TDF APPLICATIONS
EXEMPLAR
CASE STUDIES

March 2017
We hope that you will find this selection of exemplars useful as you complete your own TDF application. Naturally, case studies differ considerably in terms of topic and writing style. There is no set approach that applicants are obliged to follow. The featured exemplars were commended by the TDF review panel and support team, based on their interesting focus; depth of reflection; use of pertinent literature; and integration of evaluative sources (e.g. students, peers, external stakeholders, performance data).

Kind regards,

The TDF team
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1. ASSOCIATE FELLOWSHIP

Area: Medicine

EXAMPLE 1.1 - PROMOTING CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF RESOURCES

One of the roles of a small group facilitator (SGF) is to “foster critical thinking” 1. As a facilitator I have to assess and give feedback to students on their ability to critically analyse resources. These resources include web-based resources, which research has shown are a significant part of medical education 2. Year 2 Problem Based Learning (PBL) students are assessed on their ability to be reflective and critical about the relevance, quality and limitations of the sources and evidence that they use. Students evidence this by posting relevant resources on their group’s forum on the digital learning environment, along with some points of critical analysis about the resource. This is an important lifelong skill in the ever changing world of medicine, when the General Medical Council (GMC) states that doctors must keep their professional knowledge and skills up to date 3. Students will have to refer to resources regularly once they qualify. It is therefore important that they have the skills to critically analyse their sources, to ensure they are using and interpreting information in a way that will provide the best care for their patients. [A3; K1; K2; K4; V3; V4]

However, at times it has felt difficult to engage some students in this process. Students need to understand the importance and impact of critical thinking 4. Therefore, to teach them that this skill is relevant not just as students, but once they qualify, I have advised them that as a GP, I frequently look up information to help me in the care of my patients. I also act as a role model 1 by posting resources myself on the forum and including a critical analysis of the resource. [A2; A4; K1; K2; V4]

Students are given training during the Clinical Decision Making (CDM) area of the course on how to critically analyse research papers. However, in my experience, students often use websites for their PBL research. Even when they do critically analyse them, often this is very brief, for example only mentioning the date of publication. The CDM Lead confirmed that specific critical analysis of websites is not currently included in their training. Therefore I felt it would be helpful to teach students an approach to critically analysing the websites they were using for PBL research. I suggested a framework for this, making it easy to remember by using letters beginning with the same letter for each point: what, who, why, where, when? What is the resource and how is it relevant to your learning? Who wrote it and who is the target audience? Why was it written? Where was it written? When was it written? I asked each student to use this framework to critically analyse a resource they had used for their PBL research. Another university had a framework available for analysing websites, which took a very similar approach 5. [A2; A4; K1; K2; K3; V2]

I shared this framework with the other facilitators, who also used it with the students in their groups. Feedback from another facilitator confirmed that it was a useful exercise, but that students did not continue using the framework in subsequent PBL work. Therefore, during the next academic year, we plan to set out clear expectations for the students regarding regular critical analysis of resources in each PBL case unit so that they can develop this skill. [A1; V2; K5; K6]

References


EXAMPLE 1.2 - DEALING WITH CONFLICT WITHIN A SMALL GROUP

One Problem Based Learning (PBL) group I facilitated gave me feedback that I should “intervene more quickly with conflict / inappropriate comments in the group”. However, the role of a small group facilitator is not to dominate group discussion but rather facilitate the process. Therefore this feedback left me with a dilemma of how best to intervene whilst not dominating the group. Qualified doctors must work collaboratively with colleagues, respecting the skills and contributions of others, so it is important for medical students to develop the skills to deal with conflict themselves in preparation for their team work in the future.

The group in question had experienced one particularly difficult session when discussion had become heated due to a difference in opinion regarding the benefits of patient support groups. The group made ground rules at the start of the year, which included listening to and respecting other group members, as well as a different member taking turns to chair each session. I realise that I did not intervene straight away when conflict arose as I hoped that the group would remember their group rules, the chair would take a leadership role and the students would resolve their disagreement in a satisfactory manner. I was also aware that the one student in the group who did not appear to see the benefits of patient support groups was an international student from a different cultural background to other group members and I did not want this student to feel victimised. Also, although conflict has the potential to harm group functioning, it may be an unavoidable “storming” stage through which the group needs to progress. Conflict can be indicative of innovation in a group, plus debate can help to foster critical thinking.

In this situation I did take some action after the event, including encouraging the students to discuss this issue in their feedback. For the next session I brought in an icebreaker activity about seeing issues from different points of view and encouraged all the students to do this within group sessions when there was a difference of opinion. I also gave individual written feedback to the student who had expressed strong views during the session, regarding how to express alternative opinions to others whilst still being respectful.

The following term with a new group, I decided to introduce the idea of conflict resolution more explicitly at the start of term when discussing their group rules. I was honest with my PBL groups about the dilemma I had about not wanting dominate the group, but to empower them to have the skills to resolve conflict themselves. I asked them to discuss in pairs, whilst setting their group rules, strategies for dealing with conflict should it arise, so that they could be prepared for this and already have considered in advance what to do in this situation. My hope was that should a heated conflict arise again, I would be able to refer students back to their own discussions and invite them to apply the strategies they had formulated, enabling me to facilitate the process rather than being directive.

References


Area: Psychology

EXAMPLE 1.3 - DEVELOPING APPROPRIATE METHODS FOR TEACHING

The workshops we deliver give students an opportunity to practice some of the concepts they have learnt in an associated lecture, and as such it is important that they have grasped the main points of the lecture. At the beginning of each workshop we check that all students attended the lecture and asked what they had remembered from it. However, when we asked often they did not respond, or just one person would respond. We did not know whether they knew the information and chose not to say (maybe too shy) or not.

In order to respond to this problem, the Stage I workshop leaders had a meeting to decide the best course of action. Since asking students what they remembered was not working, we knew we needed to find another method. We understood from what we’d learnt at our GTA teaching course, that using a variety of assessment methods would ensure that specific students would not be disadvantaged. We added a short test of knowledge to the beginning of each workshop, as formative assessment and feedback are crucial for students to learn effectively and help them achieve the learning objectives of the module (NUS, 2015).

One method of assessment we chose was to present questions on worksheets to complete in small groups. Group work encourages knowledge to be tested through articulation and discussion (Williams, Beard & Rymer, 1991). We followed advice by Kerr and Bruun (1983) that the optimal group size to allow students to develop a sense of identity and ownership is between 4 and 6 people. As recommended by one of the universities 7 steps guides (7 Steps with Plymouth University) we allocated groups using a range of approaches. For example, sometimes we gave each student a number and asked them to form groups according to the number given (this approach was especially useful when students had not got to know any of their colleagues yet) and on other occasions we let them self-select their groups.

We also invited students to bring their lecture notes along with them so that they could look the answers up if necessary as the nature of the material does not lend itself to rote learning (E.g. Behaviourist style learning). When the workshops were delivered in computing rooms, students could also access the internet to view lecture slides. We also prepared a few key slides from the lecture so that if we found out students were unsure of the key points then we could use the slides as a trigger memory from the lecture to enable us to recap/explain.

Students engaged with the new-style workshops and we could see that whilst some students had remembered the key points from the lecture, many had not. Therefore, this new style of workshop allowed students to fully engage with and understand the key concepts encountered in the lecture before going on to participate in the rest of the workshop. This type of formative group work helps to avoid some of the perils of summative assessment (Jones, 2014). It also has a wider benefit of improving student well-being and developing transferable skills that prepare them for the workplace (Jaques, 2000) [V4].

References

7 Steps with Plymouth University. 7 Steps to: Using group work in your teaching. Online: https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/2/2398/7_steps_to_using_group_work_in_your_teaching_March_2013__1_.pdf


Area: Psychology

**EXAMPLE 1.4 - GIVING STUDENT FEEDBACK**

As part of my role I mark practical reports and it is also my job to discuss feedback with students when they request it. I was emailed by one such student who was unhappy that her report, marked by a colleague of mine, had been awarded a D grade. This mature student felt like she had put a lot of effort into the report and that this effort had not been fairly awarded; she was very unhappy. This situation provided an opportunity to demonstrate my commitment to developing assessment literacy (Taylor, 2009).

