBooks authoring tool. Each book chapter represents a stage in our project's work in progress.

Key issues addressed through the e book contents will be: broadening of information literacy into a digital setting, the evidence linking DL to improving student experience, life skills and employability, resources, and how we managed our change process. Filmed student and staff interviews, images and text will be embedded in the eBook to illuminate work in progress. Showcasing sections of the book in parallel with a verbal account from one team member's experience of how their own novice DL skills developed will form the content of the presentation.

Participants will learn that designing e books is a fun way of not only developing new DL skills themselves but that the learnt skills can be extrapolated to encourage students to develop DL skills in any subject area.

This presentation demonstrates an innovative, useful tool for learning, building staff and students' skills and reflection. Our free e book will be downloadable at the presentation. References CBI and Universities UK (2009). Future Fit: preparing graduates for the world of work. London, CBI.

Session 6

Addressing Students' and Staffs' Expectations of Higher Education in Response to the Fee Rise 2012

Presenters: Dr Elizabeth Bates & Linda Kaye

Institution: University of Cumbria & Edge Hill University

Theme: Emerging challenges and improving student success

With the rising cost of fees, there is a concern that there will be rising student expectations of Higher Education to become less intellectually and academically focussed, and be more directed towards a "consumer culture" (Jones, 2010).

Research pre-fee rise has highlighted the possibility that students would view themselves as consumers and their demands and expectations would exceed the realistic realms of academic staff (Jones, 2006). Research examining expectations and motivations of students is the first step in understanding and addressing these issues. Additionally, understanding staffs' expectations and experiences could provide insight into potential changes of provisions as a result of the fee rise.

The aims of the current research are three-fold; to cross-sectionally examine differences in first year undergraduate students' expectations, motivations, and criteria in choosing HE, before and after the Fee Rise 2012/2013. Secondly, to examine the changes in expectations and realities in undergraduate students throughout the degree programme, and finally, to examine staff expectations and experiences of student support in relation to the Fee Rise 2012/2013. This will be achieved through the use of focus groups with undergraduate students and staff. It is

expected that comparisons of both students' and staffs' expectations pre versus post fee rise will suggest greater demand in relation to pastoral support, formal teaching contact hours, employment prospects and feedback and assessment.

Session 7

Blogs for Reflection and Discussion: bringing digital literacy into the curriculum

Presenter: Lindsay Jordan

Institution: University of the Arts London

Theme: Skills and information literacy

This presentation will share lessons learned from using blogs as a distributed environment for regular learning activities within a Postgraduate Certificate course in Learning & Teaching.

Individual blogs were used as a base for monthly, assessed activities to promote engagement with literature, writing practice, personal reflection, group discussion and peer feedback. As a tool, blogs were selected not only for their technical suitability, but also to provide teachers with user experience of a technology widely used in creative education and industry, and to enable informed discussion on the topic of open professional practice. The opportunity for personal ownership of spaces and ideas was also a draw, as it was important in the context of this course that participant responses were seen as personally relevant and non-contestable. Participants' experiences of using the blogs were collated through surveys and interviews, with particular focus on perceived benefits and challenges, and on any changes in attitude towards open practice and/or the use of blogs. This feedback is informing a number of changes that will be implemented for the following cohort, with recommendations including a more gradual progression towards open practice, and strategies to reduce the impact of participant attrition on peers. Knowing what participants found most challenging will be of great value in redesigning the induction process and informing future technology choices, whether this means adjusting functionality or selecting a different tool altogether.

The development of digital literacy is a strategic priority for many institutions. In sharing our own experience of incorporating technology into the curriculum to explicitly promote both discipline-specific learning outcomes and generic digital literacy, it is hoped that delegates will take away something of relevance to their own context, whether they work with staff or students.

