Vice-Chancellor’s Teaching and Learning Conference 2015

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Keynote Speaker Biography

Professor Ray Land, Director, Centre for Academic Practice (CAP) & Professor of Higher Education, School of Education, Durham University

Ray Land is Professor of Higher Education at Durham University and Director of Durham’s Centre for Academic Practice. He previously held similar positions at the Universities of Strathclyde, Coventry and Edinburgh. He has been a higher education consultant for the OECD and the European Commission and has recently been involved in two European Commission higher education projects in Europe and Latin America. He is currently advisor to the Norwegian TRANSark project on architectural education. He has published widely in the field of educational research, including works on educational development, learning technology and quality enhancement. He is best known for his theory (with Jan Meyer) of Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge. His latest book (with George Gordon) is Enhancing Quality in Higher Education: International Perspectives (Routledge 2013).
Keynote: Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge: A Transformative Approach to Learning

Ray Land, Durham University

The ‘threshold concepts’ approach to student learning advocates the idea that certain concepts or practices can act in the manner of a portal, or learning threshold, through which a changed perspective opens up for the learner. The latter enters new conceptual terrain, which permits previously inaccessible ways of thinking and practising. These conceptual gateways are often the points at which students experience difficulty and are often troublesome as they require a letting go of customary ways of seeing. They provoke a state of ‘liminality’ – a space of transformation and transition from an earlier understanding or practice towards that which is required. This tends to be uncomfortable, and may leave the learner in a suspended state, or ‘stuck place’, in which understanding approximates to a kind of ‘mimicry’ or lack of authenticity. Depending on discipline and context, knowledge might be troublesome because it is ritualised, inert, conceptually difficult, alien or tacit, because it requires adopting an unfamiliar discourse, or because the learner remains ‘defended’, resisting the inevitable shift in subjectivity that threshold concepts initiate. As Dewey once observed ‘The path of least resistance and least trouble is a mental rut already made. It requires troublesome work to undertake the alteration of old beliefs.’ Such work often entails an ‘ontological’ or affective shift in the learner, leading to a changed subjectivity. However, as Shulman notes, ‘without a certain amount of anxiety and risk, there’s a limit to how much learning occurs. One must have something at stake. No emotional investment, no intellectual or formational yield’. This session will provide an outline of the thresholds approach followed by an exploration of its implications for curriculum design.

(Further information at: http://www.ee.ucl.ac.uk/~mflanaga/thresholds.html)
Tailoring curriculum delivery for a diverse student body: the impact on foundation students' learning experience at GSM London.

Paper

Paulette Annon (Greenwich School of Management) & Babawande Sheba (Greenwich School of Management)

This study investigates whether there is a need to align the delivery of core skills modules for students in the foundation year of a degree programme in order to provide students with the underpinning skills and knowledge required throughout their academic journey. The action research is based on Year 0 students at GSM London where a number of the diverse student body have struggled to progress onto the degree programme as a result of difficulties encountered on three core skills modules namely: Computer Literacy, Numeracy, and Academic and Critical Writing. An action research consisting of a pilot diagnostic activity was carried out to identify students who would require additional support throughout the semester on these core skills modules. This was conducted using a combination of in-house paper based and IT based assessment instruments. The additional support was in the form of dedicated support classes in the three core skills area. The results indicate that the use of diagnostic tests coupled with additional support alongside the delivery of course material has enhanced students abilities to undertake their module assessments with greater confidence in, and development of, their skills and knowledge. This also resulted in a significant increase in pass rates for students completing one or both elements of the module assessment after attending additional support classes. This research has subsequently informed the review the curriculum across the institution.
Pedagogies of illustration as a specific discipline within art and design are under-explored in academic literatures. This project investigates the impact of illustration students learning in groups, under conditions of pressure which reflect the scenario faced by commercial illustrators in the work place, where tight deadlines and work in unfamiliar groups is the norm. Illustration students at Plymouth University were asked to create a comic book or an illustrated artist’s book, during two twelve hour sessions, separated by a forty eight hour period. Participating students completed questionnaires reflecting on their experience of learning through the exercise, both before and after the sessions. A smaller selection of students, representing individual members from a selection of the groups, also took part in focus groups before and after formative assessment, to explore more deeply their experience of learning under these conditions. Students reported substantial achievement with the outcomes of the exercise, in terms of both experience and learning. Identifying practical challenges such as costs implications upon design choices, the research will link this series of goal focused decision-making processes to learning. Students demonstrated a willingness to learn in environments, which synthesised professional practice in the creative industries. Given the current focus on employability in higher education, these conclusions contribute to evidence supporting practical engagement with work place conditions in illustration programmes as a means to build confidence in seeking placements and internships that operate in this high tempo way.
Peer review in scientific writing skills: the value of giving and receiving feedback

Paper

Kimberley Bennett & Sebastian Stevens

Critique and evaluation are essential in scientific writing and discourse. However, science students tend to report information in essays as fact. We investigated the impact of giving and receiving feedback on critical thinking and essay writing. Final year marine biology students (n = 76) engaged in voluntary double-blind peer review of an essay (n = 37). We investigated a. questionnaire responses about giving and receiving feedback and b. impact of quality of peer review produced and received on essay improvements and final grade. Over 90% of respondents (n = 28) felt receiving and giving feedback helped their essay writing, particularly literature evaluation (75% receiving; 57.1% giving) and essay structure (61% receiving; 50% giving). There was a weak, positive relationship between quality of received review and final submission (LM: F(2,12) = 6.56; p = 0.024; R2 = 0.284). Final grade was positively related to prior grade (LM: T = 2.61; p = 0.023), and quality of feedback given (LM: T = 2.61; p = 0.023; F(2,12) = 9.15; p = 0.004; R2 = 0.54). Evaluation, argument development, clarity and structure improved most. Mean grades prior to peer review differed by 1% between students who participated (n = 28) and those who did not (n = 8). After peer review, essay grades were higher in participants by 5% (68% vs 63%), and mean exam grade differences were even greater (57% vs 49%). These results suggest giving and receiving peer feedback has lasting value for writing and critical thinking development in science students.
Revolutionising Engineering through Teaching Technology
Enhanced Learning Incorporating Tablet Technology and Digital Learning

Paper

Mike Buller & Rebecca Vickerstaff

This session will introduce techniques and methods used to revolutionise engineering teaching within undergraduate modules in the School of Marine Science and Engineering. The teaching of any engineering discipline is very dependent on the use of detailed worked examples to explain and explore the fundamental concepts of the topic.

The adoption of a Microsoft Surface Pro 3 has radically changed the way the way in which lectures and seminars are given. Adopting Microsoft’s OneNote as a virtual whiteboard in conjunction with Camtasia Studio has enabled the creation of annotated simulation videos to give students an immersive exposure to learning engineering software and engineering fundamentals.

Student feedback and development following the introduction of these innovative teaching methods will be discussed and limitations of the techniques explained. Transferability of methods into other educational disciplines will be explored, providing staff with information on how these techniques can be embedded into the curriculum and its advantages in the upcoming Curriculum Enrichment Project. Webinars were also incorporated to enable large scale teaching within a limited timetable removing physical limitations of physical teaching spaces and provide students with learning resources for revision and reflection.
The Impact of Becoming a Faculty of Arts & Humanities Dean’s Award Ambassador

Steve Butts

In the summer of 2014 The Faculty of Arts & Humanities at Plymouth University agreed to embark on a new aspirational and transformational student endeavour. At the time, first year students had scholarships on offer, and final year students had the opportunity to gain various awards and prizes. But there was little on offer by way of motivational reward or recognition during the second year. Thus the Faculty took the decision to implement a Faculty of Arts & Humanities Dean’s Award as a vehicle to help bring a large and diverse Faculty together, and encourage interdisciplinary learning. The content of the award was developed with Faculty Sponsors, Prague Event Solutions, who are a high-end corporate and celebrity destination management company and friends of the Faculty. Dean’s Award Ambassadors are selected by highest aggregate second year marks in each of the 17 subject areas within the Faculty. Successful students are sent a formal notification certificate, and asked for confirmation they are able to attend a five day, all expenses, interdisciplinary, international, transformational learning experience to Prague. This paper examines the impact of the Dean’s Award in relation to its Ambassadors. It reflects upon the student experience through their voices, from the moment of notification, the awkward moments meeting each other for the first time at Heathrow, the Prague experience, and their return back into their work and studies.
Student voice: a catalyst for change

Paper

Jane Collings & Pollyanna Magne

The notion of the ‘student voice’ is not new. In 1975 Jacks promoted the purpose of representation to secure educational and institutional change. However use of the student voice has become more explicit in recent years. One reason for this is that much greater credence is given to messages delivered directly by the students. Student feedback is therefore more influential and able to challenge long held notions of teaching and learning practice (Brooman et al, 2014). However it is vital that students see changes in practice to ensure that they believe their voice is being listened to (Halsey et al, 2008) and that use of the student voice becomes a routine part of good practice (Campbell et al, 2009). With these caveats in place student voice has the power to challenge staff assumptions about the teaching and learning process and, if acted upon, can improve results and act as a catalyst for change (Cook-Sather, 2006). This session will illustrate how student voice including: the National Student Survey (NSS); Student, Staff and Academic Representative (SSTAR) awards; and research projects, has increasingly impacted on the work of Educational Development (ED). Using case studies and video footage this paper will show how ED works together with schools and programmes analysing key messages from student feedback to enhance practice.