I arranged to meet the student quite quickly understanding the importance of communication between student and tutor (Laurillard, 2002) and of giving timely feedback (Race, 2011). Whilst it was not appropriate for me to make a judgement on the grade, I believed that it had been fairly given with good written feedback. I was able to explain to the student that whilst she had obviously put lots of effort into her report, she had not put effort into the areas that were being assessed as based on the marking criteria. I encouraged her to look at feedback as a learning experience that she could utilise for her next report. We went through the marking criteria together to demonstrate where she should focus her attention for next time. [A2, A3, A4]

Hattie and Timperley (2007:81) recognise that the impact feedback has can be both positive and negative, and through dialogue with this particular student I was able to turn an initial negative perception of her feedback into a positive perception. The student popped in to see me some months later and was proud to tell me that she was continuing to use feedback constructively and had progressively got better at report writing (going from a D grade, to a C and then a B). This demonstrates that this student was empowered to improve her own learning (Dawson, Magne & Sentito, 2009). As ensuring students are familiar with the assessment criteria is essential in helping them to be successful in their report writing (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006), we focus on doing this much more now in our workshops. We show them the criteria and discuss the key points that they should focus on for each assignment they complete. In one workshop a colleague has developed a new activity that requires using the assessment criteria to evaluate an example practical report. This is a condensed version of the successful 90-minute intervention developed by Oxford Brookes University (ASKe, Oxford Brookes) where students are asked to mark two sample assignments, both individually and in groups before getting tutor feedback. Due to time constraints, in our version students mark one section of a practical report in small groups before discussing their mark and feedback with the larger group and tutor.

**References**

Aske (Assessment Standards Knowledge exchange The Centre for Excellence in Assessment at the Business School), Oxford Brookes University. Improve your students’ performance in 90 minutes! Online: https://www.brookes.ac.uk/aske/resources/


2. FELLOWSHIP

Area: Education

EXAMPLE 2.1 - MID-YEAR STUDENT CONFERENCE

I have for four years been involved in an event we run as a course to give some co-curricular input for all our students (c. 180 students in total). This takes the form of a mini ‘conference’ “Education Futures” (EF) with sessions on careers options and opportunities for students outside of their taught timetable [A1, A2, A4, K3]. I work with three colleagues, planning EF several months in advance, and have responsibility for working on the aspects of EF relating to years 2 and 3, which include guest speakers from post-graduate courses offered by the university [V2, V4], graduates of the degree, who come to share their experiences since graduating, and the chance for second and third years to mingle (which happens rarely otherwise) and for third years to pass on advice to second years about their final year of study, potentially recognizing their part in, and utilising, ‘communities of practice’ [A1, A2, A4, K2, K3].

This facilitates peer learning. As Boud (p.4) suggests, “Students learn a great deal by explaining their ideas to others and by participating in activities in which they can learn from their peers” [K3]. We extend the scope of this during EF, by facilitating mixing between year groups, which allows students of a variety of ages, ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds and so on, to mix and spend time with each other, and for these students to learn from each other’s experiences [A1, A2, A4, K2, K3, V2]. This helps with the course’s general approach to student support and guidance, extending these tasks beyond staff in a structured way.

EF also offers the option of post-graduate study to some who might not otherwise consider it [V1, V2]. As suggested by Wepner et al. [V4]. We invite course alumni to speak about their experiences as professionals working in the education sector and elsewhere, and relate these to the learning they gained from time on the course. This helps current students to understand how they are preparing for their careers after graduation [V4]. We have a number of mature students and a number of students who have come to us from Access courses or Foundation Degree courses on the Education Studies degree, and some of them have not considered themselves to be particularly academic, which may explain why they have not thought of further study before. Hearing the successfully stories of others ‘like them’ seems to help them to realise that they are capable of at least considering a Masters or PGCE.

Students are asked to register for EF, to show their intention to come (and to help with arrangements for the day), and to give written feedback [A1, K5, K6]. I have also worked with Student Representatives from the course this year, who have attended previous events, to get their input on this year’s event [K5, K6]. Feedback tends to be positive, and statements along the lines of “the day made me think about options for post-graduate study / employment I had not considered before” seem to be common. Student Representatives gave detailed feedback on the different speakers, the plenary session where they could ask questions of alumni, and the sessions where students mixed: all were highly recommended for this year’s event, indicating that they were popular, at least [V3]. Visiting alumni also praise the event, with one alumnus from 2009 having spoken at the event five times since graduation.
References


Area: Psychology

**EXAMPLE 2.2 - YEAR 2 WORKSHOP ON THE PSYCHOLOGY OF AGEING TO DENTAL STUDENTS**

In 2015, I solely prepared and delivered (twice) a new psychology of ageing workshop for 35 undergraduate dental students [A1, A2]. The students are predominantly scientists, school leavers and from BME groups. Students used ‘Turning Point’ to anonymously report how confident they felt speaking with older adults in clinic, at the start and end of the session and it increased [K4, K5]. I asked them to discuss their perceived strengths and concerns. One student said “telling someone older than me what to do”. I reminded them of prior learning on collaboration with patient and helped the students transfer this learning [A2, K2, V4].

I put the PowerPoint on Moodle a week before the session, so that students with specific learning needs e.g. English as a second language, dyslexia, could read them beforehand. I became aware of the need to do this during training for Associate Lecturers run by Plymouth University where I was introduced to and read the e- resources ‘7 steps series’ and ‘Disability and dyslexia information for staff’ including tips on catering for cultural diversity, specific learning needs, inclusive assessment and unconscious bias. Prompted by this training [A5], I asked students about specific needs and used a range of media and teaching methods to suit a range of learning styles and needs e.g. audio visual clips and imagery from Age Concern, YouTube and website, data, and reflective tasks [V1, V2, A4, K4].

The learning objectives included the cognitive and emotional aspects of ageing, communicating with respect, empathy and clarity. I drew on my academic and NHS psychology experience [K1, V4] and pedagogy literature. I showed audio-visual clips of elderly people [K4] as authentic patient-centred material is helpful (Petraglia, 2009; Dammers et al., 2001) [V3]. I chose respectful imagery of BME elderly people with consent to use from the Internet [K4] and facilitated a group activity to share cross cultural expertise as the evidence suggests activating prior knowledge and micro teaching is helpful (Schmidt, 1983) [V1, V2, K2, K3] where psychological material can cause distress. One student thanked me for managing the situation sensitively [A4].

An integrated curriculum is important for learning, so explicit links were made to the concurrent Enquiry Based Learning case. Previous feedback indicated students wanted more dental examples so I visited the clinic and used examples from my observations and made links to the professional body’s standards [A5, K5, V4]. Despite this, some students perceived psychology and communication skills as irrelevant to dentistry and did not attend. I am grappling with this challenge with the school. Exam questions on psychology may help. Although the cohort received the good feedback below from homeless patients and a manager [K5, K6, V4]:

“I enjoyed talking to them and felt comfortable”; “I learned things I didn’t know and I liked how they talked to me.” “they treat our residents with dignity and respect.”

**References**


https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/learning-gateway/disability-and-dyslexia/information-for-staff

https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/teaching-and-learning/guidance-and-resources/7-step-series
Area: Dentistry

EXAMPLE 2.3 - PREPARING FOR PRACTICE – CLINICAL GOVERNANCE WORKSHOPS FOR FINAL YEAR DENTAL STUDENTS

Background
To prepare for practice final year students have to understand clinical governance and the legal regulations of dental practice and running a business. These form part of the final year curriculum and are normally delivered as four separate plenary sessions.

Reflection on practice
In this example I have chosen to focus on my teaching practice in a ‘lecture setting’. Although student feedback was good with the traditional delivery method, I felt it was not effective in presenting what can sometimes be fairly dry (but important subjects) in comparison to other areas of clinical dentistry. In order to improve the student experience and to move away from large class teaching, I suggested to the year lead responsible for timetabling that they should be consolidated into a single half-day workshop. This, I felt, facilitated a problem-based learning approach to the material and would engage the students more fully.