Session 8

Nudge Psychology – Developing Effective Learners

Presenter: Karen McCormack

Institution: Edge Hill University

Theme: Leading change in the teaching and learning arena

“Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness” (2008) by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein draws on behavioural and economic psychology to identify how governments may consider using psychology to encourage the public to make positive choices when it comes to their everyday lives. The theory discusses how people may be “nudged” to make the right decisions rather than trying to “shove” them and Thaler and Cass’s book has influenced governments on both sides of the Atlantic to consider how government may use psychology to induce the public to make choices that will benefit themselves personally and the economy as a whole.

Using behavioural theory is nothing new in the class room. Operant conditioning is one theory which underpins positive behaviour management and students for some time have been rewarded for positive behaviour and face a scale of sanctions intended to deter negative behaviour. Nudge psychology may successfully be adapted for the class room and when approached in a structured way, students should eventually develop the skills they need to become independent researchers themselves. In the class room, teachers need to be nudging students to make the right choices and making the right choices easier to make than the wrong choices. In practice, this means rather than suggesting students read a particular piece of writing or follow up a reference in a journal, the teacher provides extracts and electronic links to the reading they would like their students to do.

This presentation will demonstrate how hyperlinks in electronic feedback, twitter groups and Kim Tags on resources, may be used to develop effective learning among the student community. Making wider reading easier to engage with at any time using a range of popular devices, such as iPhones, iPads and Kindle is a “nudge” all teachers should be keen to make.

Session 9 - A Collection of PechaKucha Presentations

9(i) Shifting Identities: from classroom practitioner to undergraduate students

Presenter: Joanne Sutcliffe

Institution: Edge Hill University

This presentation will present aspects of a research project that addressed some of the issues that students on part time undergraduate vocational courses face in

relation to their comparative identities, namely, the transition into Higher Education as a student. This will focus around the potential conflict between an established identity as an experienced classroom practitioner and an emergent, or insecure, identity as an academic writer.

The research approach taken was largely qualitative. We will show that from attrition rate data and subsequent student evaluations a 'confidence crisis' was identified at the point of first assignment submission. We will present to the group how we addressed this which included an online academic skills building module which was implemented as part of the assessment for the first module. We will then show how we subsequently replaced this online module by an introduction to academic literacies element. We will discuss how this was delivered in short tasks linked to module content with opportunities for formative feedback and reflected elements of the patchwork approach (Winter 2003). We will then consider an additional group of students who were identified as having a later 'confidence crisis' as they were exempt from the first modules through their professional qualifications namely HLTA (Higher Level Teaching Assistant). This group could potentially have professional identity to 'protect' as they hold professional status (Dunne, 2008). The balance between risk to reputation and academic challenge and the impact of the recognition of this to develop 'learner resilience' is explored.

Dunne, L, Goddard, G., and Woolhouse, C. (2008) Teaching assistants' perceptions of their professional role and their experiences of doing a Foundation degree, *Improving Schools*, 11(3) 239-249

Winter, R (2003), 'Contextualising the Patchwork Text: Addressing Problems of Coursework Assessment in Higher Education' *Innovations & Teaching International*, 40(2) 112-122

9(ii) A Study into Student Experience and Expectations to a Personal Tutor System

Presenter: Kerrie Jones

Institution: Edge Hill University

Theme: Making the first year experience a success

Personal tutoring seems to be an essential element of the Higher Education experience. An effective system however requires a substantial time commitment from tutors to meet their tutees on a regular basis and a willingness on the part of students to engage in such a scheme. This study into the student experience and expectation of a personal tutorial system is based on the results of a questionnaire and follow up face-to-face interviews with a group of Level 5 students at Edge Hill University. The study will aim to establish the extent to which this group of students expect, need and value a personal tutorial system. Key issues to be explored within this study include logistical arrangements, the willingness of students to confide in staff, the other staff in the University who are approached for support and whether the personal tutor is perceived to be needed by the student to help with non-academic issues such as employability.

9(iii) Aimhigher Alumni to University Alumni: longitudinal impacts of Aimhigher Greater Merseyside on current undergraduates' learning and success?