References

Brooman, S., Darwent, S., Pimor, A. (2014): The student voice in higher education curriculum design: is there value in listening?, Innovations in Education and Teaching International


The PEP Project: Exploring the expectations, barriers and experiences of PGT students

Paper

Debby Cotton, Karen Gresty, Mick Fuller & Tricia Nash

Student numbers on postgraduate taught (PGT) programmes have increased dramatically over the last 20 years; however there has been a recent decline in participation, especially from UK students (Millward and Creasey, 2013). Although funding issues are likely to be involved in this decline, little is known about other potential reasons, or about what might be done to reverse the pattern. Although extensive research has been undertaken into student experience at undergraduate level (e.g. Hatt et al., 2005), there is a limited, albeit growing, body of research in the area of PGT study (e.g. Wakeling, 2005). This led to the Higher Education Commission commenting in 2012 that ‘Postgraduate education is a forgotten part of the sector’ (Higher Education Commission, 2012:17).

Plymouth University is part of a national study exploring the postgraduate student experience in STEM subjects (the PEP project). Led by Kingston University and with collaborators in 10 other UK universities, this is one of the biggest projects funded by HEFCE under its postgraduate support scheme. The research aims to:

- Explore applicants’ perceptions, motivations, and expectations of PGT study
- Explore the barriers to PGT study
- Explore the experiences of students undertaking PGT study
- Explore the outcomes of students as a result of undertaking PGT study

This paper will review the early findings from research undertaken in the Faculty of Science and Environment at Plymouth University, drawing out the key differences between our students’ reports of their motivations and experiences with those from the wider national project team.
Formative Moodle Assessments: A method to engage students in Marine Chemistry?

Paper

Gillian Glegg, Emma Purnell & Rebecca Shellock

Chemistry is seen as a ‘hard’ science and is often unpopular with many students entering courses such as ocean science or marine biology which are chosen as result of a passion for the marine environment. To overcome students’ antipathy to chemistry it is important to engage them in activities demonstrating the relevance of what they are learning but when working with large classes this can be challenging. It is especially difficult to provide help and formative feedback on tasks such as field data interpretation without spending many hours working with small groups. This project aimed to provide an educational assessment (formative and summative) for large classes of students to whom chemistry may seem peripheral and unpalatable. Moodle based quiz software was used to provide a varied base for a range of analytical tasks focused around field data interpretation. Moodle offers new opportunities, including a range of question types and feedback options, for more flexible assessment design. In particular it allows for a range of hints and tips to be provided before a second or third attempt at a particular question to try to guide the students to the correct answers. These answers can then be graded according to the amount of help required. This enables formative and summative assessment to be realised. This was trialled with a class of 200 stage 1 students. The assessment utilised a variety of quiz question styles, feedback (audio, text and video) and Google Earth in order to provide a clear marine context and deliver wider explanations and support. The students’ attitudes to this exercise and the effectiveness of this approach will be evaluated in the context of recent student feedback provided by questionnaires and focus groups and the lessons learned from this trial will be presented.
Student perspectives of partnership in English higher education: evaluating marketisation from the street level

Paper

Claire Gray

Partnership arrangements between English colleges and universities have been a primary mechanism in providing accessible and vocationally based higher education, particularly since 2001 (Scott, 2009). This paper uses empirical research data into the experiences of students from three English higher education partnerships to evaluate student experience, understanding of partnership arrangements and perceptions of higher education identity.

The data is analysed with reference to policy aims which have introduced a more market based higher education environment (Brown & Carasso, 2013), based on a rationale of improving both student choice and quality (Browne, 2010). Policy assumptions are discussed and challenged in relation to partnership students through examination of student decisions and lived experience of study within partnership arrangements. Relationships between colleges and universities are evaluated from the perspective of students and their expectations of higher education study.

The research draws on the bottom-up policy implementation (Bevir & Richards, 2009; Lipsky, 2010) tradition to provide analysis of the effects on partnerships of a quasi-marketised environment. The implementation of college higher education through partnership is increasingly defined through marketised discourse rather than social inclusion. A more distinct version of transactional partnership is emerging as both university and colleges re-negotiate the boundaries between competition and collaboration (Gray, 2014). It is suggested that in marketised environments of collaboration and competition, the increasing autonomy of the partnership delivering institution has profound effects on the higher education experience, with implications for the student when cast as ‘consumer’ (Palfreyman & Tapper, 2014).
An investigation into the pedagogic effectiveness of project-based learning (PjBL) for stage one students in Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences (GEES)

Nichola Harmer, Alison Stokes, Paul Lunt, John Maskall & Ruth Weaver

Curriculum changes driven by the forthcoming CEP will see an increased emphasis on active methods of teaching and learning. In particular innovative curriculum developments, such as the new ‘Plymouth Plus’ module, will involve both students and academic staff working in interdisciplinary teams to undertake project-based group activities.

To prepare for the delivery of new project-based learning (PjBL) modules in the GEES (geography, earth and environmental science) disciplines, a series of trial activities was developed to investigate the effectiveness of interdisciplinary, group-based projects as a teaching and learning strategy at stage one. The first stage of the project involved a collaborative student-staff workshop aimed at identifying the key benefits and challenges of interdisciplinary project-based learning. The outcomes from this workshop were then applied to designing a project-based activity in which sixteen students from across the GEES disciplines participated voluntarily over three successive trials. Each trial ran over a three-week period with an interdisciplinary team of 5-6 students, starting with a staff-led introduction and ending with a student-led session in which they informally presented the outcomes from their project.

Qualitative and quantitative research data into the student and staff experiences of participating in the trials were collected using a combination of surveys, pre and post-trial interviews, and transcripts from group discussions. We report on the preliminary findings from this research, and the implications for the design and delivery of interdisciplinary, project-based group work at the stage one level.
Easing the Transition: Developing Peer Assisted Learning Scheme (PALS) for new and potential masters students

Rong Huang & Elizabeth Stenhouse

Increasing numbers of master’s students are international and/or mature students who may require support both academically and within the social environment. For a small number of the students undertaking certain master’s programmes perceived lack of academic and social support may be a contributory factor to non-completion or failure of the programme of study. Therefore a holistic procedure and process for managing transition of students undertaking a master’s programme is required utilising the valuable experience of past and current master students. This research is to report the experience of the student mentors in relation to develop a student-centred peer mentor culture within the provision of master’s education in Plymouth University.

The project involved master’s students from Faculty of Business and Faculty of Health and Human Sciences. It adopts a qualitative approach to understand the experience of student mentors in running the peer-mentor sessions at master’s level. Focus group discussion during five debriefing sessions and student mentors’ own summaries of their experience in completion of their work are two main data sources. Framework analysis was adopted to analyse the focus group discussion while content analysis was used to analyse the summaries from the student mentors.

The project illustrates how minor changes to our practice can have a large impact on the experience and success of the students. It also shows the value to all students of taking an inclusive approach. In order to successfully carry on such session at master’s level, three factors should be addressed: right time for the sessions, right student mentors to lead the sessions, and right mix of students to improve learning efficiency.
Introducing Twitter as an assessed component of the undergraduate nursing curriculum: case study

Paper

Ray Jones, Janet Kelsey, Pam Nelmes, Tracey Proctor-Childs, Teresa Chinn (@WeNurses) & Nick Chinn (@WeNurses)

Background: Nursing students need to learn online professionalism, avoiding pitfalls but taking opportunities to learn from others. Twitter is widely used by qualified nurses but has not been systematically introduced to undergraduates.