In preparing for the session, I follow established good practice. Firstly by reviewing the General Dental Council learning objectives in the subject areas to ensure I prepared material to cover the important areas that students need to know upon graduation to satisfy the professional regulator. I then designed the workshop in collaboration with colleagues with experience of governance compliance to provide a blend of learning opportunities with an emphasis on case-based scenarios for students to work on in small groups (with facilitation) to encourage involvement. Prior to the workshop, I provide teaching material (a presentation and other professional guidance documents) via an online platform to ensure students understand the purpose of the session and have some background to the subject. This also aids inclusivity by providing preparation time for students with additional learning requirements such as dyslexia etc. The students working in their groups feed back their answers to the wider group to ensure the entire cohort is able to benefit from the twelve scenarios and also to provide an opportunity for questions. The session introduces an important element of peer learning and reflection and further reinforces the team approach to dentistry. I facilitate this, something I am getting better at, following attendance at a course provided by Plymouth University and with increasing experience. I try to ensure every student contributes to the session, something I think the new design enables.

Impact
Feedback from students on the session (run for the first time this year) was extremely positive over previous years (with greater attendance) and they felt it aided their preparation for job interviews which are also based on scenarios.

“In my interviews for my DF1 position, I discovered that what I’ll be doing is a continuation of what I’ve been doing here; graduates from other Universities had much less experience of this and were much less confident than I was of dealing with scenarios. I felt much better prepared”

This justified moving away from a large class teaching style with little opportunity for student engagement, independent thinking or problem solving. In order to further support students with future employability the session has been brought forward in the timetable so it is linked to their job interviews. I am keen to
further develop the workshop by using expert facilitators for each of the small learning groups and include more real-life scenarios to enhance the authenticity of the session.

References
Area: Health Professions

**EXAMPLE 2.4 - ENSURING THIRD SECTOR PLACEMENTS ARE PROVIDING APPROPRIATE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS**

In my role as a practice educator, I have responsibility to ensure that the quality of assessed practice learning opportunities undertaken by social work students to enable them to demonstrate their capability in line with The College of Social Work’s (TCSW) professional capabilities framework (PCF) meets the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) regulatory requirements of 170 days of assessed practice learning. The current UK economic and political context within social care has created a reduction in placement offers from local authorities. This has led the BA (Hons) Social Work programme to work increasingly with the third sector. Bellinger (2010a) charts the historical and political changes within practice learning over the last two decades. [A2, A4, A5, K6, V4]

Over the last ten years I have been developing and supporting third sector placements. This involves identifying practice learning opportunities and then seeking to support agencies and their staff. This is achieved in a number of ways, which include providing training to the agency staff, for example, preparing the agency for a student placement to ensure standards and expectations can be met around supervision and assessment (Williams and Rutter, 2013). In addition, ongoing support to the student and the agency throughout the placement enables appropriate learning opportunities to be maintained. Partnership working is a key concept in this area of work and I consistently receive positive feedback from agencies. [A5, K1, K6, V1, V4]

Partnership working underpins my own professional embodiment of a theoretical approach namely relationship-based practice (Ruch, 2010). In turn this enables me to role model good professional practice in ‘relationship building’ for the students to observe and experience. Indeed, students have found this to be a powerful learning experience as the two examples of student feedback below highlight:

- ‘My agency supervisor, practice educator and I communicated regularly and in a positive way, which enabled us to discuss critically where the learning opportunities were and where there could be some development’.

- ‘Mirroring good practice with service users often resembled the support I got from my practice educator and placement supervisor’.

It is often the students themselves that can present the key challenge to successful third sector placements. They can feel they have a substandard opportunity if they are matched to a third sector placement. This has been reinforced by recent reviews of social work education in the UK by Narey (2014) and Croisdale-Appleby (2014). The underlying assumption of such reports privileges social work placements with local authorities, specifically children services, over those in the third sector. It is essential that the student is as prepared as the agency for undertaking such a placement. My role is to ensure students understand that legal frameworks are central to agency practice throughout social care, not just within local authorities (Lavalette, 2011; Bellinger, 2010b). This is achieved by working with students to match practice learning opportunities with the student’s own learning needs. The ongoing support I provide throughout the placement aims to enable students to make sense of what they are learning in practice with their learning from the taught programme whether they be in a local authority or third sector placement (Biggs and Tang, 2011). [A1, A3, A4, K1, K6, V1, V4]
References


Area: Performing Arts

**EXAMPLE 2.5 - THE BLENDED CLASSROOM**

As an instructor who started lecturing during the transitory period into online learning, I became interested in researching how theatre lecturers can utilise the online classroom to their advantage [A5;V3]. I completed a postgraduate certificate in Online Education specifically examining the effectiveness of theatre in the online realm. Because of this experience, my line manager at Plymouth University assigned the redesign of module THPF403: Performance Praxis 1 to me upon my hire [A1].

The Performance Praxis module is one that has always been difficult for the Theatre and Performance team since the lectures dominated class time and therefore, the students were unable to discuss the lectures’ content. The lack of a discussion period then led to a disjoint with the practical element of this module since the students were unclear on its connection to the lectures. Given my background, the team allowed me to redesign the module so the lecture portion would be offered on the DLE, therefore allowing the lecture sessions to become discussion sections (Matthews, 2016) [K4]. When redesigning this module, I used Badrul Khan’s *Octagonal Framework* (Singh, 2003: 51) to evaluate the effectiveness of this new structure. I concluded that in allowing the students time to discuss the lecture’s content before the practical session, the students would have a clearer understanding on the practical as an extension of the lecture [A4]. Since none of our subject’s modules are currently offered online, I believe the adaptation of this module confirms Driscoll’s belief that blended learning is ‘a great way to initiate an organization into e-learning’ (2002: 1).

By encouraging the students to learn both in the classroom and on their own time, this module embodies the idea that ‘learning is a continuous process’ (Singh, 2003: 53). Furthermore, the blended classroom allows this module to effectively realise its assessed learning outcomes since the students are now able to critically engage with the literature in an environment conducive to exploration and reflection and instructor guidance [K6].

During this eight-week module, I asked the students to provide written feedback on this style of teaching and learning [K5]. One student believed the online lectures were ‘a good use of time’ and another student appreciated the ‘diversity in lecturing styles’ (student feedback, 2016). A majority of the students felt their critical thinking skills were growing, although many still expressed concern of the theoretical content covered in the lectures. Due to its new design, the lecturing team felt that the content could be slightly more advanced since there would be a lecturer available to discuss the questions raised in the seminars. Chen and Jones received similar feedback in their study, stating, ‘blended-learning students appear to have found the course more difficult. Interestingly, however, blended-learning students indicated significantly more agreement that their analytical skills improved as a result of the course’ (2007: 8). Overall, this model has worked significantly better than its predecessor and is a wonderful introduction to online learning in the theatre programme. In the future, I would like to attend workshops on virtual tools that could strengthen the delivery of this module and other modules delivered entirely online.

**References:**


3. SENIOR FELLOWSHIP

Area: Education Development

EXAMPLE 3.1 - LEADING CHANGE TO INSTITUTIONAL PROGRAMME APPROVAL

At X University I held a pivotal dual role. Part of the week I was an educational advisor, leading taught programmes in teacher development and helping colleagues to design learning activities. Alongside this, I was the institution’s Programme Approval Advisor [K6]. To approve programmes, many UK HEIs operate a committee, comprising representatives from across the institution. X University follows a streamlined model, whereby the Advisor directly receives submissions, making independent decisions and providing substantial feedback. On appointment I sought to optimise this area, which is critical but contentious 1.

First, I targeted improved efficiency. To show that the ‘centre’ was ‘on their side’, I fed back promptly when colleges submitted final documentation. Over three annual cycles, I reviewed 115 new/revised programmes, reducing turn around for the final approval phase to an average 7 working days, compared with 51 in the previous three years. This simple enhancement built trust:

“since you started, we’ve seen a marked turnaround in how things are processed” (Taught Programme Support Manager, Life Sciences).

A limitation of X University’s model is that information sharing is difficult without a central committee; teams may be unaware of a relevant programme evolving elsewhere in the University. In response I initiated a periodic e-report on approval submissions, which was sent to all colleges and relevant Professional Services, enjoying a good reception [K4]:

“Thanks for the report and the very constructive input and help with the process” (Associate Dean Education, Life Sciences)

Whilst these were positive steps, waiting until an advanced point to make first contact with colleges was problematic. As eloquently noted in Gerbic and Kranenburg’s (2003) paper:

“[there’s] not really anything you can do with comments at this stage…[it’s] too late to make alterations” 2.