Presenter: Angie Daly

Institution: Edge Hill University

This presentation explores emerging evidence of the longitudinal impacts of Aimhigher on undergraduates' learning and success. It draws on findings from a two-year research project 'Aimhigher Alumni Longitudinal Study: Perceptions, Progression and the Impact of Aimhigher on Undergraduates in Greater Merseyside HEIs from 2008-2011'. The research included a literature review and innovative digital storytelling methods to capture case studies of 'Aimhigher Alumni' students. This presentation offers a case study of two 2nd year undergraduates who had participated in Aimhigher Greater Merseyside when at school. It includes a digital narrative of their experiences and reflections on their academic preparedness and success at higher education. The presentation concludes by posing that the impact of Aimhigher is yet to be fully understood as funding for the programme ended before the majority of 'Aimhigher Alumni' entered higher education. It suggests therefore that the experiences of 'Aimhigher Alumni' in higher education provide a valuable area for research into the impacts on learning and success in higher education and that this knowledge will support higher education outreach and transition programmes in the future.

Thomas, L. (2011) Do pre-entry interventions such as 'Aimhigher' impact on student retention and success? A review of the literature. Higher Education Quarterly.

Daly, A., Caffrey, R., O'Rourke, L., Grant, L., McNeill, J (2011) Aimhigher Alumni - Learner Voices and Reflections on Aimhigher, Aimhigher Research Network 23rd February 2011, Edge Hill University, UK.

Daly, A., Lynskey, D. (2011) What works in Aimhigher Great Merseyside? The voices of Aimhigher Alumni, FACE Regional Seminar 16th March 2011, The University of Liverpool, UK.

Daly, A., Grant, L., Jones, R. and Thomas, L. (2011) Aimhigher Alumni Longitudinal Study: Perceptions, Progression and the Impact of Aimhigher on Undergraduates in Greater Merseyside HEIs from 2008-2011, Final Report 2011, AHGTM, Liverpool

Papers**Session 10****Use of Visual Metaphors in Virtual Environments for Teaching and Learning: the user point of view****Presenter:** Dr Beatriz Pacheco**Institution:** Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie**Theme:** Student induction and transitions

This paper aims to discuss the use of visual metaphors in the development of System Interfaces for Distance Education about the differences between two scholars concerning Human-Computer Interaction: Donald Norman and Jakob Nielsen, whether or not to use the metaphors. The possibility of networking, both as a framework for access and processing of information, and as a framework for exchange and collaborative activity is the high quality of emerging technologies. His techniques allow structures to implement new and more complex forms of social interaction, arising the possibility of immediate exchange of information and content in cyberspace. Hence, the individuals become at the same time, transmitters and receivers, producers and consumers of the message. Therefore, communication is no longer linear and one way to become multilingual, polycentric and polysemic. In this context, the interfaces through which individuals will interact should be designed towards their needs in a fast, effective, efficient and satisfactory way.

A powerful tool used to achieve these goals is the use of visual metaphors (icons, graphics, layout of visual elements in the interface) that exploits the users' previous knowledge and repertoire to facilitate the communication process, leveraging prior knowledge in order to define computational interactions difficult to articulate. If this association is interesting, on the other hand new mental models cease to be created and exploited, often delaying the development of a language of its own in such systems.

In Virtual Environments for Teaching and Learning such use is widespread, which may end by emphasizing similarities, by omitting important differences between the model that uses (something known) and the system that is drawn from it (something new). Thus, we shall show that in Virtual Environments for Teaching and Learning, as well as other interfaces that use the Web environment, the last user will have to improve the conceptual model of the object in every interaction, because, for as close as they can be, the virtual world is different from the real world.