Aims: To introduce optional Twitter for second and third years, and assessed Twitter for first year students.

Methods: Students received one lecture and two webinars on digital professionalism including use of Twitter. First year students had to create course Twitter accounts and were assessed by ‘process’ such as having appropriate bios and minimum number of tweets (80%), and by ‘engagement’ asking followers to give feedback (20%). Baseline registration, Twitter activity, student feedback, followers’ survey, and lecturer’s observations, were used to assess feasibility.

Results: Optional uptake of Twitter by second and third year students was modest, while 448/452 first year students created accounts and had contact with 10966 people. Of 702 ‘followers’ most responded very positively about nursing students’ Twitter use. Although 70% of students thought Twitter use was ‘probably’ or ‘very worthwhile’ only 44% learned ‘some things’ or ‘a lot’. We learned practical lessons such as the need for formalised group sessions to get stronger to help weaker students. One month after assessment 43% of students had used Twitter the previous week.

Discussion: Introducing Twitter as an assessed part of a first year nursing module is feasible and thought worthwhile by students and those they engage with online. With some modifications we expect most students to learn from Twitter and to make positive contributions to online health discussions.
Since students’ learning is largely driven by the assessment (Biggs 2003), it’s reasonable to offer the feed-forward feedback, facilitating students by clarifying goals, criteria and expected standards rather than only being reactive. Also, not all institutions have a student body that largely demonstrates an advanced capacity for organising their own learning. Rather they tend to rely on the tutor, specifically for the clarification and guidance on their assessment. The challenge is to enhance their level of confident and construct their motivation by offering explicit information and guidance on the task. Therefore, there is no doubt in the value that feed-forward feedback can offer in student’s learning, however the challenge is how to make it effective, considering the large class sizes and limited resources. Similarly, ensuring the consistency in term of communicating the assessment task, mainly when the same module is taught by many tutors across different locations can be challenging. In order to support students’ learning through assessment, and address the above mentioned challenges, the feed-forward feedback was introduced to provide the recorded video guidance on the assignment task. The module leader recorded the video assignment guideline and made it available on VLE to all students enrolled in the module. The assignment video guidance was 15-20 minutes long. Research was conducted among the Level 5 students who studied Human Resource Management module at GSM London in 2013 over two semesters.

Research has demonstrated that offering the video guidance on the assignment task has positive influence in their learning. Essentially, it enhances students self-confident to do well through motivational and instructional constructs. Research has also demonstrated that it offers students opportunity to self-assess their progress by revisiting the video number of times. Research finding has also shown that how the video guidance can be an effective tool to offer feed-forward feedback to the students with large class sizes regardless the locations
Is the electron configuration a threshold concept in entry level chemistry?

Paper

Aga Kosinska

The idea of threshold concepts has been introduced during the UK national research project by Meyer & Land (2003, 2005). In the Wordnet Dictionary, a threshold is defined as “the starting point for a new state or experience”. Threshold concepts have been described in many different ways as a gateway, internal change of thinking or core knowledge of a particular discipline. However, the idea that underpinning the concept is generally defined as a novel comprehension to already known theories which allows learner to proceed towards more advanced knowledge. In biology, for example, Taylor (2006, page 88) noticed that the engagement with threshold concepts could lead to better understanding of “biological processes at a number of scales”. In chemistry, students are also challenged by the macro-level and sub-micro-level phenomena and therefore to employ threshold concepts to make chemistry understandable and relevant would seem to be an appropriate approach. Recognition of threshold concepts in a particular discipline is crucial not only from the student’s but also from the teacher’s perspective (Cousin, 2006, 2009; Meyer & Land; 2003). The aim of this presentation is to demonstrate that electron configuration could be regarded as a threshold concept in entry level chemistry and as such should be identified at the beginning of the course. It will discuss methods of presenting the concept of electron configuration as well as a range of strategies supporting students during their learning process which, hopefully minimize the troublesome knowledge related to electron configuration and more advanced concepts such as bonding, periodicity and reactivity.

References


Ricky Lowes, Helen Bowstead & Emma Purnell

We will report on a TFA research project “Feed-forward: Exploring the staff and student experience of technology facilitated feedback - can technology support and engage staff and students in dialogic feedback?” This investigates how institutional technologies (VLE-Moodle and eportfolio system-PebblePad) can be used to support and encourage innovative feedback methods. To what extent can dialogic feedback be achieved and how much can institutional technology facilitate this approach? We will outline the research findings around feedback and feed-forward in both our VLE (Moodle) and our eportfolio system (PebblePad). A comparison will be made between the feedback functionality afforded by the VLE and eportfolio system. Both technologies have a wide range of built-in tools to support feedback. The project aimed to evaluate the different levels of engagement and usability for dialogic feedback and to develop a framework of conditions and skills needed by staff and students to work within a dialogic feedback context.

This session will discuss experiences and findings in the light of the following questions:

- What are the factors and conditions that support engaging learning conversations online?
- What skills do staff and students need to participate in dialogic online feedback?
- What is the cost and what resources are needed for a ‘learning conversation’ / dialogic approach to feedback?
- How difficult is it to use the feedback mechanisms using the technologies we have?

As well as qualitative and quantitative methods to measure activity and engagement, the project uses learning analytics from both systems to support the findings.
Enhancing the Student Learning Experience: Perspectives from self funded international PhD students

Paper

Emmanuel Mogaji (University of Bedfordshire) & Nenadi Adamu (University of Bedfordshire)

There are suggestions that the increase in UK higher education fees has led to a greater focus on enhancing the student experience by the universities. However, although International students have been paying high fees over the years, it is unclear if universities are investing in enhancing their peculiar student and learning experiences. This research explores the experience of self-funded international PhD students, on the premise that they also, deserve quality student experiences.

In examining current student experiences, semi structured interviews were carried out using a small sample of students. Some of the findings indicate that most international self-funded PhD students do not believe they have adequate learning support, and they are often expected to perform on the same level as their home counterparts. While this is possible, it is believed that international PhD students would benefit from a more structured support system to enhance their learning and student experience. Including a structured learning path of courses to the PhD curriculum, staggered through the first two years would be ideal as well as incorporating opportunities to work closely with more experienced researchers. Peer to peer mentorship is also recommended, and also a focus on enhancing their post PhD employability is vital.
Student Complaints: Staff experiences and their potential implications

Paper

Reema Muneer, Sharon Gedye, Emily Beaumont & Debby Cotton

Student complaints (and appeals) about Higher Education are on the rise (OIA, 2014). For students, the cost of going to university has grown, and significantly so in relation to the introduction tuition fees. This has fuelled the increasing consumer culture within the sector (Palfreyman, 2012). Coupled to this, Higher Education Institutions have been increasingly concerned with the student ‘voice’ and student satisfaction as measures of quality, and using these to raise standards. As a result of this context, institutions have done much to promote and facilitate students’ ability to raise informal and formal concerns and to develop their complaints and appeals processes (Behrens, 2013).

To date there has been limited research examining student complaints within Higher Education. The attention of most research in this area has been the students themselves (Cooper-Hind and Taylor, 2012). This paper reports on the findings of a Plymouth University PedRIO funded study which focuses on academic staff experiences and opinions on student complaints. Academics were asked to record their experience and opinions via an open online survey targeted at a national audience. This paper will outline the key findings of this research including academics opinions on:

- what students complain about and why
- parental involvement in student complaints
- departmental and institutional handling of complaints
- the positive and negative impact of complaints

Findings from the research will be interpreted with a view to opening a debate on how informal and formal complaint handling can be improved.
Training for competence or capability: what is the difference, why does it matter and is capability a threshold concept?

Paper

Hilary Neve & Sally Hanks

Health profession education emphasises the development of student competencies. For medical and dental undergraduates, expected competencies are detailed in national guidance, produced and monitored by the GMC and GDC (General Dental and Medical Councils). They are presented as learning outcomes, separated into domains such as biomedical, clinical and professional. Each domain tends to be assessed separately, using predictable and familiar tools and settings.