Accordingly, I offered to attend planning meetings with colleges/disciplines before documents were submitted, to provide formative advice [A3]. The offer was optional so as not to inhibit teams but I was invited to many meetings, especially where proposals were complex (e.g. involving professional placements [V4] or articulation arrangements with FE providers [V2]). These meetings provided excellent opportunities to explain the external drivers behind what was sometimes perceived as intransigence from the University (e.g. UK Border Agency rules which influence how non-EU students can engage in field work off-campus) [V4]. The next step was to work with the team to identify approaches that met regulatory requirements but preserved as much of their educational vision as possible [A1, A4, K6]. My work reflected Robert Stake’s ‘responsive model’, in which teams should be helped to navigate obstacles by taking a “general perspective in the search for quality”, rather than rigidly following a “model or recipe” 3. Many HEIs are currently broadening their portfolios to offer innovative and intricate programmes (e.g. dual-degrees with international partners). Consequently, an open-minded attitude to programme approval is important, and was appreciated by the teams I supported:

“... admire your meticulous, thoughtful and good natured way of working” (Director of Taught Programmes, Social Sciences & International Studies).
As well as humanising quality assurance processes, face-to-face meetings helped to systematise quality enhancement; programme planning meetings could be used as a ‘stepping on point’ for promoting effective pedagogical practice. As I benefitted from a panoramic view of teaching approaches within the institution, I was able to share with teams the work of colleagues from other disciplines, including the use of formative assessment in place of excessive summative assessment, and the constructive alignment of module and programme-level learning outcomes [A3, K2, K3]. These insights were valuable:

“The lessons learnt especially around programme-wide learning outcomes and pitching the educational aims so they are more inspiring to applicants/students have been pivotal” (Director of Postgraduate Programmes, Medical School).

I consolidated the attainments from above by rewriting X University’s programme approval regulations [K6]. Hitherto, these were spread across multiple, aging documents; included nebulous guidance on what was permitted and how to proceed; and did not reference important emerging forms of delivery (e.g. MOOCs). Indeed, Gerbic and Kranenburg (2003) found that “dealing with the uncertainty of the document requirements” was one of the biggest obstacles for faculty members engaged in programme approval processes. The consolidated regulations that I produced presented clear flow diagrams for all types of programme development and a colour-coded system to help colleagues identify the steps required in their particular case. I informed the policy changes that I made by reviewing practices at other HEIs and QAA requirements; modelling the effects on the current portfolio; and, critically, convening forums of key stakeholders (e.g. lecturing staff and colleagues from Marketing, Strategic Planning, Student Records, the Legal Office) [A5, V3]. The latter approach sought to recognise that programme approval in HE is not a ‘technical’ process, with an objectively right/wrong way of operating, but a ‘political’ activity in which a sense of ‘value-pluralism’ is needed to mediate the views of various parties. The revised regulations promised genuine impacts on the opportunities/experiences of learners, as well as providing professional development opportunities for colleagues [A5]. For example, for the first time colleges were, through provision of clear processes, empowered to create modular CPD-style courses for professionals [V2]. The new regulations were well received, such that I was nominated for a Professional Services Recognition Award, alongside colleagues who had revised other policies (e.g. the assessment handbook).

My work continues to benefit X University, as the frameworks that I set up there remain in use following my departure. My experiences of analysing programme approval processes and devising positive approaches are also having a positive impact at Plymouth. I have been nominated to reflect the views of Teaching and Learning Support on the ‘task and finish’ group that is revising Plymouth’s academic regulations for the first time since 1998. Importantly, I am also able to promulgate awareness of quality structures that influence frontline teaching work, as part of the teacher development programmes that I help deliver (i.e. PGCAP). In doing so, I aim to give participants a richer understanding of the sector that they work in, and to help nurture a shared understanding and respect between frontline teaching staff and colleagues in quality assurance.

References


Area: Education Development

EXAMPLE 3.2 - EXPERIMENTING WITH PEDAGOGIES

My effectiveness as an Educational Developer has benefitted from frontline experiences as a Lecturer, when I experimented with different teaching methods [A1, A2]. For example, at X University I noted the External Examiner’s concern that the undergraduate Sport Science programmes provided little opportunity for groupwork. Over 25% of employers have queried graduates’ team-working and communication skills ¹ and these often feature in HEI’s desirable graduate attributes (including the Plymouth Compass) ². Groupwork seems an ideal means of developing such skills. Consequently, I replaced an essay with summative group work in my second semester, final-year module in physical activity promotion [A3, K3].

To begin, I defined the task. Groups would research a correlate of physical activity that was related to the course but had received little attention in my sessions/materials (e.g. the weather, acculturation). Happily, this broadened the content covered and represented a form of co-creating the curriculum [K1]. Groups would deliver a presentation on the topic; field questions from classmates and myself; and provide a handout. The task was ‘authentic’, reflecting independent research, data synthesis and presentation skills that could be valuable in a host of careers [V4]. Importantly, it also represented a significant amount of work, following evidence that group assignments are less successful where students can justifiably complete the work alone ³ [K2].

Next, I attended in-house training, which examined issues such as group size, formation and assessment strategy [A5]. I settled on groups of 4-5, consistent with literature on the ideal proportions for positive group dynamics ⁴ [V3]. Unusually in modern HE, the immediate cohort included no international students, no ethnic diversity and a balanced gender distribution. Consequently, I allowed groups to self-select. In more cosmopolitan contexts, further sophistication might be needed. For instance, within Plymouth’s General Teaching Associates course we selected groupings from mixed nationalities and disciplines to encourage dialogue and discovery [V1]. Participants in my group task were given some choice over the topic covered, as well as the time and date of their presentation, so reflecting the value of student autonomy in assessment ⁵ [V2]. I also sought to incorporate other nuances. For the task to be authentic, it was vital that individuals attended, even when not presenting themselves, so as to provide a probing audience. To incentivise attendance, I included questions, based on teams’ presentations, in the final summative assessment - an in-class test which, unlike a formal exam, I could compose dynamically, at short notice. This approach could be difficult today. As understanding and diagnoses of learning disabilities have increased, more students are presenting diverse needs. Just as with exams, a number of venues might be required for an in-class test, which could be complicated for a lecturer to organise alone. As an alternative, I would consider incorporating the same questions in a take-home exam, for submission the next day [V1, V2, A3]. In order to promote the development of collegial skills, I also decided to base a portion of marks on peer-evaluation. I researched and defined key criteria for the group to use and, following advice received during the training, decided how much each individual’s mark could be adjusted dependent on peer input [V3]. Having established the algorithm, I used X University’s in-house software to automate the process of collecting and calculating group marks [K4]. It was through my interest in such technologies that I was made departmental ‘e-champion’ – the ‘go to person’ for colleagues interested in technology enhanced learning (“[X’s] uses of learning technologies to enhance courses and provide pedagogically sound assessments are particularly impressive”: Probationary Assessor, X University Teaching Centre). During the assignment, positive group relationships were further promoted by the requirement that teams submit minutes from planning meetings ⁶.
Over five years I was able to refine the assessment by, for example, developing a clear marking rubric and establishing protocols for handling group disputes [A3, A4]. Although there was no marked improvement in quantitative student evaluations for the module, they remained stable, above 4.0/5.0 [K5]. Given the potential challenges that attend group work, I considered this a sign of success. Furthermore, open-ended student comments were positive: “[the] presentation task aids self-learning”. Colleagues who were initially reticent about group work were also intrigued, with several approaching me for informal guidance on introducing their own tasks.