Session 11

The Impact of Academic Writing Skills support: a case study

Presenter: Andrew Tomkins

Institution: Edge Hill University

Theme: Academic writing

Over the last twenty years the numbers of students participating in higher education in the UK has increased. Over this period a discourse has emerged in which undergraduate academic writing skills are seen as problematic (Ganobscik-Williams, 2006; IvaniÄ• and Lea, 2006; Winch and Wells, 1995). Studies have been undertaken which have evaluated the impact of academic writing support (Bailey, Derbyshire, Middleton, Rayson and Syson (2007), for example, demonstrated the value of study skills support for a group of nursing diploma students, who all saw an increase in their marks following attendance of at least one support workshop. A number of studies have shown that academic writing skills support is most valuable when embedded in the curriculum and made discipline specific (Bailey et al, 2007; Durkin and Main, 2002; Wingate, Andon and Cogo, 2011).

This study concerns the impact of the academic writing support delivered for a core first year module on English language and literature, which is taken as a part of an initial teacher training undergraduate programme at Edge Hill University. The assessment for this module requires students to write a children's story and then to reflect on the writing process. The reflection causes problems for many students and a common error is to reflect on the content of the story rather than on the process of writing it. In 2009-10 and 2010-11 the Learning Services Academic Skills Advisor who supports the Faculty of Education was asked to deliver a bespoke lecture, tailored to the reflective element of the assignment for this module. This was well received by the students and resulted in a significant improvement in the marks achieved compared to those awarded for the same module in 2008-09 when no bespoke support was provided. In 2010-11 the marks achieved were also compared with three other first year modules in which bespoke support was not given by the Academic Skills Advisor. Furthermore, the students were asked to answer three questionnaires concerning their perceptions about their academic writing and about the usefulness of the bespoke lecture, immediately before the lecture, shortly after the lecture delivery and after the students had received their mark and feedback.

The questionnaires demonstrated that the students valued the input from the Academic Skills Advisor and the research as a whole suggested that the bespoke support had a positive impact. The partnership between the Academic Skills Advisor and the tutor was instrumental in the success of the support, since the tutor was able to contextualise the contents of the lecture during its delivery. This case study, therefore, reinforces the arguments of those who advocate an embedded and subject specific model of academic writing support.

Bibliography Bailey, P., Derbyshire, J., Harding, A., Middleton, A., Rayson, K. and Syson, L. (2007), Assessing the impact of a study skills programme on the academic development of nursing diploma students at Northumbria University, UK, Health

Information and Libraries Journal, 24 (suppl. 1), 77-85. Durkin, K. and Main, A. (2002), Discipline-based study skills support for first-year undergraduate students, *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 3 (1), 24-39. Ganobscik-Williams, L. (2006), General introduction: responding to the call for academic writing theory and pedagogy, In: Ganobscik-Williams, L. (ed.), *Teaching Academic Writing in UK Higher Education: Theories, Practices and Models*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. xxi-xxvi. IvaniÄ• , R. and Lea, M.R. (2006), New contexts, new challenges: the teaching of writing in UK Higher Education, In: Ganobscik-Williams, L. (ed.), *Teaching Academic Writing in UK Higher Education: Theories, Practices and Models*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 6-15. Winch, C. and Wells, P. (1995), The quality of student writing in Higher Education: a cause for concern?, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 43 (1), 75-87. Wingate, U., Andon, N. and Cogo, A. (2011), Embedding academic writing instruction into subject teaching: a case study, *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 12 (1), 69-81.

Session 12

To be confirmed

Presenter:

Institution:

Theme:

Session 13

Competing in the Graduate Labour Market: student perspectives on (not) developing their 'personal capital'

Presenter: Dr Paul Greenbank

Institution: Edge Hill University

Theme: Enhancing employability

The evidence suggests that in order to be able to compete effectively in the graduate labour market students need to package what Brown and Hesketh (2004) refer to as their 'personal capital' in a way that is attractive to employers (Tchibozo, 2007; Hinchliffe and Jolly, 2011). Personal capital comprises of 'soft currencies' (i.e. skills, values and personality traits that graduate employers are seeking) and 'hard currencies' (i.e. evidence of the possession of these soft currencies through participation in relevant curricular and extra-curricular activities).