In this presentation we will question whether competence based education and assessment adequately prepares our students to practice in today’s complex, ever changing world of healthcare. We will draw on research into students’ preparedness for practice to demonstrate how just “ticking the competency box” has often left young doctors and dentists unprepared and unsure how to tackle problems in the real world.

We will argue that we need to educate our students for “capability” as well as competence. Building on the literature we will explore the nature of capability and the skills, such as the ability to formulate and solve problems in unfamiliar and changing settings, which underpin it. We will propose ways that dental and medical undergraduate profession curricula could adapt to support students to develop capabilities and discuss how these might be assessed. We will also introduce the GMC’s early work on professionalism capabilities.

Finally, we have found that, while the notion of capability can be perspective shifting and transformative for some educators, it can be troublesome for others. This has led us to suggest that “capability” may be a threshold concept for educators.
Inspiring Teaching and Learning Opportunities with the DLE

Paper

Mark Pannell

The DLE provides opportunities for both large and small changes or additions to our teaching and learning practices. This session will be a rapid-fire presentation of some of the innovative ways staff and students have used the DLE for teaching and learning in its first year. Examples will include course structures, use of a combination of peer and summative assessment tools, and some student led activities. Some techniques for achieving administrative tasks in teaching using the activities available in the DLE will also be shown, for example, using the DLE to enable students to self-select their project subject and supervisor.

This rapid-fire session is intended as a taster that will attract the attention of practitioners and lead them into an online resource illustrating how to achieve similar results to the examples shown.
Embedding PebblePad in the Curriculum. Scaffolding eportfolio activities as frameworks to support learning.

Paper

Emma Purnell & Daniel Metcalfe

Since 2009 Plymouth University has used the PebblePad eportfolio system. It is available to all staff and students, and can be used independently for personal and professional development, or as part of assessed activities within the curriculum. One of the key practices across the institution is the use of scaffolded eportfolio activities, both to support the learning process and as the primary form of assessment. Current PebblePad practice includes a diverse range of learning and teaching activities including skills audits, evidencing competency frameworks and capabilities, recording learning, action planning, placement learning, reflection, and personal and professional development. The range of disciplines where this innovative practice exists is as diverse as the practice itself, from Public Services to Paramedics, Law to Languages, Midwifery to Marine Biology, Entrepreneurial Practice to Leadership Practice and more. All activities can be informal or formative assessment opportunities. Many have these activities are stitched together into summatively assessed portfolios or online workbooks, at which point they can be reviewed by peers or tutors using the range of feedback functionality within the ATLAS (Active Teaching Learning and Assessment Space) part of PebblePad.

This session will demonstrate a number of live PebblePad examples and the supporting assessment practices. It will also outline some of the motivations driving new eportfolio adoption and the lessons learnt from existing practice. Additionally, we will touch on how as an institution we hope to scale and sustain eportfolio based learning.
Alleviating anxieties: listening to student voices through their enablers

Priska Schoenborn & Wendy Miller

Anxiety is a major issue in many areas of student life. Such anxieties are felt by many students, whether with assessed needs or not, as evidenced by the research showing a rise in mental health issues amongst university students (e.g. Andrews and Wilding, 2004). As with other groups of learners, students with assessed needs vary in their ability to express themselves, or give voice to their needs, experiences, and concerns whilst at university (MacLeod and Green 2009, Knott and Taylor 2014). The aim of an OFFA-funded project entitled 'Untapped Knowledge: learning from student enablers' was to give voice to these students through learning from their enablers, or non-medical helpers (NMHs). An online survey and subsequent focus groups with NMHs identified key themes through examples of best practice and challenges experienced by their students. These themes formed the basis for a set of 'Short Guides for Busy Academics' which provide quick tips on how to make teaching and assessment more inclusive for all students. The topics cover: course design and materials; communicating with learners; assessment; lectures; group work; and field and practical work. Changes needed at institutional level were also articulated. These include NMHs having access to the DLE, and module handbooks containing an overview of all timetabled group work, as the enablers reported that the heightened stress caused by group work can largely be reduced by such forewarning. Throughout the other guides also, strategies were given to help staff alleviate student anxiety, whether voiced or not.

References


Introducing the 3R’s Inclusive Assessment: RESEARCH, REFLECT and REFERENCING

Paper

Armani Shepherd

As part of a curriculum model enfolding the crucial role of assessment equitable learning experience, this paper presents an innovative best practice example which successfully engages students. It is flexible and can be applied to a range of subject disciplines. It encourages creative thinking, enhances research skills, engages the students and grounds them in referencing as well as incorporating good use of figures and/or plates. It develops critical reflection and can be utilized to introduce a culture shift such as the embedding enterprising entrepreneurship or careers related research into a module. It is adaptable enough to address alternative areas such as Internationalization, theory or methods. Alternatively it can be used to encourage students to go beyond that taught in the lecture. This assessment encourages mind maps and out of the box thinking (ideal within problem based learning). It avoids the structure of a formal essay to enable an inclusive assessment designed to be suitable for both left and right brained students in demonstrating their full potential in understanding and knowledge. As such this model aligns with the QAA. 2013 UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Ch B6. This paper introduces and reflects upon this assessment framework which has been practiced and developed within ethnomusicology modules over a period of four years. This assessment can align with FHEQ teaching levels 4, 5 or 6, and prepares students with skills for future modules (even careers), including those which are autonomous such as their dissertation. This is an assessment model which students find enjoyable, includes a formative peer assessment and provides added value.
Understanding the student experience of video debriefing following simulation: a case study in paramedic practice.

Paper

Gary Strong, Kirstie Brown & Rebecca Vickerstaff

Effective debriefing is seen as key to embedding learning outcomes in simulation based activities for healthcare professionals and students. The use of video in the debrief allows students to observe and critique their own and their colleagues’ practice, interactions and decision making. Paramedics are required to make appropriate clinical and ethical decisions in time critical situations. Simulation and debrief allow students to experience and explore these decisions in a safe environment. Incorporating video playback into the debrief allows accurate observation of the scenario, but the use of video may have unanticipated as well as anticipated consequences. A group of volunteer students participated in two time-critical and potentially stressful scenarios. The first involved an end-of-life care decision process, in which students needed to consider the viability and ethics of resuscitation. The second involved a cardiorespiratory arrest secondary to narcotic overdose. Video playback was used extensively in the debrief. Afterwards, students used Ipads to complete a reflection on the experience of debrief using video playback. Highlights of the student reflections are presented along with discussion of the implications for curriculum development.
Exploring the epistemological and practical experiences of Arts practitioners when engaging with an Educational Development programme

Paper

Karen Treasure, Jennie Winter & Sarah Chapman

This research seeks to develop an understanding of the epistemological and practical experiences of Arts practitioners when engaging with an educational development (ED) programme. ED programmes are tasked with developing academics from all disciplines, but informal observation of PGCAP participants, alongside emerging evidence in the literature, suggests that some Arts practitioners may disconnect with ED programmes (Booth 2013). Such tensions appear to exist despite the epistemological underpinnings of knowledge creation in Education and Arts being very similar, that is, largely interpretive and constructivist. This project thus explores this area of dissonance by exploring the epistemological and practical experiences of Arts practitioners when engaging with an ED programme.

Using interviews with Arts practitioners who have undertaken an ED programme at Plymouth University, several key issues were identified which frame their experiences. While there is broadly an acceptance of the practical value of learning how to construct modules and associated documentation, as well as the epistemological coherence of these factors, there is broad disengagement from the overall pedagogic approach and structure of ED which is widely deemed to be inapplicable to the Arts for a number of reasons. These research conclusions are significant for the wider field of ED, as there is recognition of the value of Arts as a vehicle for formal, informal and interdisciplinary learning (Seagraves et al. 2008), so mutually beneficial links between ED and Arts can help to nurture improved pedagogic practices across higher education.
Since 2010 Plymouth University has regularly undertaken student technology surveys, work that has been complemented by a series of focus groups. Initially this focussed on discovering what technology was used and owned by our campus-based and partnership students, particularly in relation to mobile devices, but recently has been expanded to included attitudes, application and confidence in Digital Skills.