Experiences at a subsequent university further developed my thinking on group work. There, I was involved with programme-wide audits using the TESTA methodology (Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment) 7. TESTA reviews in the UK and beyond have produced important observations about how assessment impacts on students. For example, findings appear to challenge the assumption that assessment variety is ubiquitously beneficial to students, by allowing different types of learner an opportunity to shine. Investigations suggest that students may benefit from a modest framework of assessment formats, whereby formative opportunities can be provided for mastering each type, which might then ‘feed-in’ to high-stakes summative tasks [V3]. Equipped with this knowledge, I see the risks of having introduced a potentially unfamiliar assessment format at an advanced point in students’ studies. I now encourage colleagues to study the number and distribution of assessment formats across their programmes. This was the case when I recently worked with Nursing teams to revise their programmes in advance of revalidation by the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

My history as a frontline lecturer brought exposure to many other distinctive pedagogies, such as online assessment and fieldwork [A3, A4]. These experiences provide a useful platform from which to talk with colleagues about their teaching. The approach cannot be simply to tell individuals that their ideas are ‘right or wrong’. As educational developers we are unlikely to be expert in the norms of the discipline and the ‘saga’ of the department in question – that is, the local history and staff/student cultures 8. Rather, our role can be to encourage colleagues to be imaginative in their pedagogical approaches but also to enter into the cycle of evaluation and self-reflection - as I did with group work - to robustly check that teaching innovations deliver positive experiences for students.

References


Area: Leadership

**EXAMPLE 3.3 - CHAMPIONING SCHOLARSHIP, RESEARCH AND ACADEMIC PRACTICE THROUGH OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

As an Associate Head of School (2012-2014) and Faculty support role in Teaching and Learning (2015-current) I have a sustained active commitment to the embedding of high quality teaching and learning. The Higher Education sector is experiencing significant challenges that include changes to HE funding and the introduction of discourses of accountability and excellence. These involve measures of quality focussing on input and output performance indicators (Light et al., 2009:3). [A5; K6; V4]

My AHoS role coincided with the set-up of a new school, requiring new school process and policies to be established. Leading and managing change in HE challenges established practices and structures, requiring leaders to create a collaborative environment that enables academic, professional services and students to fulfil their potential and interests (Bryman, 2007). Working closely with the Head of School and School Executive group I implemented institutional and school policies. [A4-5; K6; V2-3]

Examples of new school processes where I have taken a collaborative leadership position include the following. I was operationally responsible for establishing whole school staff meetings. Four meetings took place during the academic year (2012-13) to foster a sense of collegiality and offer inter-disciplinary opportunities in relation to best practice in teaching and research. Each meeting was themed (School structure & information exchange; teaching & sharing good practice; professional services and supporting best practice; maximising research opportunities). The latter included invited speakers from Research & Innovation to discuss research opportunities. A follow-up event on enhancing research-informed teaching (Oct 2013) was attended by ca. 30 teaching and research staff who shared knowledge and expertise on the diverse research interests, followed by discussions on programme level strategies for addressing the teaching-research nexus (Jenkins and Healey, 2005). Also disseminated was information about a School Development Fund and School Research Fund designed to address capacity building in scholarly and research activity amongst less research-active/more teaching-focussed academic staff. The intention was to stimulate curriculum developments in relation to the different quadrants of the teaching-research nexus. In particular, how current research-tutored and research-led activities within curricula could be developed to involve students’ active participation in research through inquiry-based learning opportunities (Healey, 2005; Healey et al., 2010). [A2, 4, 5; K2-6; V1-3]

A notable impact was a collaboration between the Institute of Health & Community and the MSc Social Research Methods to validate a module IHC731 ‘Critical Research, Engagement and Practice’. This module enabled students to critically engage with research through working alongside a PU researcher, critically reviewing and evaluating research presentations and activities (e.g. seminars, conferences, keynote presentations, symposiums) within the IHC and/or linked to Plymouth University or external activities. [A1,4; K1-3; V2-4]

More recent examples of school events include an Enhancing Teaching & Learning workshop (Sept 2014), exploring the innovative use of formative and summative assessment strategies, with a focus on feed-in, feed-forward and feed-back (Brown, 2007). Responding to Programme Leads’ concerns relating to CEP revalidation, and my own observations that staff knowledge and practice on inclusive assessment required updating I liaised with Educational Development to deliver a bespoke session that would contribute towards the School’s strategic ambitions in enhancing teaching quality. Feedback has been positive: ‘X is
committed to improving consistent teaching, learning, assessment and feedback across the University.’ (Educational Developer, SFHEA). In 2015-16 I have been able to build upon these leadership experiences in a Faculty support role in Teaching and Learning where I have actively supported the ADTL and programme teams through providing critical feedback on 5 programme approvals documentation, including aligning to national QAA benchmarks, professional qualification frameworks and institutional strategies, and represented the Faculty at three approval events. [A5; K6; V2-4]

The use of performance indicators for both internal and external review processes represents one of the major changes in the HE landscape and I championed the positive use of this data to enhance the student experience within the School through changing attitudes on data usage. This included Programme Lead (PL) staff attending a KIS and SPQ workshop that I organised in conjunction with Corporate Information (Summer 2012). The staff were positive about the session, typical feedback included ‘knowing when and how the data is collected has given me a better insight into its importance for programme planning’. [A5; K5-6; V3-4]

I liaised with Corporate Information and PLs during data collation for KIS and publication on Unistats to ensure the robust and reliable teaching and learning related data. Through undertaking an analysis of key competitor profiles, prior to the official launch of Unistats I was able to alert the HoS and the PL of a significant difference in relation to practice-based assessment, which required external liaison with HEFCE to clarify the methodology and definition. More broadly I monitored programme level data (NSS/SPQ/Module pass rates etc.), discussed areas of poor performance with teaching teams and sign-posted staff to teaching and learning resources and educational development workshops. Examples of improved performance can be found in relation to BSc. (Hons) Sociology increasing average scores on NSS Q1-4 from 83% (2013) to 96% (2015). [K6; V4]

Feedback from the Head of School: ‘X was excellent in their role as Associate Head of School, tirelessly leading and championing academic development in the School. Their understanding of data made them exceptional in using quality data sets to inform and develop best practice in teaching and research; from supporting individuals through PDR, to working with stakeholders to service needs.’

References


https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/id585_institutional_strategies_to_link_teaching_and_research_2.pdf accessed 01 March 2016.

Area: Research Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXAMPLE 3.4 - DEVELOPING RESEARCH METHOD-BASED LEARNING RESOURCES TO IMPLEMENT NATIONAL AND LOCAL STRATEGIES</th>
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<td>Research and published findings are the foundations of inquiry and knowledge in the academic community. Another strand to my own academic activity is the development of learning resources to support understanding in methodology, methods, and the research process underpinned by a range of pedagogic approaches. My approach here has been to engage in a range of related activities that encourage methodological pluralism through utilising real-world problems that focus on practitioner engagement and the teacher-learner relationship. Social Science research methods training is about bringing together theoretical, methodological, and critical analysis frameworks that go beyond research-skills training. [A1-4; K1-4;V2]</td>
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<td>I have led the development of two web-based open educational resources (OER) in Research Methods (RM): Numeracy &amp; Quantitative Methods and Numeracy for Professional Purposes (JISC, 2011) that contributed to the University’s CPD development framework, support of tutors in classroom and blended learning environments. Each OER module is organised into 10-11 discrete topics that consist of podcasts and accompanying PowerPoint slides which can be tailored to local delivery needs. The slides introduce key concepts, examples and recommended readings. These have been promoted across the HEA network with the goal to upskill, overcome accessibility issues to suitable materials, and enhance professional practice for tutors delivering Level 5 and Level 6 RM. Jorum reports indicate downloads of between 50 and 3,258 for each topic. Additional learning resources comprise of two text books including Social Research: An Introduction, Sage:2nd edition, sold across five countries, including a Chinese language version, ‘It is clearly built on solid pedagogic and conceptual foundations... theoretically informed researchers with a genuine commitment to pluralism in research methods’. [A1-A5; K1-2,4; V2,4]</td>
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<td>I was able to use the on-line resources to develop a series of face-to-face professional development workshops and resources to support academic staff delivering HE college-based degrees in the PU Partner College Network. A total of 5 colleges including PETROC, South Devon College, Exeter College, and 45 staff took part. I successfully delivered three interactive one-day workshops on ‘Supervising the student dissertation’, ‘Qualitative research process and analysis’, and ‘Quantitative research process and analysis’. I received positive feedback: ‘Devising and delivering bespoke short courses, X has connected with staff from across academic disciplines. The feedback from this CPD has been excellent – many of the staff were initially uncertain about their own capacity (particularly in quantitative methods) and lacking in confidence to engage with unfamiliar research methods and techniques. However, the skilful, reflective and supportive approach to these sessions made them popular and fruitful. X has engaged with many staff across the network to provide a lead in supporting research methods teaching and is a valued university leader in this capacity.’ (Plymouth University Partnerships Co-ordinator). [A1-5; K1-6; V1-4]</td>
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<td>Contributing to knowledge exchange with the South West researcher workforce, I have also delivered 7 bespoke research methods training to 84 participants in research-related posts in the private, public and Third sector via the South West Observatory HQ (2010-2013). Typical participant feedback: ‘Practical advice from a tutor who knows their stuff from both sides of the fence ... a well-put-together session which was relevant to my current and future roles’.</td>
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Engaging with the research community outside academia enables me to reflect and strengthen current research issues into my university teaching. [A1-5; K1-5; V1-4]