This presentation provides insights into student perspectives on developing their personal capital. It is based on research involving in-depth interviews with 21 undergraduates in their first and final year of study (42 interviews). Research indicates that the primary motivation students have for going to university is to enhance their employability (e.g. Watts, 2006). Despite this the vast majority of the students in this study were not committed to developing their personal capital. The study worked with concepts such as habitus and economic, social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1979, 1998, 2003) and found that the students' values are a key influence on their behaviour. In particular, the study identified the lack of a future orientation; a 'purist' orientation; risk aversity and a tendency to have an external locus of control as significant barriers to the development of personal capital. In addition, social norms and the normative behaviour of peers influenced the students' values and behaviour.

The paper argues that whilst it is important for undergraduates to have information about how to prepare for the transition from education to employment, this has little effect unless the students' underlying values can be changed. Drawing upon the findings of this study and other research (e.g. Lewin, 1999; Loewenstein et al., 2003; King and Hicks, 2007; Bazerman and Moore, 2009) the paper concludes that students need to have their existing values challenged through approaches such as 'unfreezing', 'analogical encoding' and the development of 'possible-selves'.

Breakout Session 4:

14:35 – 15:05

Presentations

Session 14

The Role of 'Context' in the Design of Integrated Information Literacy Skills – Learners Preferences

Presenter: Kirsty Baker

Institution: The Open University

Theme: Skills and information literacy

Information literacy (IL) skills are widely acknowledged within higher education (HE) as key graduate attributes, essential to effective participation in education, employment and society. However, a challenge for learning designers is how to ensure learners see the relevance of such skills. IL skills development is increasingly being embedded within the HE curriculum, and the available evidence suggests that this is the most effective approach. Reasons cited include that IL is not a completely generic skill, and students require a basic understanding of the context in order to formulate search strategies, select appropriate resources and evaluate them.

Within the Faculty of Health & Social Care at the Open University (OU) two models of skills development have evolved, both embedded within the curriculum. Both require students to undertake a task which demonstrates IL skills but they provide context-giving information in different locations: Model 1: Module-specific information is fully integrated within the skills activities. Model 2: Skills are taught using generic, re-usable online activities relevant to the general area of Health and Social Care; the module-specific context is provided at the point when learners are directed to complete the skills activity.

The OU's Evaluating Approaches to Developing Digital Literacy Skills project aims to identify the effectiveness of these approaches by evaluating learner perceptions of their experiences. Data have been collected from reflective questionnaires (n=300) and semi-structured interviews (n=18) involving students from three modules.

This paper will present initial findings and will explore what key design features, including use of module-specific context, are most important to learners when creating an integrated approach. These findings could be used to inform good practice for embedding skills materials which will be relevant across the HE community.

Session 15

Enhancing Employability Through the Use of 'Real Users' in Computing Modules

Presenter: Shirley Hunter-Barnett

Institution: Edge Hill University

Theme: Enhancing employability

Lately, it is no longer enough for students to leave university with a degree, as gradually more and more employers are looking for additional achievements and skills. Therefore, the objective of this study was to ascertain whether the use of 'real clients' in a core computing module can enhance a students' skills base and therefore employability.

A case study that used a multiple research methodology, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection was completed. Participants included previous university students, current 3rd year students and prospective/current employers. The study was designed to serve two purposes. Firstly, to indicate to other practitioners, how the use of real clients can impact on students employability and secondly to ascertain what makes it successful/unsuccessful in preparing students for their future careers.

This paper describes the process of embedding employability skills into the computing curriculum and discusses the pedagogy behind using real clients in academic modules. It also explores the added value to the student of using live cases, in computing modules, and investigates the impact it has on students' employment prospects.

Session 16

Feeding Forward: supporting level 6 academic writing

Presenters: Charles Davis, Claire Scott & Ani Scott

Institution: University of Derby

Theme: Academic writing

When delivered post assignment, students are denied opportunities to reflect and act on feedback to the same extent they would be were it looped throughout a learning process (Poulos & Mahony, 2008 & Laurillard, 2005). While tutors are often cognizant of the benefits of providing on going feedback, workload pressures and rigid curricular structures make implementing such approaches difficult.