The knowledge gained from the 2010/11 survey informed the design, structure and content of the ‘Mobile with Plymouth’ initiative. The 2012/13 survey helped to provide evidence of need, and design specification for the Digital Learning Environment (DLE). In particular it assisted with understanding student expectations and underlined the need for the DLE to be accessible via mobile devices.

This paper will report on the 2014/15 survey which will investigate the efficacy of the DLE and the use of DLE functions. It will also update our knowledge of student use and ownership of mobile devices and tell us about the Apps that are currently favoured.

Two key themes that have emerged since 2010 will also be explored. Firstly, that there is a mismatch between student confidence and their competence in using technology to support their learning. Secondly that students’ ownership and use changes faster than HEIs can make technology and support available to staff. Thus students’ expectations and demands are likely to be misaligned to the experience that an HEI can offer. These are both of particular interest, given the prominence of the Digital Literacy in the forthcoming QAA Higher Education Review
Making it easier to be effective tutors – the role of S3

Workshop

Paul Dowland & Ricky Lowes

This practical hands-on workshop will introduce participants to the functionality of S3 and demonstrate how it can support them in their role as personal tutors, or as Senior Personal tutors. Paul Dowland, the creator of S3, will be on hand to explain and demonstrate the technical functions, and Ricky Lowes, Senior Personal Tutor in the Plymouth Business School will facilitate discussion and exploration of how S3 can lead to more effective personal tutoring, relating this to best practice as recommended by SEDA and the HEA, and of the role S3 can play in a joined-up approach to supporting our tutees. The student facing pages of S3 will also be demonstrated.
Concept Mapping in PBL: A simple add-on?

Workshop

Kerry Gilbert, Hilary Neve, Helen Lloyd & Stephanie Bull

Problem-based learning (PBL) is a means to develop students’ understanding of concepts related to medical issues and relationships between them. Concept-mapping provides a useful visual representation of the interrelationship between concepts. To develop an understanding of a group of concepts and forge a better picture of the interrelationships between them, it is first necessary to be cognisant of what you already know. Activation of prior knowledge is a key step in PBL (and other small-group learning activities) to provide scaffolding as a basis for construction of a wider knowledge-base. We introduced concept-mapping to our PBL course to encourage students to consider their prior understanding of the issues raised within a case to provide a basis for questioning to extend knowledge and understanding around themes being addressed. Data collected suggested many uses for concept maps, both positive (useful for linking; summarising; organising learning) and negative (they were difficult/fiddly; time consuming). These findings do not seem to reflect the strength and power that can be afforded by using concept maps – i.e., they are not a simple add-on. So, what now – how will we convince our PBLers that concept maps are the way forward?

An introductory presentation will outline the work we have done on concept mapping. Then working in groups you will explore how to use concept maps to develop ideas; activate prior knowledge; hypothesise and link themes to improve understanding of specific topics. Thus, this provides a firm foundation to identify gaps in understanding allowing the organic synthesis of focussed questions.
Enhancing the postgraduate taught student experience

Workshop

Karen Gresty, Debby Cotton, Mick Fuller & Tricia Nash

A recent publication entitled ‘Transition to higher degrees across the UK’ (Wakeling and Hampden-Thompson, 2013) reports the outcomes of comprehensive research examining postgraduate taught (PGT) provision within the UK. The authors indicate that further research into institutional and subject differences is urgently needed, and this provides a rationale for the PEP project (a HEFCE-funded national project exploring the experiences of postgraduate taught students in STEM subjects, of which Plymouth University is part). The PEP project team are building an evidence base about students’ perceptions, motivations and expectations of postgraduate study, as well as their experiences once on course. The research provides additional evidence about pre-entry expectations and early experiences of PGT students, in contrast to the annual PTES survey which records the student experience at the end of the course. Although this research has been conducted with students studying in the STEM disciplines, the findings are likely to be of interest across other discipline areas.

This workshop will provide participants with the opportunity to discuss:

- factors concerning participation and successful engagement at postgraduate taught level across the STEM subjects and beyond;
- solutions to barriers and difficulties experienced by postgraduate taught participants;
- potential implications of the research findings for present and future institutional, national and international HE policies.

The workshop will draw on the experiences of PGT students and programme leads from the Faculty of Science and Environment, and will be led by members of the research team.
Reflections on co-designing and delivering the first module of the CEP: Interactive learning in lecture theatres

Workshop

Christie Pritchard & Joe Allison

Evidence suggests that although lectures can encourage passive learning, if student-centred pedagogies are adopted, active and deep learning can take place (Blight, 2000; Light et al., 2009). This notion underpins the Curriculum Enrichment Project (CEP), and during 2014, the Learning Development (LD) team collaborated with the Adult, Mental Health and Child Nursing programmes to design and deliver an immersive CEP module for first year undergraduates, titled ‘Ways of Knowing’.

This pilot module was underpinned by an academic literacies approach (Lea, 2004) and the LD team designed and delivered eight 2-hour lectures, with the aim of embedding their knowledge of critical thinking, peer-learning, academic writing and reflection, whilst maintaining a sense of becoming and belonging for the student nurses.

The workshop will explore how time was used in lecture theatres, with large student groups, in an interactive way. Activities were designed to encourage problem-solving, discussion and debate, in order to provide an engaging and interactive learning experience. As well as sharing their reflections on what worked, and what didn’t, the team will invite delegates to examine the resources and session plans used; asking them to consider what implications these could have for embedding good academic practice in their own disciplines.

References


Interactive pedagogies in the undergraduate curriculum: Some early CEP experiences

Workshop

Rebecca Turner, Debby Cotton, Victoria Hurth, Janet Kelsey, Anna Chick, Patricia Nash & Pauline Kneale

Student-centred pedagogies which promote active learning and student engagement have long been recognised as beneficial to student performance (e.g. Freeman et al., 2014). The integration of activities that stimulate problem solving and critical thinking into the undergraduate curriculum serves to promote meaningful learning and provides students with regular opportunities to apply the knowledge they are exposed to in their studies (Richardson et al., 2012). Interactive pedagogies are integral to the Curriculum Enrichment Project (CEP), and have been identified as a way in which Plymouth University can provide a stimulating and cutting edge experience to future undergraduate students. In September 2014, 19 programmes from across the Faculties of Business, Health and Education (the ‘transition group’) redesigned their undergraduate curricula to align with the principles of CEP. Alongside this move PedRIO commenced a programme of work to evaluate the implementation of CEP and gain insights into the experiences of staff and students from these programmes to inform the wider roll-out of CEP.

In this workshop we will provide an overview of a cross-institutional survey conducted as part of this work to capture the ‘first experiences’ of first year students. Two module leaders from the transition group who were responsible for the design and implementation of the first immersive module will offer insights into their experiences. We will then use a ‘silent discussion’ to examine some of the opportunities and challenges presented to us through the move to interactive pedagogies through CEP.

References


The Geek Culture, Social Interaction and Peer Assisted Learning (PALS)

Workshop

Ismini Vasileiou

Teaching Computing has always been a challenge. Gender imbalance, lack of social interaction, and isolation of the student lead to exploring further ways of approaching and supporting the students. IT and Computing, are not about how many lines of code you write. The real world requires soft skills, transferable skills, such as presentation, writing etc. How do you 'teach' those skills to someone who falls under one of the categories above. Where do you stand as the teacher? Are you part of this 'geek' stereotype culture?

Peer Assisted Learning has now become a significant step in Higher Education. The HEA 2014 report explored and evidenced the benefits of peer assisted learning across the UK. This workshop aims to map those outcomes against current strategies in teaching computing degrees. Strategies that will be explored are lecture, flipped classroom and practicals. The session will explore the current situation and how things have been changing and improving while peer assisted learning has been embedded into the classroom.
Critical thinking across the disciplines: understanding and application

Poster A

Joseph Allison

Critical thinking is widely recognised as a defining, yet troublesome concept of education, yet Pithers and Soden’s (2000) review highlighted a lack of research regarding its development at degree level. Research activity has since increased, although little work has looked at the understanding of this concept held by academic staff. Disciplinary differences in how critical thinking is experienced and understood may be responsible for uncertainty regarding its pedagogy, and why it remains a troublesome concept (Moore, 2011). Moore (2013) suggests the idea of, ‘institutional meta-langauges’ of critical thinking that embrace and celebrate disciplinary difference. Whilst Jones (2009) stresses the need to ‘open-up’ generic attributes such as critical thinking, recognising their ‘multiplicity, connected and transformative’ nature. This study will explore the degree to which the understanding and use of critical thinking varies across disciplines at Plymouth University. Specifically looking at: how academic staff talk about critical thinking, individually, within, and across disciplines; what it means to them and their discipline; and, how they try to convey it to their students? Using focus groups, interviews and practice observations, it will look into how the discourse of critical thinking is incorporated, fostered and played-out in practice. Appreciating the varied nature of critical thinking within and across disciplines, how it is constructed, used and taught, ‘discipline knowledge in action’ (Jones, 2009). Without this understanding, claims of, ‘narrow’ and ‘flat’ teaching (Alston, 2001) that result in the ‘trivialisation of critique’ (Masschelein, 2004), and shallow instrumentalised reasoning (Brookfield, 2012), will not go away.
Student social engagement: what can they learn, what can they give?