Funded research from the HEA (2012-14) to map, understand and support RM teaching nationally across HE college tutors and students has enabled me to adopt an evidence-informed approach to inform local strategies for CPD, research-based resources and enhance quality assurance. This research has been widely disseminated at internal PU staff session (ca. 30), and externally at the HEA Teaching Methods conference (2013) (conference delegates ca. 100), and one peer reviewed journal article in JVET (2015). [A4-5; K1-6; V3-4]

This work sits within a wider national agenda to enhance undergraduate research and statistical training and ‘training the trainers’ support (McInnes, 2009; British Academy, 2012). Successful bids to the HEA Centre for Sociology, Anthropology and Politics (UK4/SS/10 ‘A Toolkit for Embedding Methods Teaching within a Sociology Field Trip’ C-SAP) and ESRC (2012) Quantitative Methods Curriculum Innovation funding have resulted in the embedding of innovative RM approaches for BSc Sociology. For the C-SAP project I developed a Level 4 Sociology fieldwork resources toolkit, student materials and tutor guide. Fieldwork has long been a key feature of the natural sciences curriculum (Kent et al., 1997) and, in order to be effective, needs to be properly embedded, allowing students to understand the relationship between classroom and field-based activities (Lonergan & Andreson, 1988). The C-SAP toolkit adopts an inquiry-based learning approach through focussing on exploring social determinants of health, well-being and deprivation in contrasting areas of Plymouth. The toolkit enables students, working in small peer groups, to draw discipline relevant literature, engage with secondary quantitative statistical data sources and undertake primary research through an ethnographic walk. Capturing qualitative data through recording observational notes, photographs and researcher experiences. Alongside developing discipline-based knowledge, students are learning how to be active participants in co-produced research and to develop an understanding of reflexivity in research inquiry, central to the foundations of social science knowledge and understanding (Hsiung, 2008). The assessment strategy was a group assessed poster and verbal presentation. Alongside the classroom activities each small student group was supported by tutorials as it is recognised that novel fieldwork can cause student anxieties (Cotton, 2009). [A1-5; K1-5; V1-4]

As the Plymouth lead for the ESRC project (2012) the project resulted in the re-designing of a core BSc (Hons) Sociology L5 module to embedded quantitative methods in substantive modules, linking theory, methods and evidence. The impact of these initiatives has been an increase in quantitative methods based Sociology final year student dissertations with the external examiner commenting:

‘the research methods training is extremely well integrated, providing pathway of learning that feeds into the dissertation (2014-15)’. [A1-5; K1-6; V1-4]

As an active member of the Quantitative Methods (QM) network, I have been an invited speaker at 7 QM/RM events with cross-institutional attendance from research post-graduates, early career teachers and researchers. Between 2007-2015 these included Training the Trainers, ESRC NCRM (2007, ca. 80), three consecutive bi-annual ESRC Research Methods Festival (2008/10/12, ca. 100), two international conference papers on QM/RM, ESA, Torino 2013, and ECER, Budapest (2015) with a peer-reviewed articles in Sociology (2015) and the Journal of Vocational Education and Training (2015). [A5; K1,6; V3-4]

References


EXAMPLE 3.5 - CREATING AND CHAMPIONING AN EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING CULTURE IN PLYMOUTH BUSINESS SCHOOL

‘Effective higher education leaders make specific changes happen by engaging people in the process of personal and institutional change and improvement’ (Scott et al., 2008, p. xiv)

I became AHTL for Plymouth Business School (PBS) at the point at which PBS was created in 2013. The previous ‘School of Management’ had not championed excellent Teaching and Learning (T and L) practice as a KPI or key concern for staff, and T and L policy and practice were not discussed in public fora or shared arenas.

There are perhaps contextual reasons for this: Plymouth Business school is one of the largest and most complex in the University with 2000 undergraduate students, 25% of whom are international; over 30 programmes divided into overarching ‘suites’, of which 8 are final year ‘top-up’ programmes; 154 modules, over half with 50 plus students, and 32 with over 100 enrolments; 13 programme leaders, 4 discipline groups, each with a particular identity and orientation around their subject, comprising of 68 FTE staff, plus 3 associated discipline groups in Plymouth Graduate School of Management (with 49 staff).

With the establishment of the new school, one of my priorities was to ‘raise the profile’ of the importance of excellent, reflective T and L practice (and associated issues such as the student experience), and to ensure that colleagues were aware of University policy, pedagogic research and good practice guidance, and of the impact of their practice on the student experience. Most important was the opportunity to create an environment in which open and meaningful discussion could take place, which encouraged reflection on individual professional practice (A5, K6, V3). Inevitably, this brings challenges: academic practice can be remarkably resistant to change initiatives (Martensson et al., 2011).

In addition to leading on NSS results at 3 school open forum meetings, and to visiting specific Discipline Group meetings to discuss ‘local’ T and L issues, I designed and led (in conjunction with the Associate Head, Plymouth Graduate School of Management) 3 whole school ‘Teaching and Learning Away Days’ (2014, 2015 and 2016) with a broad T and L remit, but emphasizing specifically the importance of:

- University policy and guidance on assessment and feedback and inclusivity
- Need for and methods of enhancing student ‘assessment literacy’
- Improving our feedback ‘scores’: identifying shared solutions

These priorities were informed by an analysis of NSS/SPQ scores and open comments, by external examiner feedback, and by issues raised at programme committees, and solutions and recommendations sought from teaching and learning pedagogy (A1, A2, A4, A5, K1, K2, K3, K5, K6, V1, V3, V4).

Enabling and facilitating ‘informed discussion’ is paramount to achieving change for a quality teaching and learning amongst academics (Martensson et al., 2011), and at the heart of these events was the need for me to draw out existing knowledge and expertise and to lead critical, engaged and progressive discussions with 60-80 colleagues. One of the challenges of such events is working with a diverse group of practitioners whose academic practice is potentially being challenged and critiqued. Some are guilty of a sense of ‘false uniqueness’, assuming that their discipline, subject or module has special circumstances, which renders them immune from normal regulations and rules of engagement in the academic context.
Others resist any perceived form of control on their academic practice, as they perceive it as a threat to their autonomy and academic identity (Henkel, 2005; Becher and Trowler, 2001). I have had to front such challenges in these public fora, responding positively to colleague concerns whilst championing a firm commitment to the need for reflective practice, and for change and improvement in our standards and practice.

For example, following NSS and EE feedback on the varying expectations and workload of modular assessments, I researched, designed and introduced some ‘Equivalence’ guidelines to inform colleagues’ assessment design (A5, K2, K6, V3, V4). In order to overcome resistance to the proposed guidelines, colleagues were organised into discipline groups to discuss how they would implement the guidelines within their own modules. Scott et al., (2008) emphasize the importance of context and culture when leading any kind of change in the HE context: ‘change, like learning, is a profoundly social experience, and one’s peer group is an important source of motivation (or de-motivation) and support’ (p. xvii) (K3).

The AHTL role can lead to incumbents being perceived as ‘public enemy number 1’ where long-standing (but potentially archaic and ineffective) practices are being challenged. I have developed my skills of tact, persuasion and the ability to draw on a strong evidence base to inform my arguments and practice (A5, K5, K6, V1, V3, V4).