This paper focuses on how two BEd primary tutors and a learning technology advisor at the University of Derby (UoD), sought to create a feedback loop using feedforward and feedback strategies to support 85 students on a final year module. Students were provided with video artefacts highlighting examples of good practice and common errors in past papers. Using dialogues and/or monologues, the tutors were able to provide students with explanations as to why particular stretches of text succeeded or failed to meet assessment criteria. Although initially envisaged as being the starting point on the feedback loop, the tutors found that after the videos were made available, student requests for help fell dramatically compared to previous years.

An evaluative questionnaire, which had a 67% response rate, indicated students valued having access to the videos as they signposted what the assessment criteria required and how it to meet it. Results also illustrated how students intended to use the resources to strategically support their writing on future assignments. While the results can be regarded as positive when considering a reduction on tutor workload and the development of writing strategies, they provide little insights into the extent to which the establishment of such feedback mechanisms developed student awareness of the topic.

The following stages of the project aim to demonstrate how students perceive the effectiveness of feedback loops designed to deepen topic awareness, especially when those loops are part of curricular structures supporting high-stakes summative assessment.

References Laurillard, D., (2005). *Rethinking University Teaching: a conversational framework for the effective use of learning technologies*. 2nd ed. London and New York: RoutledgeFalmer Poulos, A . & Mahony, M.J., (2008). Effectiveness of feedback: the students' perspective. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33(2), pp143-154.

Session 17

Creating Effective Feedback to Support Students' Engagement with Academic Writing

Presenters: Jacqui Basquill & John Bostock

Institution: Edge Hill University

Theme: Assessment for learning

With the implementation of eassessment within the Faculty of Education a deeper understanding of the elements within the process has been created. The need for an efficient, secure procedure for submission, esubmission, emarking, emoderating and e feedback has been highlighted, taking the needs of both students and colleagues into account. During this process, in order to ensure quality and a positive experience which will enhance students' engagement and experience, the need for effective, supportive feedback was emphasised.

The aim of this presentation is to examine the development of guidance for colleagues to ensure they feel secure in providing excellent feedback which enables students to develop confidence and move forwards with their subject knowledge and academic writing. JISC (2010) discuss the seven principles of effective feedback, these are the foundations which underpin this process.

This presentation will deconstruct the principles and encourage discussion as to their true meaning and what this may look like in practice. There will be an opportunity to examine assessment for learning through formative feedback as well as a practical element looking at a variety of feedback and considering what is effective and what is not. Finally the session will consider the impact of effective feedback and investigate methods of improving student engagement with feedback

Session 18

The Transition Project

Presenter: Daniel Robinson

Institution: Edge Hill University

Theme: Student induction and transitions

As part of Edge Hill's mission of being proactive and a commitment to increasing student resilience, student services have developed an opportunity for students to take part in a transition program. The project's main objective is to offer a distinctive student centered orientation of the HE experience.

The presentation will focus on the following themes;

- The aims and objectives of the project and its programme of activities.
- Resource implications.
- Student engagement with the process.
- The benefits for the students and the university.
- Future plans for the project.

We will look at the project and how we believe it has enhanced the student experience and individual resilience in a number of ways.

- Facilitate a workshop to create discussion and raise profile of the project
- Giving two student stories on how the project helped them
- Offering feedback from staff and participants
- Looking at research which supports experiential learning to increase resilience and increase student empowerment

We have a 100% retention rate of those who attended the transition event. This is accompanied with anecdotal evidence of confidence in their own experience thus far. The presentation will discuss where/how the project has had an impact on the student experience/customer journey. We will conclude by offering this model as a solution to increasing student resilience, improving retention and enhancing student experience. Whilst the project was originally offered to disabled students, we believe, the model of the project will benefit all students, creating more, autonomous, ready and confident students when starting in September.