Poster B

Richard Ayres & Sebastian Stevens

Why should the University provide community experience for healthcare students? What is the pedagogic value? Is there value in inter-disciplinary placements? Finally, can students make a valued contribution for providers whilst learning themselves?

The Cumberland Academic Health Centre (CAHC) opened in Feb 2013, a joint initiative between the University of Plymouth and Plymouth Community Healthcare. Providing community-based teaching is one of the key aims of the project along with research on the impact of such placements.

The PEDRIO funded “Making a difference interdisciplinary social engagement project” co-ordinated by CAHC is providing placements for both medical and nursing students in 3 Plymouth-based social providers (Devonport House, Shekinah Mission and Plymouth Community Homes). The project also put on a major health promotion event in Devonport that included healthcare students from 10 disciplines and attracted huge attention from local groups and the Plymouth Herald newspaper.

The project will be evaluated for both students and providers using diaries, interviews, focus groups, photos and questionnaires.

This presentation will present the experience so far of this project and of CAHC in providing authentic community experiences to a variety of U of P healthcare students in the setting of one of the most deprived communities in the S West.
Shifting the threshold of motivation theory to overcome local disquietudes in Coimbatore, India

Poster C

Venkat Bakthavatchaalam, Mike Miles, Andrew Fox & Joachim Gingele

Many would argue that the threshold of motivation theory is situated firmly in a Western culture and doctrine. From this threshold, ideas about motivation in the workplace have been projected onto other, non-Western cultures. In some instances local cultures have reacted to counter the alien cultural bias, but in most cases local cultures have acquiesced and strained to conform to the imported ideology, on the assumption of its superiority to indigenous thinking.

India may be described as a case in point. India has a deep and rich cultural heritage, but for many years its economic development lagged behind most Western countries. Recently however, India has outperformed most Westernised economies and, while the Initial surge in performance could be credited to the adoption of Western models of operation, as the economy has matured so has the confidence of the indigenous management. India is now at a threshold moment, where the value of a Western mode of thinking is being challenged. Disquietudes are being expressed about the on-going effectiveness of alien ideologies to support the future expansion of the Indian economy.

India’s success has spawned significant investment in Higher Education research, but most investigations into what motivates Indian academics to conduct research have been based on Western theories and concepts. This research samples a cross-section of the 64 Higher Education Engineering departments in Coimbatore. It seeks to detect shifts in the threshold of motivation theory, to quantify local disquietudes about alien motivation theory in Coimbatore and to elicit evidence of indigenised adaptations to motivation theory that have the potential to shift the current threshold of the concept.
What do dental trainers think of the preparedness for practice of dental graduates?

Poster D

Cathy Coelho, Sally Hanks & Priska Schoenborn

We will briefly report on progress of a PedRIO project investigating the views of Dental Foundation trainers on graduates’ preparedness for practice:

- Why this project was undertaken
- What we did and how
- The initial results and possible implications for the future, as well as
- What is yet to be done
Raising Awareness of Unconscious Bias in Teaching and Learning

Poster E

Debby Cotton, Jennie Winter, Reema Muneer & Despina Tsilimagou

There is increasing evidence that we all form stereotypical associations and make inaccurate judgements about people (positive or negative), without explicitly being aware that we are doing so (Greenwald and Krieger, 2006). This is termed unconscious or implicit bias, and its effects may be exhibited through ‘micro-behaviours’. The impact of unconscious bias on certain groups (particularly women and ethnic minorities) can be very serious. For example:

- Papers with a female first author are more likely to be given a lower rating than those with a male first author (Borsuk, 2009)
- Peer reviewers give female applicants lower scores than male applicants who display the same level of scientific productivity (Wenneras and Wold, 1997)
- Requests for information on doctoral study are ignored by academics at a higher rate if from women and minorities (Milkman et al., 2014)
- Differences in staff expectations of students’ abilities are picked up by the students and can affect their performance (Rubie-Davies, 2006).

Student interactions (in group work etc.) may also be influenced by unconscious bias (Cotton et al., 2013), and it may impact on marking where this is not anonymous (Fleming, 1999). Yet recent research at Plymouth indicated a lack of awareness about the potential impact of unconscious bias on interactions between students and staff (Cotton et al., 2015) – and this may be a contributor to the gender and ethnicity attainment gap. There remains a substantial differential in achievement between male and female students and between white and BME students, thus this is a very important issue which all teaching staff should be aware of and take steps to mitigate.

This poster will report on a recent teaching fellowship project aimed at enhancing understanding of the issues surrounding unconscious bias in higher education with a view to helping move the university towards a culture change in thinking about equality and diversity in teaching and learning. The project team developed a set of resources to assist teaching staff in identifying and managing unconscious bias. These materials can be used as stand-alone resources - or as a basis for educational development workshops.

Key issues to be considered in this poster will include:

- What is unconscious bias?
- How does it impact on teaching and learning in higher education?
What steps can we take to reduce its impact?

The poster will also highlight some of the key outputs from the project, including a 7 steps guidance document for academics and an online resource designed in Xerte. Evaluation of these resources both internally and externally has been exceptionally positive and further dissemination is planned.

References


What can S3 do for you (and your students)?

Poster F

Paul Dowland & Ricky Lowes

The poster will illustrate the functions of S3 at a variety of levels: manager, personal tutor, teacher, and student, and shows how, by providing quick and easy access to data at programme, module and individual student level, and facilitating information sharing, it can support staff in working more effectively with students. We hope that by providing a clear and engaging visual display, a greater number of colleagues will be informed about the possibilities offered by S3.
Concept mapping in PBL: a simple add-on?

Poster H

Kerry Gilbert, Hilary Neve, Helen Lloyd & Stephanie Bull

Problem-based learning (PBL) is a means to develop students’ understanding of concepts related to medical issues and relationships between them. Concept-mapping provides a useful visual representation of the interrelationship between concepts. To develop an understanding of a group of concepts and forge a better picture of the interrelationships between them, it is first necessary to be cognisant of what you already know. Activation of prior knowledge is a key step in PBL (and other small-group learning activities) to provide scaffolding as a basis for construction of a wider knowledge-base. We introduced concept-mapping to our PBL course to encourage students to consider their prior understanding of the issues raised within a case to provide a basis for questioning to extend knowledge and understanding around themes being addressed. Data collected suggested many uses for concept maps, both positive (useful for linking; summarising; organising learning) and negative (they were difficult/fiddly; time consuming). These findings do not seem to reflect the strength and power that can be afforded by using concept maps – i.e., they are not a simple add-on. So, what now – how will we convince our PBLers that concept maps are the way forward?
Exploring life histories of young women undertaking an ITE Course

Poster I

Suki Honey

Exploring life histories of young women undertaking an ITE Course  There are numerous studies investigating the take up of STEM subjects by women. All of them report that, despite years of initiatives taken at local and government level, the number of women studying mathematics to A-level and beyond continues to be low. Low take up at higher level mathematics courses results in even fewer women taking up employment in STEM related occupations. Many of these occupations (such as civil engineers, statisticians, computer software developers) have the potential to influence policy makers. This can often mean that half of the population is under represented (if at all) when it comes to decision making and policy design.

This study investigates the life histories of 4 women BEd Primary ITE students, who have chosen to specialise in Mathematics. Literature suggests that their beliefs and attitudes towards mathematics and mathematics pedagogy will influence the girls in their primary classrooms, as they were once influenced by the teachers that taught them. By collecting their biographical histories, this study hopes to shed some light on the choices they made and the people that influenced their decisions. Their narratives provide a deeper insight into why they have chosen to become primary school teachers, rather than follow a STEM related career.