In terms of impact, anecdotally, attendance has remained high at each of these events, and one (senior) colleague gave the feedback ‘It’s a pity it was in July-it’s the first useful event I’ve been to all year’. This was representative of feedback from attendees, which was overwhelmingly positive. Evidence of impact at the level of school outcomes can be seen through improved student performance and student experience feedback and scores: Our proportion of good honours degrees has increased significantly from 43% in 2012 to 63% in 2015; NSS overall satisfaction for PBS has improved from 84% in 2014, to 87% in 2015 and 91% in 2016. According to the Guardian League Tables (2017) we are in the top 50 for overall course satisfaction, and teaching satisfaction, and 20th for feedback for our business, management and marketing courses (Guardian, 2016). Open comments suggest a continuous improvement in the student experience of teaching and learning practice, although I am alert to the need to deal more locally with academic ‘tribes’ within the school (Becher and Trowler, 2001) to address specific problems and issues at the level of the discipline, programme and module. The context of constant measurement and regular reporting on metrics now prevalent in a marketised HE sector in the UK provides no room for complacency (Molesworth et al., 2011) (V4) and this has necessitated an agile and flexible response by T and L leaders-including me as AHTL- to address each new set of feedback and scores.

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In my capacity as Discipline Group Leader (DGL) of the HR and leadership group (2010-2013) and AHTL (Plymouth Business School (PBS) 2013-present) I have had significant responsibility for the management and support of academic colleagues. Both roles are discussed below, with the impact of my activities embedded within the discussions.

Firstly, as DGL, I inherited a fragmented group of individual colleagues without a strong team ethos, and succeeded in building a strong shared team identity. There are some distinct benefits in creating a strong sense of disciplinary identity and allegiance. Jawitz (2009) suggests that the discipline is the ‘central organizing vehicle’ within higher education, and that belonging to a ‘disciplinary community involves a sense of identity and personal commitment’. This is what I was seeking to achieve. I was responsible for recruiting/selecting new colleagues, including the writing of appropriate job descriptions and person specifications, managing selection activities, supporting new colleagues through induction and probation, and appointing mentors for all new appointees (I introduced the mentoring system to the group). I undertook workload management and allocation for all team members, and conducted formal PDR’s as well as regular development discussions with all team members (except Professors). (A2, A4, A5, K2, K3, K5, K6, V1-V4).

These fundamental people management activities have often been rather neglected in the academic context, and whilst I have a wealth of experience of undertaking them in my previous roles outside HE, I inevitably encountered some resistance from long-serving academic colleagues (Scott et al., 2008) who had not been subjected to such ‘hands-on’ management. Bolden et al. (2007) capture some of the challenges for the academic leader at whatever level (indeed, their research confirms that distributed leadership approaches are common in HE): they report a ‘dynamic tension [...] between the need for collegiality and managerialism, individual autonomy and collective engagement [...] informality and formality [...] and stability and change’ (Bolden et al., 2007, p.3). I certainly encountered these tensions! Whilst ‘effective’ and ‘strong’ leadership in HE may be called for by government and professional bodies (Bolden et al., 2007) I know that some colleagues, at times, perceived my interventions as attempts to control and regulate their academic activities and identities through the potentially socio-normative ‘control’ elements of these apparently innocuous HR-type activities (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002), especially challenging for knowledge workers (including academics) who can perceive such ‘managerialist’ interventions as a threat to their autonomy and academic integrity (Karremann and Alvesson, 2004). Indeed, one very long-serving colleague informed me that she ‘had no line manager’, and nor did she need or want one. Part of my challenge was to be seen to ‘protect staff autonomy’ (Bryman, 2007) in order to counterbalance my attempts to introduce formal structure to the management of the group. Ultimately, all colleagues were responsive to ‘being managed’, engaging in meaningful two-way PDR discussions, and a shared sense of collegiality was established within the group.

Additionally, I ensured effective channels of communication, an important role for academic leadership (Bryman, 2007), with fortnightly updates via e-mail, and monthly team meetings to discuss new policy and practice developments, and to share best practice across the group. One senior and long-serving colleague commented that she had never been so well-informed in her 20 plus years in HE.
I foregrounded Teaching and Learning in the group: I re-invigorated subject assessment processes with team scrutiny meetings to enable colleagues to understand and learn from colleagues; I formalised a ‘buddy’ system for module scrutiny and moderation processes; previous Subject Assessment Panels (SAPs) had become somewhat perfunctory events with only module leaders attending, and no opportunity for discussion of the ‘health’ of the subject, or for new colleagues to learn from existing practice. As part of the ‘culture shift’ within the group to a stronger sense of shared identity and understanding (Jawitz, 2009), I introduced a more inclusive approach to SAPs with all colleagues invited, and module leaders required to discuss and reflect on learning from their module experience rather than simply reporting student performance statistics (A2, A4, A5, K2, K3, K5, K6, V1-V4).

As AHTL for PBS, I took over responsibility for co-ordinating and communication with the 13 programme leaders (PLs) on undergraduate business programmes. This was a new role with this aspect only loosely described in the job description, and I had the opportunity to shape the nature of my input and relationship with PLs. I sought their input on what was required from their perspective (Bryman has emphasized the importance of academic leaders fostering a collaborative and consultative environment for academics (Bryman, 2007)) and sought to establish my own credibility as a role model by taking on an additional interim programme leadership role (Scott et al., 2008). As well as sharing information on important developments, consulting PLs for their views on key developments, and providing support and mentoring for new (and existing) PLs, I established a regular ‘programme leader forum’ for undergraduate PLs in PBS. In terms of impact, the PL forum continues to be attended by all PL colleagues (unless they have prior commitment) and others seeking to share/hear views. The forum has been successful by creating a safe space for consultation, for information sharing, and for building a sense of community and identity. In terms of my effectiveness as meeting lead/chair, one colleague commented recently:

‘It was a great meeting - you are excellent at chairing meetings, very supportive but fun and keep everything on track - you are wasted in academia, you should run the country!’

Inevitably the changing nature of HE and academic work and the ‘new forms of managerialism’ (Jawitz, 2009) provide some challenges to academic identities, and the opportunity for establishing close communities of practice can provide contexts within which academics can construct their identities. In both of these roles, I sought specifically to create a sense of collegiality, an important activity for departmental level leadership (Bryman, 2007) through developing a sense of ‘community of practice’ (Wenger, 2000): firstly, in the domain of HR and leadership academic practice, and secondly for those with the shared identity of ‘programme leader’.

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As an educator, I make an extensive contribution to advancing the practice of teaching IT security from institutional to international levels. I designed Plymouth’s BSc and MSc programmes in Computer and Information Security, and teach across the full spectrum of undergraduate and postgraduate study, with leadership responsibility for 60 credits and participation in another 40 [A1-4, K1-3]. These are consistently well-received, based upon direct student response and formal module feedback, and where opportunities for enhancement are identified I directly respond within module reviews and action plans. My effectiveness is also evaluated through the standard peer-review process that we introduced in my School, and I have paired with different colleagues for each of the 4 years we have run this [K5].

I am in the fortunate position that my research and professional activities in the security field explicitly include understanding and enhancing the educational methods used in the topic area. As such, my activities are impacting what gets taught, how it is taught, and who it reaches:

- I am active within the Information Security Education Working Group of the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP), which focuses upon advancing and promoting the pedagogy and practice of educating in IT security 1. I have contributed research into security learning, focusing upon how to educate non-specialist users in workplace and personal scenarios 2, and elements of my work are often used in the research of other security educators. I am also a Programme Committee member for the Working Group’s biennial conference, fostering a community of security educationalists and sharing practice between them [A5, V3].

- For eighteen years I have led the Intensive Programme on Information and Communications Security (IPICS), delivering 2-week summer/winter schools alongside academics from between 10-20 other European HEIs [A1-3]. This fosters curricula and practice sharing amongst the participating academics (e.g. my content on usable security is now delivered annually at the University of Piraeus, and I have benefited from seeing how other academics deliver challenging topics such as cryptography [A5]), and internationalisation of the student experience (e.g. the opportunity to interact and work with an international peer group giving valuable cross-cultural perspective on the security and privacy topics) 3. As one of four international lead coordinators of IPICS I share the responsibility for championing appropriate breadth, depth and relevance of the student experience, and am directly setting standards for teaching in the topic space. My outputs have also been included in a textbook based upon this programme curriculum (for which I was lead editor) 4, enabling my approaches to impact and influence the wider group of learners in the topic area [A1-2, K1-2].