This study will have implications for the teaching and learning of mathematics within the ITE programmes and beyond. It is hoped that the findings will influence policy makers within schools and provide a new model for classroom practice.
Feed-forward to scaffold guided autonomous learning

Poster J

Ricky Lowes

This poster reports on how a series of structured tasks using feed-back which then feeds forward in a dovetailed fashion into the next task can be used to support and facilitate engagement with autonomous learning. It explores to what extent students are aware of their own development as learners, and how far they engage with opportunities for dialogic feedback. Factors that support or hinder students’ engagement with the process are identified, and the relationship between engagement and achievement is explored. Analysis will draw on frameworks proposed by Yang and Carless (2012) and Shute (2008).
Plymouth Law School embraced the embedding of sustainability into the curriculum early, and it features across all three stages of the LLB (Hons) programme, appreciating the relationship between values, policy and the law (Varnava, Lowther, Payne 2010) In Stage 2 (Level 5) this is embedded in European Union (EU) Law, a 20 credit year-long compulsory module. The EU has integrated sustainability into all its policies and it is a Treaty-based obligation to ground secondary legislation in sustainability (TEU, art. 3; TFEU art. 11).

The module syllabus begins with an 8 week exploration of the various means of enforcing EU law. In 2010 the module team decided to introduce sustainability at the end of this part of the syllabus to provide a means of ensuring both the cementing of sustainability literacy; and a practical vehicle for comprehending the often arcane EU enforcement processes. There is clear synergy here: students of EU law gain a deeper understanding of how the law is enforced; and in doing so their competences are augmented though the contextual linkage of a critical EU policy imperative. Thus the methods by which laws are enforced against member states for failure to fulfil their EU law obligations is an intrinsic part of the design for learning from this resource. By fusing it with the notion of sustainability, the workbook permits the user to appreciate in a practical way how failures in implementation are dealt with; potential outcomes, including consequences/ sanctions for the member state; and, permit the potential for an evaluative application of the extent to which member states’ practices are aligned with the sustainability imperative.

The approach adopted is an ‘e-workbook’, collating and hyper-linking a variety of sources and directing students through a series of tasks. The material is studied autonomously over a three week period and assessed in the end of module examination through the use of objective and short answer questions representing 25% of the overall total. Students are supported in their learning throughout the module with formative assessment opportunities and a tutor ‘open door’ query and feedback policy.

In the four years of its use, the e-workbook has evolved into a valuable resource, and, anecdotally promoted a wider appreciation and application of sustainability. It is now themed on the approachable, yet contentious area of water quality – and specifically bathing water quality – the directed study tasks in the workbook provide the students with a series of exercises enabling them to locate issues of obligation, liability, and apply their understanding of sustainability to this issue. The exercises are particularly designed to improve research skills, working as a bridge between Stages 1 and 3 where higher autonomous research skills, particularly at the law/policy interface, are required.
The module team are currently planning follow-up work to assess the degree to which sustainability concepts are retained and the extent to which it is a literacy that could be identified as a characteristic of Plymouth law graduates.
Grand Challenges: Tackling global sustainability issues at the University of Exeter

Poster L

Hannah Lloyd-Jones & Jessie Becker-Rock

The University of Exeter is committed to promoting environmental sustainability through education and research. One of innovative ways it does so is through Grand Challenges, a week-long summer programme for undergraduate students.

The programme addresses some of the biggest sustainability challenges faced by society in the 21st century, such as sustainable food production, fashion and building, as well as conservation and climate change.

Students work together and share knowledge in small interdisciplinary research groups. Over 600 undergraduate students from our six academic colleges participated in Grand Challenges 2014, alongside post-graduate research students and academic staff with differing areas of expertise. This mixed environment allows students from different backgrounds to understand how their particular knowledge fits into the bigger picture, and helps them make links with different areas to find multidisciplinary solutions to issues of sustainability.

The programme takes place after exams in the summer term—in spaces both familiar and unfamiliar to students. One Challenge took over an empty shop in a local shopping centre and worked with the public throughout the week to raise awareness of the ethics around fashion. Another Challenge saw students working at a community centre to design and plant a sensory garden, teaching students about issues around mental health and connecting them to the local community. Taking students out of their comfort zone physically by undertaking learning in non-academic spaces helped students to think outside the box and about the real world impact of their work, connecting their academic work with real people, places and projects.

One student said “Grand Challenges helps you engage with the real world, doing something meaningful you can be proud of. Yes, I was part of that and it was amazing!” The Challenges are designed to be highly motivating for students by giving them the opportunity to be the active architects of their group learning. Groups set their own goals, take initiative in planning group activities and are responsible for delivering high quality outputs at the end of the Challenges. Groups in 2013 and 2014 were led by post-graduate facilitators and in 2015, Challenges will be co-designed by small group of undergraduate student leaders. By creating real world outputs such as videos, apps, social media campaigns and policy documents in one week, students apply their knowledge to a format that can have more
impact than the traditional essay. In many cases, students have been able to use these outputs to inform the wider community about sustainability issues.

The skills sessions that Grand Challenges students attend prior to the June week prepare them for working in an innovative learning space as well as for applying their learning — for example sessions include understanding team dynamics, project planning and presentation skills. By using different learning techniques and spaces, the Grand Challenges programme incentivises student involvement in and understanding of sustainability issues. The programme helps students form and become part of communities that want to make a difference beyond the lifetime of Grand Challenges.
International students: Issues and concerns

Paper M

Patrick McMahon

This paper presents the findings from a grounded theory study undertaken at Plymouth University into the main concerns of international students and the strategies that students exploit in order to resolve those concerns. One of the main concerns that international students face is in their struggle to communicate effectively in their second language: findings show that students who have a different first language are generally dissatisfied with their English language level and feel disadvantaged as a result. In response to this, they often fall back into using their first language for study and background reading, and weaker students make use of translation tools with mixed results. International students are disappointed with the level of interaction that they achieve with British students and British society in general, and active students react to this by exploiting opportunities to meet people through volunteering and sports activities. Other students react by turning to their conationals for support and they form strong support networks to help each other with practical, emotional and academic issues. Ultimately, international students come to terms with their challenge through a process of learning which transforms their identity.
Immersive Interprofessional Learning

Poster N

Miriam McMullan

In response to the University Curriculum Enrichment Project (CEP) initiative to facilitate student learning, I developed and led a large interprofessional education (IPE) module on ‘Preparation for Professional Practice’, involving students (n~300) and academic staff (n=12) from 6 healthcare programmes. My approach was based on pedagogic research indicating that the theoretical underpinning for IPE is social constructivism which emphasises that we learn through interactions with others (McMahon, 1997). However, for interprofessional learning to be truly successful it is important that students engage actively with the roles, values and beliefs of students from other professions. It is therefore crucial that interprofessional learning is interactive, as active collaborative learning through common tasks and discussions in interprofessional groups will help to achieve shared understanding (Hean et al, 2009). Therefore, to ensure that students in the seminars would work interprofessionally, small IPE working groups (5-7 students/group) were incorporated in each of the seminar groups, the seminars were facilitated by interprofessional lecturers and interprofessional scenarios were used. In pedagogical terms the aim was to encourage active learning i.e. students ‘doing’, rather than ‘reading about’ and enabling students to develop effective partnerships with peers from different professions (Cousin, 2010).

In September 2014 the module was the first and only module students attended for two weeks. Benefits of the CEP were expected to be greater critical engagement of students with their learning; active learning and team work; leading to students who would be flexible, innovative and confident in team settings (Kneale and Driscoll, 2013), which feedback confirmed.
New developments in the online assessment of mathematics at Plymouth University

Poster O

Craig McNeile

Computer based assessment systems for mathematics offer many advantages, such as: rapid feedback, and individual randomized tests. I report my experiences with using Maple T.A., an online assessment system for mathematics. Maple T.A. includes a computer algebra system, which allows sophisticated mathematics questions to be used in tests. I compare my experiences using Maple T.A. with the experiences of other staff members at Plymouth University, who have used the quizzes in Moodle for mathematics problems.
The PEP Project: Exploring the expectations, barriers and experiences of PGT students.

Poster P

Tricia Nash, Debby Cotton, Mick Fuller & Karen Gresty

Plymouth University is part of a national study exploring the postgraduate student experience in STEM subjects (the PEP project). Led by Kingston University and with collaborators in 10 other UK universities, this is one of the biggest projects funded by HEFCE under its postgraduate support scheme. Part of the project was also the award of three different types of scholarships to 40 applicants to cover the costs of course fees either 100%, 60% or a contribution of £1000. The research side of the project aims to:

- Explore applicants’ perceptions, motivations, and expectations of PGT study
- Explore the barriers to PGT study
- Explore the experiences of students undertaking PGT study
- Explore the outcomes of students as a result of undertaking PGT study
- Explore the impact of a scholarship on PGT study
- Compare the Plymouth University experience to the National picture.

During September and October 2014, all new STEM postgraduate students were asked to complete an Entry to Study Survey about their attitudes to and expectations of postgraduate level of study. In February and March of this year, all the 40 scholarship students and a group of students who had not received a scholarship but had submitted a survey, were asked to take part in a focus group which discussed the students’ experiences so far.

This poster will articulate some of the initial findings about students’ expectations and concerns as well as the perceived impact of a scholarship on PGT study.
Mapping Sustainability in the Curriculum

Poster Q

Michael Pretious & Laurie Blair

Queen Margaret University Edinburgh (QMU) has used sustainability as one of its key developmental pillars in its relationship with the local community. It also currently has a research theme looking at ‘Sustainable Business’.

However, little effort had previously been made to examine the use of sustainability* as a teaching theme. This poster details preliminary research funded internally that investigated the extent to which sustainability permeates the taught curriculum in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the Schools of Arts, Social Science and Management and Health Sciences.

The methodology comprised a thorough analysis of programme and module documentation across the Schools. Textual analysis identified the prevalence of key words associated with sustainability. The poster presents the findings, and identifies the concentrations of modules associated with sustainability in each School.

Future work will develop case studies illustrating best practice, which will focus on the importance of sustainability as a teaching tool in Higher Education that fosters graduate attributes and aids perceived employability.

*‘Sustainability’ is broadly defined according to the ‘Triple Bottom Line’ model developed in the United Nations / Brundtland Report (1987), thus examples of curricular interventions that relate to the environment, society and the economy are adduced.
Increasing the Impact of Education Research through the use of Social Media

Poster R

Sebastian Stevens, David Sibley & Grace Anderson

Demonstrating how a research project will achieve impact is a large part of most educational research bids today, with many funders looking for more than a conference paper and journal article as being sufficient. Funders today want to see not only how your research will contribute to the current body of knowledge, but also how it could impact other areas of academia as well as providing economic and societal wide benefits (Research Councils UK: online). Requiring high levels of research impact is a particular concern for education and social science research where the majority of funding comes from public funding streams.

SHINE (Self Help Inspiring E-Resources) is a research project at Plymouth University that is creating a hub of self-help information to promote resilience and support mental health and wellbeing. It aims to meet the Research Councils (UK) pathways to impact by ‘Improving health and wellbeing’ and ‘Increasing public engagement with research and related societal issues’. To engage students, staff and the wider general public in the research, Twitter and Facebook are utilised and managed through a social media management system. This software has provided the research team the opportunities to not only manage the content of the social media sites, but also to analyse and evaluate the level of public engagement in the research through complex analytics. The results of these ongoing analytics provide an evidence base for the level of impact provided throughout the research process. We would now like to share with others the benefits, challenges and considerations of using social media management systems as a tool of engagement.

References

Delivering interdisciplinary project-based learning (PjBL) at stage one: practical outcomes and lessons learned from a curriculum development project in the GEES disciplines

Poster S

Alison Stokes, Nichola Harmer, Paul Lunt, John Maskall & Ruth Weaver

A curriculum development project undertaken in the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences has explored the practicalities of delivering project-based learning (PjBL) to interdisciplinary groups of stage one students by undertaking a series of trials designed to mimic the style of teaching and learning that will take place within new active and immersive modules delivered under the Curriculum Enrichment Project (CEP).

Following a preliminary workshop in which students and academic staff worked in partnership to identify a range of perceived benefits and challenges to interdisciplinary PjBL, academic staff developed a trial activity designed to be undertaken by small (4-6 students) interdisciplinary groups. Using a combination of staff-led sessions and resources delivered via a dedicated Moodle site and designed to simulate a ‘flipped classroom’ approach, students worked together to complete a research-based task and report back on their findings.

The outcomes from the trials have provided critical insight into the experiences of both learners and instructors when undertaking interdisciplinary PjBL, which will aid the practical delivery of new modules. Although the trials were undertaken outside of their normal timetable, the students enjoyed participating and highlighted the potential benefits of interdisciplinary group-based projects to their academic, employability and social skills. They also provided valuable feedback about important aspects of the pedagogic approach including the initial allocation of groups, contact time with staff, resources, and nature and style of assessment. Staff have benefitted from designing and developing activities which are inclusive of learners from a range of academic disciplines, and experimenting with new ways of delivering instruction.
Catch of the day: WrAssE, a resource for academic writing

Poster T

Jason Truscott, John Hilsdon & Joe Allison

Writing in academic contexts is not something that all students are able to do well from the outset. Learning Development supports students from varied backgrounds and differing academic ability through bespoke workshops, guides, tutorials and the Writing Cafe. However, in the process of helping students to improve their writing there are a number of frequently asked questions from learners: - “What does ‘good’ actually look like?” and practitioners: - “How can students see what critical writing looks like in the context of their discipline?” - “Where can I get examples of academic writing that can be accessed on demand?” - “How is it possible to do this efficiently, collaboratively and globally in our expanding digital world?”

Learning Development aims to address these questions in a rejuvenated online digital platform that both students and staff can utilise. A digital study area called: Writing for Assignments E-library (WrAssE). The concept of WrAssE has been with Plymouth University since 2002, originally introduced by John Hilsdon (Head of Learning Support and Wellbeing), and part of the excellent LearnHigher resources. Learning Development are now ready to unveil an enhanced version of WrAssE: all the good old functionality with improved usability and extra features. Come and discover the brand new WrAssE, and see how you can contribute to its expansion - hook, line and sinker!
SSTAR Award Winners 2015

Each year UPSU holds the prestigious SSTAR Awards, recognising the many excellent university staff members and dedicated student representative’s we have here at the Plymouth University.

Every year staff and reps are nominated in a range of categories, from most inspirational teaching to best use of technology and outstanding school rep. This year we have had an outstanding number of nominations, with over 1000 individual nominations being made!

A student committee then decides on Faculty winners for each award, with the overall winner being revealed at a big awards ceremony at the end of the year.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most Dedicated Dissertation/Project Supervisor</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>David White</td>
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Outstanding Personal Tutor

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<td>Dave Easterbrook</td>
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Support Staff (University Wide)

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<tr>
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<td>Alex Bordol</td>
<td>Highly commended: Volunteering</td>
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<td>Nicola Symons</td>
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<td>Nadine Jeffery</td>
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Best Placement Support

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<td>Lauren Kay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sylvia Terbeck</td>
<td>Highly Commended - Psychology</td>
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Most Innovative use of Teaching Methods

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Outstanding Support Staff (School and Faculty Based)

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<td>Will Ververs</td>
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Best Course Rep

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Outstanding School Rep

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<td>Highly Commended: Health Professions</td>
<td>Health &amp; Human Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrietta Beynon</td>
<td>Winner: Biomedical &amp;Healthcare Sciences</td>
<td>Medicine &amp; Dentistry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lucy Richardson</td>
<td>Highly Commended: Geography, Earth &amp; Environmental Sciences</td>
<td>Science &amp; Engineering</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stand-out Forum Chair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sophie Godwin</td>
<td>Winner: Education</td>
<td>Arts &amp; Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Cox</td>
<td>Highly Commended: Plymouth Business School</td>
<td>Business</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ellen Lamb</td>
<td>Highly Commended: Psychology</td>
<td>Health &amp; Human Sciences</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Gold Awards:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophie Godwin</td>
<td>Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alan Willetts</td>
<td>Health Professions</td>
<td>Health &amp; Human Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jessica Small</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Health &amp; Human Sciences</td>
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