- My own research includes a significant and long-term focus upon projects that directly address how security education and awareness are approached [K3]. By supervising PhD research, I investigated how security education can be framed to suit different learning styles 5. After establishing experimentally that personalised learning 6 was a viable approach, this research proceeded to develop a model for “Personalising Information Security Education” 7, which forms a foundation for ongoing work. This includes Masters projects exploring themes such as gamification and context-based awareness raising, in order to improve learner engagement and enable more effective targeting of awareness-raising opportunities. Meanwhile, going beyond the educational techniques themselves and considering how they can be used, I have also...
championed collaborative international research into how the combination of effective education and cultural factors can influence security compliance in organizational contexts [V4].

- Aligning with my leadership around technology-enhanced methods, I have developed and released over 150 security podcasts as iTunesU open resources, thereby enabling my material to reach and impact an international audience (over 80% are non-UK, with the US, China, and India being prominent sources). It has routinely seen 5,000-10,000 downloads per week, with several hundred subscribers, and led it to feature in iTunesU's Great Collections list (placing Plymouth alongside institutions such as Imperial College and MIT). I wrote up this experience as a paper reflecting upon the value of iTunesU as a means of promoting security education in an international context [K4, V3].

- My international recognition led to an invitation to review bids for the HEA’s Learning and Teaching in Cyber Security scheme, collaborating with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to select fundable projects from 35 applications. Key evaluation criteria included proposals’ consideration of pedagogically-appropriate means of teaching security subjects. My knowledge of the security education landscape enabled me to identify projects positioned to make credible impact, and my input was significant in determining those accepted for funding [K1-2, K6, V4].

- My track record as an academic enables me to demonstrate knowledge and leadership in teaching approaches for cybersecurity. This led to the opportunity to become part of the international editorial board for the newly-established Journal of Cybersecurity Education, Research and Practice. Board invitations specifically targeted academics involved in the discourse around advancing security education. I will champion the development of this journal to ensure that it offers impact across the discipline, and promotes innovation within the wider community [A5, K1, V4].

My leadership and impact in the security discipline and its associated pedagogy sit precisely at the intersection of my role as a professional and educator. All have been approached from perspectives such as pioneering educational practice, and broadening the accessibility of the learning experience. Moreover, my participation in activities such as IFIP and IPICS has given me a clear opportunity to learn from the teaching practices and ideas of other academics, and take back ideas to try with our students, or feed into related research. Meanwhile, my iTunesU materials are an example of leading the use of technologies I advocated in Example 1, leveraging the on-demand nature of podcasts to extend access to global audience. In parallel, all such activities provide an excellent means for maintaining my own development in the subject area and wider profession (e.g. highlighting new/emerging security techniques to cover within future teaching) [A5, V3].

References


Area: Computing and Electronics

EXAMPLE 4.2 - CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

I have strong commitment to continuous development, and take opportunities to pursue this in my topic area, as an educator, and as a leader.

- My various external examiner roles (particularly relating to taught programmes), give a good basis for reflecting upon pedagogic practices and quality standards within the sector [K5]. While the effectiveness of external examining is sometimes questioned ¹, I am confident that my input has directly improved practices in several HEIs (e.g. enhancing coursework feedback, so students can tangibly relate it back to assessment criteria; ensuring meaningful examination solutions, with granular marking schemes, that could be used by an independent assessor). In many cases, I have identified examples of inconsistency within the teams concerned, and encouraged them to share good practice internally. In other cases, I am able to adapt my own approach based upon good practice witnessed elsewhere (e.g. alternative approaches to delivering or assessing topics; dealing with group work, part-time/off-campus cohorts, etc). Observing inconsistency and gaps at other institutions has also been a trigger to reassess my own School, particularly when new staff are appointed. As such, I am working with my Associate Heads to continually guide staff on good practice for setting and marking assessments [K6].

- In 2011 I led the establishment of the Academic Partnership Programme for the Institute of Information Security Professionals (IISP). Collaborating with four other UK academics, I had a direct role in defining criteria through which HEIs are able to gain accreditation, and have since been coordinating the approval process for other institutions (which includes mentoring guidance in order to help HEIs shape and revise their applications). This has so far led to 17 HEIs achieving membership, and afforded me considerable insight into how cybersecurity education is approached, and is developing, amongst UK HEIs [A5, K1, V3-4].

- Since 2013 I have been advising a government organisation (GO) on establishing certification schemes for cybersecurity Masters programmes, based upon a national shortfall in cybersecurity skills, and the need for credible programmes from which to seek graduates ². I have assisted this GO in establishing a curriculum model that matches professional body requirements [A1, V4], and 18 programmes across 14 universities have achieved certification [K6]. Additionally, others are (re)designing programmes around these requirements, so my efforts will also indirectly influence learning experiences of students on many other programmes.

- In 2013 I was a consultant for the HEA’s Changing the Learning Landscape initiative. I supported a HEI which was transitioning toward a new academic offer (increasing use of online delivery, assessment and feedback), and required guidance on engaging and supporting its academics. Drawing upon my own experiences in leading such changes ³ I successfully advised the leadership team on strategies for effective engagement and uptake. The HEI’s final report to the HEA indicated success, with “X’s experience in influencing being invaluable”. From my own perspective, this was an excellent opportunity to consider the effectiveness of my approaches within a discipline significantly different to my own [A5, K2, K4, V3].

- In 2014 I evaluated Pearson Education’s MyLab interactive environments, offering online accompaniments to textbooks. I assessed and wrote evaluations for MyAccountingLab and MyEconLab, and then participated in collective feedback with experts from 7-8 other UK universities (including Leeds and Southampton). This gave Pearson guidance for improving their technologies and learning environments [K3-4].
Alongside offering opportunities to support the development of others, all of the above were also key developmental opportunities for me as well [AS]. For example, IISP and GO activities provided valuable insights into delivery of security topics at other universities, prompting me to reflect upon my own practice (e.g. observing and participating in subsequent GO assessment panels caused me to re-evaluate several aspects of how we present and assess topics within our own programmes). Meanwhile, the Pearson evaluations offered an opportunity to experience a very different online learning environment to Moodle and iTunesU (and, upon reflection, exposed me to approaches that I did not consider effective and would seek to avoid).

Several projects benefited from leadership skills that I had developed through earlier initiatives. For example, with IISP it was important to ensure a democratic and inclusive approach to the design of the scheme, while managing the strong academic viewpoints within the multi-HEI team I was leading. With the HEI, reflecting upon prior experiences from my own School led me to emphasize the importance of an inclusive and participatory approach, enabling academic staff to feel like supported partners, rather than simply being directed towards adoption of new approaches [V1].

Reflecting upon my leadership approach, I believe it typically matches a democratic style 4, but with the ability to draw upon other modes (e.g. using authoritative, affiliative, and transactional approaches) when required. This is supported by feedback comments sought from one of my Associate Heads:

“X chaired the meeting in his usual highly professional manner, with clarity and good humour … Everyone who wanted was given the opportunity to state their view(s) and a collaborative spirit was engendered. There are a number of forthright, difficult even, people on this committee and X manages them fairly and skilfully … X is a generous and supportive manager who is always prepared to come to the aid of colleagues who are struggling to get their point across. Above all else they are fair minded and treat everyone with respect.”

My ongoing development as a leader is further supported by processes such as Performance Development Reviews and 360 Feedback. Comments from the latter (in 2015), included positive observations such as:

“X is a really great boss … They set an example to all of us by their tremendous work ethic, friendliness, support and enthusiasm”; “An open and friendly method of leadership … The ability to listen to and make time for colleagues”; “Excellent leadership within the school and representation of the school at higher levels”.

In addition, there were relevant opportunities for development (e.g. “X can sometimes be over-critical”, and a couple of comments regarding a desire for face-to-face discussion rather than email), which I have noted and continue to work on [A5, V3].

References
5) From peer review of School Executive meeting, conducted by Dr John Eales (Associate Head for Teaching & Learning) in November 2015.